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The Career Planning Process: Developing Your Career Goals

When students hear about Career Services, they often think of activities related only to the job search process. Career decision making involves increasing self-awareness, exploring career options, and acquiring the knowledge, skills, and experiences that will help you implement your career choices. This process is unique to each individual student and the Career Services staff is here to assist you in developing your career goals and planning steps to reach those goals.

The first step in career decision making is developing self-awareness. Your career decision is yours and is rooted in your own identity consisting of your interests, values, skills, experiences, and goals. You may be certain about all or only a few of these aspects. To increase your self-awareness, career counseling offers an opportunity to discuss your life and career goals. Counseling may include assessment, which is available to help you identify and organize your interests, abilities, and values as they relate to career fields. Career counseling will increase your awareness of career options, reinforce those options you’ve already considered and expose you to others you haven’t yet considered. Discussing connections between your self-knowledge, experiences, and your vision for your future can lead to identifying career areas to explore.

Exploration can take many forms, all of which require you to be active in gathering information and applying this information to your self-awareness. Reading about careers through print and online resources in the Career Information Center (see page 8) will help you to expand your knowledge base. While reading provides general information about career fields, career counseling offers an opportunity to discuss your life and career goals. Counseling may include assessment, which is available to help you identify and organize your interests, abilities, and values as they relate to career fields. Career counseling will increase your awareness of career options, reinforce those options you’ve already considered and expose you to ones you haven’t yet considered. Discussing connections between your self-knowledge, experiences, and your vision for your future can lead to identifying career areas to explore.

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Each student brings individual experiences, interests, and goals to the job search. Career Services can assist you as you reflect on your unique qualities and apply them to your job search or graduate school goals.

Increase Self Awareness
- Meet with a Career Counselor to identify interests, values, personality, abilities and clarify career goals.
- Reflect on past experiences in high school and college to help determine what you liked (interests), what you did well (skills), and what you felt was important (values).
- Explore interests through courses, volunteer work, student activities, and job shadowing.
- Consider taking a career decision-making course.

Explore Career Options
- Research career options of interest using the Career Information Center and online career exploration sites.
- Investigate career alternatives related to various fields of study.
- Conduct an informational interviewing or job shadow with friends, family, alumni, professors, and/or others in the community.
- Begin “sampling” careers by pursuing summer jobs and internships related to your interests. Attend career fairs, industry panels, and company information sessions.
- Research graduate programs through faculty, graduate and professional school fairs, and online.

Acquire Knowledge, Skills, and Experience
- Become active in extracurricular activities and volunteer work to develop teamwork, interpersonal, and leadership skills.
- Obtain relevant work experience by pursuing internships, co-ops, part-time work, and summer jobs.
- Develop a broader appreciation of diversity through study abroad, foreign languages, community service, multicultural courses, and cultural activities on campus.
- Record your activities, accomplishments, and achievements.

Develop Self-Marketing Skills to Help Implement Your Career Goals
- Participate in resume writing, interviewing, and job-search strategies workshops.
- Meet with a counselor to help design a job search or graduate school plan.
- Participate in a videotaped “mock interview” to practice interviewing.
- Consider taking a job search course (LA 401, CNED 303, AG 100/SCI 101).
- Take advantage of On-Campus Interviewing and career and graduate school fairs.
- Network with alumni through LionLink and gather valuable career advice.

As you move closer to selecting your career field of interest, you will learn about the knowledge base, personal qualities, and experiences which are valued by employers. These frequently include: communication skills, honesty and integrity, teamwork, interpersonal skills, motivation, leadership skills, ability to work with people different than you, work experience, and a strong work ethic. Career Services can help you plan to acquire these qualities and experiences. Active involvement in these areas will make you a more appealing candidate for available opportunities.

As you solidify your plans for employment or graduate school, remember to record your accomplishments and achievements for inclusion in your resume and/or portfolio. Your resume, cover letter, and application materials are the first impression you will give to an employer or graduate school. Take the time to represent yourself well in writing so that you get the opportunity to meet face-to-face. As you move into the interviewing process, prepare to present yourself in person in a way that highlights the skills, experiences, and qualities the employer or graduate school is seeking in candidates. Remember to use a variety of resources and strategies in your search, evaluation, and acceptance of offers.

Each student brings individual experiences, interests, and goals to the job search. Career Services can assist you as you reflect on your unique qualities and apply them to your job search or graduate school goals.

http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/
Meeting with a Career Counselor

Meeting with a Career Counselor can be helpful in organizing and planning your future. A counselor can stimulate your thinking, ask important career planning questions to help clarify goals, provide encouragement, teach you strategies for making meaningful career decisions, and help you plan your job search.

Career Counselors and students work together in developing career plans. Counselors can help you to learn more about yourself, understand the decision-making process, and begin to gather information about career opportunities. However, Career Counselors cannot make your decision for you or tell you what to do in planning your career. The responsibility for making career decisions rests with you. While students may seek a specific connection between their major and a specific career, each major can be connected to multiple career paths and possibilities. Through your work with a Career Counselor, you will develop a set of skills and knowledge which can help you define and reach your career goals.

Individual Career Counseling

Individual career counseling is one of the major functions of Career Services. Counselors help students tackle the often difficult process of career and life planning through one-on-one, ongoing, in-depth, and confidential sessions. After the first meeting, you and the counselor may decide to continue meeting.

Career counseling discussions may include such topics as:

- Developing career goals
- Assessing abilities, interests, and priorities
- Improving interview skills
- Resume, cover letter, and application forms
- Internship and job search processes
- Graduate school application process
- Any related concerns, such as time management, transition from college to work, and coping with parental or financial pressures

Assessment

In conjunction with your individual counseling appointments, you also have access to specialized career assessment instruments that are designed to measure your interests, skills, personality characteristics, and work-related values.

Your Career Counselor will determine which assessment is appropriate, administer the assessment to you, and interpret the assessment results with you. These tools can be highly useful resources in helping you get clarity on your career direction and make appropriate decisions.

You may wish to meet with a Career Counselor to:

- Begin to look at your interests, skills, and values through discussion, assessments, and related activities.
- Learn about the tools and resources essential in gaining information about majors and careers.
- Discuss different opportunities, projects, activities, and ideas that can assist you in making your college education satisfying, fun, and marketable.
- Engage in exercises that can help you to identify the career skills that your academic, extracurricular, internship and part-time job experiences have developed.
- Talk about how to make informed decisions about college major, careers, job offers, and graduate schools.
- Recognize personal strengths and limitations and how they affect career planning. Develop ways to use and/or improve them.
- Learn to research employers and industries.
- Develop strategies to explore your professional network.
- Create and implement a strategic job search or graduate school plan.
- Develop your resume, cover letter, and interview skills.

Career Information Center

The Career Information Center (CIC) houses a wealth of print and online information on the following career planning steps and topics:

- Careers for all academic majors
- Occupations and industries
- Employer information
- Summer job and internship directories
- Job hunting and interviewing
- Resume and cover letter samples
- Salary information and negotiation resources
- Graduate schools
- Backpack to briefcase – transitioning from college to the real world

CAREERS Internet Database

Gives general information on 100s of occupations: education requirements, preferred traits and skills, earnings, potential employers and areas, and supplemental resources. Videos & downloads available.

- Username: 1484w
- Password: future

Career Information Center Handouts

Single topic handouts highlight internal and external print & online resources related to careers, occupations, and majors.

- Click “Salaries, Guides, and Handouts”

GoinGlobal

Gives country-specific job search and cultural advice. Also features job and internship postings as well as H1B visa-sponsoring employer database.

- Login with your Penn State User ID & password

Internships.com

Search for internship and entry-level positions for every major and field across the country. Virtual opportunities also available.

- Sign up for an account with your Penn State email address

Internships-usa.com

Search for internships in non-technical fields such as Liberal Arts, Arts, Political Science, & Human/Social Services.

- Username: PennState
- Password: NittanyLions

LibraryWorld

View the Career Library’s collection of books using our online catalog.

- Click “Career Services Library Books”
- Login: PSU CAREER SVCS
- Password: (leave blank)

Uniworl

Multinational business contact database to find American firms and their locations in other countries and firms based in other countries with locations in the United States.

- Login with your Penn State User ID & password

Vault Career Library

Career, employer, & industry guides covering many fields. Also features salary, interview and company surveys. Download PDF guides.

- Accessed via University Libraries
- Search Databases by Title (A-Z), Vault Online Career Library
- Create an account using your @psu.edu email address

WetFeet

Career, employer, & industry guides covering business, consulting, & communications. Also features guides on getting great internships in specific fields. Download free PDF guides.

- Use your @psu.edu email address to download guides

What Can I Do With This Major?

Connects majors with typical career paths.

- No password or login required

To access these resources, visit studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/cic
Informational Interviewing

What Is an Informational Interview? An informational interview is one of the best ways to obtain information about an occupation. Ideally, it is a 30- to 60-minute meeting at the workplace of an individual whose job you are interested in learning about. During this meeting, you have the opportunity to ask questions about work tasks, work environment, the person's background, and how he or she obtained that job. If you are unable to meet in person due to geographic limitations, you can conduct the interview by phone.

What You Will Gain

- A more in-depth understanding of a career field which may help you decide what type of work and setting you prefer
- More confidence regarding your career goals
- A more in-depth understanding of a career field

Locating a Person to Interview
Ask family members, friends, neighbors, professors, employers, and anyone else you can think of: “Do you know a (computer programmer, journalist, accountant... ) I could talk to about their job?” OR “Do you know a (computer programmer, journalist, accountant...) I could contact to discuss the (computer programming, journalism, accounting...) field?” Take advantage of as many opportunities as you can to interact with professionals in your field of interest.

Setting Up the Interview
Once you have identified someone to contact, it is time to make the call to set up an appointment. Once the person on the other end of the line says “Hello” you need to be ready to communicate who you are, why you are calling, and arrange time to take the time to talk to you—all in the span of approximately one minute.

It is best to plan what you are going to say in advance and practice saying what you want before you make the call. To assist you in planning your one-minute introduction, use the following as a guideline:
Hello [insert person's name], my name is [your name here] and I was given your name by [insert person's name] who encouraged me to call you. I'm a student at Penn State and have been considering my plans for after graduation and one of the career fields I am interested in [insert career field].

Given your success in [insert career field] at [insert company name], I was wondering if you would be able to meet with me to provide some advice and guidance. I have been researching the field and learned that [insert some key facts to demonstrate your knowledge]. I would appreciate a chance to ask you some questions as I am interested in learning from your personal perspective.

I will be in town during break and was hoping we could get together. Would it be possible to set a meeting at this time? OR Is there a time convenient for you during which we can talk for about 30 minutes by phone?

Of course your individual situation will be unique—simply adjust the outline above to fit and you will be ready to make the call. First, remember it may be helpful to practice—so make the first call to a friend and ask for feedback on how your one-minute introduction sounded.

Tips on How to Conduct a Successful Interview

- Prepare ahead of time.
- Write out questions and don't be afraid to refer to them. Keep the yes/no questions to a minimum; you want to stimulate discussion rather than receive a series of short answers.
- Start the interview centered on the person you're interviewing, with questions such as “How did you become interested in this line of work?” and “What has been your career path in getting to where you are today?”
- Never start with “Tell me about your job.” This is such a broad question that the person usually doesn’t know where to begin. A more focused question, such as “What do you do during a typical workday?” helps focus the answer.
- Follow up general responses, such as “I handle personnel disputes,” with requests for examples so you get more specific information and aren’t later left guessing what the person meant.
- Take notes. You’ll be surprised how much you will forget!
- Ask for a tour of the building and examples of the person’s work. Take note of the work environment, ways people communicate, the dress, etc.
- If you have a resume, take it with you as it can be an effective method of showing the person your background. You can get advice on how to improve your resume and what you need to enhance your skills and experiences. Don’t bring it with the intention of getting a job with it.
- Be yourself—conversational and amiable—to make this an enjoyable experience.

After the Interview
Take some time to think about what you learned, your positive and negative impressions, the requirements of the job, and your interests. Remember, work environments and jobs differ tremendously from one place to another so you need to avoid forming an opinion about the entire field based on only one person's opinion and job description. Continue to seek out people in the field to meet with to expand on what you have gained from this interaction and how the knowledge fits with your career goals.

Some Suggested Questions About the Person:

- What is your educational background?
- How did you get started in this field?
- How did you get to where you are today? What are your future career plans?
- What jobs did you have previous to this?
- What best prepared you for this job?

About the Job Itself:

- What do you do during a typical workday?
- What do you like most or find most interesting about your work? What do you like least about your job?
- What kinds of problems do you face? What do you find most difficult?
- What skills or abilities do you find most important in your work?
- What other career areas do you feel are related to your work?

About the Career Field:

- What are the basic prerequisites for jobs in this field? May I read job descriptions and specifications for some of the positions in this field?
- What is the typical work environment like for a person in this career area?
- What entry-level jobs qualify one for this field?
- What does the step or position above the one you hold now involve? How long does it usually take to move from one step to the next in this career path?
- Are there other areas of this field to which people in it may be transferred? What are they?

About Your Career Planning:

- How suited is my background for this field (education, interests, experiences, personality)?
- Would you recommend any further courses or extracurricular activities to help prepare me for this field or make me more marketable? Are there professional organizations you would suggest I join?
- Can you name a relevant trade journal or magazine you would recommend I review to learn more about the field?
- Where would I find position announcements in this field? In the newspaper, journals, or websites (which ones)? By word-of-mouth who spreads the word? By the personnel office (how and where)?
- Do you have any suggestions of other people doing this kind of work with whom I could talk?
- May I please mention that you referred me to this person?
- Do you have any other advice or suggestions?

Since people expect students to be looking for employment, they may assume you are calling to ask about a job. They may indicate that there are no openings at their company or that they are not in charge of hiring. Make sure to stress that you are not asking for a job interview and reiterate your interest in gaining occupational information.

People to contact:

Questions I'd like to ask:

8 CAREER GUIDE

http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/ 9
**Network Your Way Through College and Beyond**

**What is Networking?**
- Developing relationships or contacts
- Building partnerships that support you while you map out your career goals
- Sharing information
- Ongoing and reciprocal in nature

**What It Isn’t**
- A process of making cold-calls
- Using people to get jobs

**Why Bother?**
- Networking is not just about who you know but who knows you; you already have contacts who can become the basis for your network.
- Networking can build your base of contacts for future reference and provide a support network as you explore and pursue career goals.
- A single personal connection can lead to multiple opportunities for professional and personal growth, from job leads to lasting friendships.
- Networking helps you explore new career options and can help you keep up with changes in your field.

**How to Network Effectively**

**Ideally, networking starts long before a job or internship search. Contacts are not only relatives and friends, but also your neighbors, former high school and college classmates, Penn State faculty and staff members, and Penn State alumni. For those of you who have been working or interning, other contacts can include current and former co-workers and supervisors. In essence you are already networking through your daily interactions with others. When looking to expand beyond your existing network, consider these steps:**

1. **Establish Your Goal**
   - Before contacting anyone, decide on what kind of information or assistance you would like and can expect from the people you meet. For instance:
     - Information on a career
     - Referrals to specific job openings
     - Advice on the best strategies to break into a career
     - A secondary contact

2. **Do Your Research**
   - Interviewing and networking conversations are less stressful if you are prepared. By doing this, you will feel more confident, you’ll not be at a loss for words, and you will make a positive impression.
     - Make sure you do your homework on a company before you meet with one of its employees.
     - Before you meet with someone make sure you know what questions you’d like to ask (see the Informational Interviewing article on page 8 for ideas).
     - Remember, the more prepared you are, the more productive the networking experience.

3. **Make Contact**
   - When you contact someone, give them some information about you. For example, let them know that you’ll be graduating soon, what your specific skills are, and the type of position/organization that you are seeking.
   - During your conversation you might:
     - Ask for information and advice for someone seeking to enter their field or find employment with their organization.
     - Seek suggestions for other colleagues to talk to who have a connection to the industry or position that you are seeking.
     - Ask them if they may use their name as a referral.
     - Offer to send them a copy of your resume and ask them to keep you in mind if they should hear of any openings.

4. **Send a Thank-you Note or Email**
   - The person that you have spoken with has given you their time, a valuable resource. Express your appreciation for the meeting or interview with a note of thanks and include any actions that you will take as a result of the meeting. This step should not be overlooked; it is one tangible way that you’ll begin to build your network of contacts.

5. **Develop a Contacts File**
   - Using a database or index cards, develop a contacts file (see page 11) in which you maintain all pertinent information about that individual. Record information from your meeting with that person as well as your anticipated next action. Through this step, you are building your relationships with contacts who might be able to help with future career opportunities.

6. **Set Goals for Ongoing Networking & Follow-Up**
   - The Penn State Alumni Association offers many opportunities to connect with alumni including LionLink and Nittany Networking Events in key cities. Think about how many people you will try to call in one week, how many meetings you should attempt to schedule, and how many networking events you’ll attend. As part of your goal setting, make sure that you follow up with existing contacts. Be sure to let your initial contacts know of the outcomes of your meetings. In other words, keep your contacts informed about your progress and any success you have had.

7. **Always Reciprocate**
   - When you ask others for help, be prepared to return the favor.

**Successful Networkers Are:**
- Open-minded and willing to meet new people
- Prepared and persistent
- Informed and up-to-date on current events (i.e., news, industry, etc.)
- Respectful of everyone they meet and thank their contacts for their time
- Able to set clear, realistic, and achievable goals
- Not afraid to ask for the information they need

**Sample Contacts File Entry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Person:</th>
<th>_____</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization:</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>_____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred Phone Number:</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Contacted:</td>
<td>/ / by phone by email in person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Thank You Sent:</td>
<td>/ /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Recommended Contacts:</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I’m Ready, How Do I Find Contacts?**
- Use LionLink - a database of alumni who have volunteered their time to serve as a networking resource for students and other alumni, ready to answer questions about what they do and where they work, and serve as a career resource. For more information on LionLink, please visit studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/Alumni/LionLink.shtml or email lionlink@psu.edu.
- Engage professionals with LinkedIn and/or other social media. Remember to keep your profile and interactions professional. Any information that is posted is fair game for employers and the public at large to view.
- Attend information sessions hosted by various organizations (see page 40).
- Watch for events featuring guest speakers within certain fields through your academic department, Career Services or student organizations, etc.
Maximize Your Online Job Search with a LinkedIn Profile

Key Profile Components

Experience
List all work experiences, including part-time, along with what you accomplished during each. If you have them, photos or examples of projects are a great addition.

Photo
A plain background with business attire makes you look professional and prepared.

Education
Start with the college experience that is most recent. High school should not be listed if you’re a junior or senior seeking a professional position.

Volunteer
Volunteer work is just as important! Make sure to include any time you have dedicated to a cause important to you.

Summary
Describe what you are looking for right away.

Recommendations
Ask managers, professors, or classmates who have worked with you closely to write a recommendation. This adds credibility to your skills and strengths.

Courses
List any course you have taken that applies to the type of job that you are seeking.

Organizations
Make sure to include any leadership positions you may have held and indicate what you’ve done in each organization.

Skills & Endorsements
Add at least 5 key skills - your connections can endorse you for the things you do best.

Creating Your Online Presence

Setting up an Account
The first and easiest step to begin creating your online presence is to create accounts on the social networking sites that you think will be beneficial in showcasing your past experiences and skills. Some of the most popular social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, can definitely be valuable, but blogs and professional websites, such as LinkedIn, are where employers really look for you to showcase your abilities.

Start Connecting
• This profile represents you. Check for typos first!
• Only connect to people who are in professional positions that you think may benefit you or whom you can benefit.
• Join groups that interest you based on your career path or other causes you support. Contribute to conversations to establish yourself as an expert in your field.
• Follow companies in which you are interested and stay up to date with the news they share. You will see any jobs posted by companies you follow in your updates.
• The jobs tab gives you the ability to search for jobs based on criteria that you specify.

Managing Your Online Presence

Social networking sites are doing much more these days than connecting people over the internet. According to the Jobvite 2014 Social Recruiting Survey, 83% of recruiters use or plan to use social media in their recruitment efforts. Having a noticeable presence can put you ahead of the rest in your job searches, but can also ruin your chances of getting a job if what they find is damaging to your reputation.

Employers might look at your social networking sites for many different reasons. When they check your profiles, it can be a reminder of all of the positions you’ve held and how qualified you are as long as you create an effective social media presence.

Why LinkedIn?
• It can act as a digital resume.
• It is a powerful tool for researching companies, contacting professionals in a specific field, and marketing your skills and goals.
• It is the likely first place an employer will visit to learn about a potential candidate.

Effective Using Social Networking Sites
So now that you have all of your social networking accounts set up, what do you do with them? The answer is simple: interact with different groups, and professionals that are in the field you are interested in. The easiest way to do this is to “like” their pages on Facebook or follow their accounts on Twitter or LinkedIn. This is an easy way to stay updated with all of the company’s news.

A lot of companies utilize social media to interact with their consumers. When this happens, take advantage of it! Tweet back your response, post on their wall, or like their updates. If you ever land an interview with the company, you will have plenty to talk about with them. Joining groups on LinkedIn that pertain to your field of interest is a great way to network online. Professionals in the field will often

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post updates and job or internship postings to the group. Be sure to join Penn State Career Connec-
tion on LinkedIn, too, where you can connect with employers in a meaningful way, and broaden your knowledge of career fields and em-
ployment trends.

Protecting your Online Presence
No matter how many social net-
works you belong to and how
much experience you post on your
profiles, you will lose many oppor-
tunities if the material you post on-
line is inappropriate. Many times,
employers will check the social
media profiles of potential em-
ployees or interns as a way to judge
their character. If you're posting
complaints about how much you
hate your current job and boss, the
employers will check the social
network for evidence of your atti-
dude towards their organization.

You should also do an online
search of your name often to see
what comes up. If you don't like
what you find, then start to make
the changes necessary on your
social media sites. Consider setting
up alerts to notify you when any-
thing about you is posted online.
Always scan your pictures, posts
and conversations that you have
with people on every social media
platform to make sure the right
messages are being sent about your
character. If you ever doubt any-
thing, delete it or un-tag yourself.

Don't say anything online you
don't want anyone to know. Your
friends may like your photos, but a future employer may not.

Privacy Settings
The key to protecting your online
profiles is to understand how to
use each site's privacy settings.
Spend sufficient time on each
site learning how to best protect
yourself from people outside your
immediate circle. Sites are always
changing and that includes the pri-
vacy settings. Check often to make
sure that when you search yourself
as a stranger, you like what you see.

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working sites you belong to and how
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vacy settings. Check often to make
sure that when you search yourself
as a stranger, you like what you see.

In these situations, you can de-
velop skills transferable to profes-
sional careers after college. For
example, a server could benefit
from acquiring experience in train-
ing other employees in a restaurant
or customer service.

Explore Undergraduate Research Opportunities
Penn State offers a variety of
opportunities for undergraduate
students to participate in research
projects. These experiences al-
low you to work with faculty and
staff in your area of interest, build
specific skills, and further explore
your career options. Check with an
advisor in your academic depart-
ment to see what type of research is
being conducted or go to under-
gradresearch.psu.edu to review
projects listed by academic college
and department. If you are consid-
ering graduate school, helping out
in a lab is a great way to get intro-
duced to what may be expected
when you continue your educa-
tion. You will gain a deeper under-
standing of the research process, as
well as knowledge of cutting edge
developments within your field.

Apply for Experiential Internships or Cooperative
Education
Internships are intended to provide professional experience related to

Way to Gain Experience
Take a Class
One easy way to get a feel for a
career area is to take an academic
course that will give an overview
of the field. If you think that you
might be interested in a business
career, consider taking a course in
accounting, finance, marketing,
etc. If you think you'd like to do hu-
man service work, enroll in some
health and human development,
psychology, or sociology courses.
The more you get involved in the
course through individual projects,
group work, and research papers,
the more you will gain.

Study Abroad
While most students consider
study abroad an exciting way to in-
corporate travel into an academic
program, it's also a great way to
gain experience. Think of the skills
you may learn: navigating a foreign
country complete with new cur-
rency and cultural ideals, a sense
of independence as you explore
on your own thousands of miles
away from home, an appreciation
of diversity as you are challenged
to integrate your background and
upbringing with those from other
cultures, and the initiative to plan
and execute such a significant event.

Participate in Extracurricular Activities
The activities you engage in out-
side of your academic coursework
may be more than just fun. They
are an excellent way to explore your
career-related interests and

develop many skills you will be
able to transfer later to any job. If
you think you may be interested in
working with children, the elderly,
a housing authority, etc., check
out the volunteer options available
in your community. If newspaper
writing is a possible career choice,
consider joining the staff of your
campus newspaper. If you like to
lead people and projects, consider
gaining experience with student gov-
ernment. Check out clubs.psu.edu
for a complete listing of student
organizations. There are hundreds
of extracurricular activities in
which you can become involved.
Additionally, the contributions
you make to an activity, whether it
is a leading meetings, chairing a
committee, developing a project,
recruiting new members, or orga-
nizing a conference, can be related
to many potential future employ-
ment goals.

Volunteer
Many nonprofit organizations will
enthusiastically accept the services
of an industrious, cheerful, and
interested volunteer. Becoming a
volunteer shows a potential em-
ployer that you have initiative and
a commitment to your community.
Find organizations that you can
relate to – connecting through per-
sonal values or professional aspira-
tions – and give it your all. Not only
will you gain experience, you will
see what type of research is
being conducted or go to under-
gradresearch.psu.edu to review
projects listed by academic college
and department. If you are consid-
ering graduate school, helping out
in a lab is a great way to get intro-
duced to what may be expected
when you continue your educa-
tion. You will gain a deeper under-
standing of the research process, as
well as knowledge of cutting edge
developments within your field.

Gain Experience and Develop
Marketable Skills

Ways to Gain Experience

Consider all of your social media accounts and complete
the following checklist:

All of my profile pictures are appropriate?.........................................................Yes □ No □

All of the appropriate privacy settings are turned on?.................................Yes □ No □

I would not be embarrassed if a recruiter looked at my profiles?...............Yes □ No □

When I search for my name online, no personal information or
inappropriate content is brought up?........................................Yes □ No □

My friends do not have any inappropriate pictures of me
posted online?.........................................................................................Yes □ No □

My friends have not posted anything inappropriate on my profiles?........Yes □ No □
Resumes

Resumes often serve as your initial contact with employers and are the most critical item in determining whether or not you will obtain an interview. It is a brief advertisement of your skills, knowledge, and relevant experience. If you are seeking positions across industries, you may need to have several versions of your resume specific to each type of job you are seeking.

Ideally, your resume should emphasize your strong points while expressing your uniqueness and individuality. Therefore, you should present yourself clearly, succinctly, and confidently. Use the suggestions here to develop your resume and consult the samples provided to gather ideas. Do not forget to format your cover letter to pair with your resume (see page 26).

Typically, employers spend less than 15 seconds reviewing your resume before making the decision to consider you for an interview.

Classes related to my areas of interest:

Organizations I am in or would like to join:

Other opportunities I’d like to explore:

Career Planning Courses

Various career development courses are offered across the Penn State system, such as:

- Effective Career Decision-Making (CN ED 100)
- Preparation for Career Management (B A 420)
- Job Search Skills and Strategies for Educators (CN ED 303)
- Job Search Skills and Strategies for Technical Careers (AG 100/SC 101)
- Job Search Skills and Strategies for Non-Technical Careers (LA 401)

Topics include selecting an academic major, determining career goals, identifying potential employers, formulating effective job search strategies, preparing a resume, and improving interview techniques. Please consult the Schedule of Courses at schedule.psu.edu for availability by campus and semester.
Objective
• One or two concise, easy-to-read statements focusing on the type of position you are seeking, the skills you want to utilize, and/or the tasks in which you want to become involved.
• Avoid clichés or jargon, such as “To contribute to the profitability of an employer” or “A challenging position offering opportunity for growth and advancement.”

Education
• List degrees in reverse chronological order with the most recent first. Keep the information easy to scan.
• You may want to include details relevant to the job you are seeking, such as courses, special projects, research, or both.
• Most employers expect to see your official University transcript, which you may include a statement regarding your true potential.

Experience
• Give details of your accomplishments and responsibilities rather than a general list of duties. Numbers and/or make strong statements and can enhance credibility; these numbers can show volume, percentages and dollar amounts.
• Do not be discouraged if you have never had employment in your field. Instead, focus on your strengths, skills, and accomplishments.
• Summer and/or part-time work experiences can demonstrate skill sets that you have developed, even if not directly related to your career goals.

Activity
• List the most relevant activities and offices held first. Include college, community, professional, and, occasionally, outstanding high school activities.
• Consider adding brief explanatory details of the position and your accomplishments.
• Include hobbies and interests only if they are relevant to the job objective or if they reveal characteristics important to the job.
• This section can add individuality and flavor to your resume, so you may want to include unusual or interesting items.

Skills
• Technology-based or computer skills, foreign language knowledge, and other field-specific skill sets and certifications are appropriate to include.

Honors/Awards
• Include only if you have several honors.
• If you have only one or two honors, you can include them in a combined section along with your activities.

Compare this resume to the one on the facing page. Notice how the type of experience highlighted can change as a student gains more professional experience.
The resumes shown on the following pages are examples of different ways quality resumes have been written. Additional resume examples are located on our website (studentaffairs.psu.edu/career) and in the Career Information Center (see page 7).

Length
• One page is the most common length because most students lack sufficient experience for two pages. Individuals with added experience and/or degrees may need a two-page resume to present relevant details adequately.
• Resume length may also vary by career field. Consult with professionals in your field and/or a Career Counselor to discuss the resume length best for your situation.

Margins
• One inch margins all around are recommended to keep your resume from looking cluttered or cramped.
• Half inch margins may be acceptable if necessary, but no smaller.

Font
• Use a plain, readable typeface, such as Arial or Times New Roman.
• Font size should be between 10 and 12 points.
• Headings and your name may be emphasized by using a larger font size.
• Asterisks, bullets, underlining, boldface type, and italics should be used only to make the document easier to read.

Spacing
• Use consistent spacing throughout your resume for a pleasing presentation.
• Bullet points should be single-spaced.

• Allow enough space between headings to show that a new section has begun.

Layout
• Pre-formatted templates are easy to spot and allow little room for uniqueness.
• Starting with a blank document offers greater flexibility and more effective space usage on the page.
• Use a table or tab stops to help organize information in a visually pleasing manner.

Bullet Points
• Each bullet should start with an action verb (see page 22) and be no more than 1-2 lines long.
• Use up to 5-6 bullets to describe each listed experience.
• Describe duties involved in various positions or highlight skills and qualities that you developed that are related to the position you would like to obtain.

Type of paper
• A resume prepared with a quality laser printer can be very effective.
• Use quality paper; a white or off-white shade is generally preferred.

Proofread
• Proofread your resume several times, and then have a friend or Career Counselor proofread it again.
• A mistake on your resume will leave a poor first impression with an employer.

Chronological Format
Present education and work experience in reverse chronological order, describing responsibilities and achievements under each entry. This is the most appropriate format if you have experience directly related to your career goal.

Functional Format
Your experience is explained under major skill headings, while job titles, employers, and dates are listed separately. This type of resume is especially useful when your degree or work experiences are not directly related to your career objective.

Combination Format
In many instances, the combination of both the chronological and the functional formats may be the most effective. This is especially the case when some past experiences are more directly related to future goals than others. This format allows for experiences to be separated into different categories—related and unrelated—making the strongest impact by placing the most related experiences first, regardless of the dates during which the experiences took place.

As a first-year student or sophomore, it is appropriate to include information from your high school years on a resume. However, as you continue to grow professionally and gain experiences that demonstrate increasing relevance to a particular career field, you may begin to omit items that are outdated or that no longer effectively highlight your current abilities. Typically, it is recommended that information from high school years be omitted from your professional resume by the time you begin your junior year at Penn State.
RESUMES & COVER LETTERS

Action Word List:

Achieved  Compared  Enforced  Introduced  Partnered  Sold
Administered  Completed  Enhanced  Performed  Strategic
Advised  Composed  Established  Planned  Streamlined
Advocated  Composed  Estimated  Prepared  Strengthened
Allocated  Conducted  Evaluated  Presented  Studied
Analyzed  Consulted  Examined  Learned  Prioritized  Supported
Anticipated  Contributed  Exceeded  Managed  Proposed  Targeted
Applied  Converted  Expanded  Mastered  Projected  Taught
Approved  Coordinated  Facilitated  Mediated  Provided  Team with
Arranged  Counseled  Financed  Maximized  Promoted  Tested
Assessed  Created  Formulated  Mediated  Proposed  Trained
Assisted  Decided  Fostered  Mentored  Raised  Upgraded
Attained  Defined Founded  Met  Received  Validated
Audited  Delegated  Gained  Minimalized  Ran  Visualized
Balanced  Demonstrated  Generated  Modified  Received  Wrote
Briefed  Designed  Guided  Monitored  Recommended  Won
Budgeted  Developed  Helped  Negotiated  Reduced  Won
Built  Devised  Identified  Observed  Reorganized  Written
Calculated  Diagnosed  Implemented  Offered  Reviewed
Cared  Directed  Improved  Operated  Revised
Coach  Coached  Documented  Organized  Reviewed
Collaborated  Drafted  Initiated  Overcame  Revised
Completed  Collected  Edited  Overseen Screened
Concluded  Comforted  Edited  Overtook  Served
Communicated  Enforced  Interpreted  Participated  Served

References

- Most organizations will not expect references on your resume.
- You may want to prepare a list of references on a separate page formatted to match your resume for use when employers request references.
- Usually, three to five references are appropriate. Consider individuals familiar with your academic achievements, leadership and teamwork skills, and/or your work habits.
- Include each reference’s name, title, organization, mailing address, phone number, and email address.
- You should always seek prior approval from individuals you plan to list as references.

Anita Job
307 Maple Farm, Springfield, VA 12345
(123) 456-7890 x123

OBJECTIVE

To obtain a full-time public relations position in either the nonprofit or government industry

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Communications, May 2015 from St. Edward’s University, Austin, TX

MAJOR GRADES: 3.3, Grad GPA: 3.1

WORK EXPERIENCE

Public Relations Intern, October 2015
2015 Transportation Industry, Cherry Hill, NJ

- Managed and supervised government relations program, including the management and coordination of team activities conducted by the Federal Highway Administration.
- Completed all LIAF government relations activities.

SKILLS

- Experience in contract research program including writing proposals, collecting data, managing financial resources, and preparing reports.
- Served as Associate Editor of the LIAF quarterly newsletter, which is distributed to various local governments and legislative members.

ACTIVITIES

- Internship with the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Office of the Federal Highway Administration.
- Participated in the LIAF Executive Leadership Academy.
- Attended the LIAF Annual Conference.

PROJECTS

- Coordinated the implementation of a new program to improve the efficiency of local transportation systems.
- Assisted in developing and implementing new policies and procedures to improve local transportation systems.

PROJECTS

- Developed and implemented a new program to improve the efficiency of local transportation systems.
- Assisted in developing and implementing new policies and procedures to improve local transportation systems.

ACTIVITIES

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PROJECTS

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At any point in the job or graduate school application process, you may be asked to provide professional or personal references. These references may be interviewed by phone or email or asked to provide a letter of recommendation as an endorsement of your capacity to succeed as a graduate student or emerging professional within your field. The names you choose to provide can have a strong impact on your candidacy and the importance of this decision should not be overlooked.

Who Should I Ask to Be a Reference? When considering your options for references, it is important to think about the context in which the person knows you. References that are most informative and helpful are those who know different aspects of your work and who are willing to support your candidacy enthusiastically and knowledgeably.

Consider asking those who have observed you in settings similar to the position you are applying for, or who understand your knowledge base in an area that is relevant to the position or graduate program.

Examples of potential references include:
- Faculty members
- Employment supervisors (current and previous)
- Advisors for extracurricular activities such as clubs, organizations, sororities, and fraternities
- Colleagues with whom you have worked closely

Typically, you would not ask family or friends to serve as a reference for you unless you are asked to provide a character reference. In those instances, it may be more appropriate to ask a coach or volunteer leader.

How Many References Should I Provide? Usually, three to five references are appropriate. Think about the combination of people you are providing and how they know you to ensure a diverse representation of your experiences. You want each reference to be able to highlight the skills and abilities that are most relevant to the position or program to which you have applied.

It is not a bad idea to let the reference know why you have applied. They may ask you to provide information about the graduate program you are interviewing for.

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Cover Letters

1. Address by name and title of the individual with the power to hire you, if at all possible. Try to avoid sir, madam, or to whom it may concern.
2. Adapt the letter carefully to specific details of the job opportunity.
3. Open with an idea that captures the attention of the prospective employer so that the letter and resume are considered worth reading.
4. Highlight and draw attention to the points in your resume that uniquely qualify you for the position.
5. Close your letter with a request for an interview.
6. Use a business letter format and maintain a professional tone.
7. Special attention should be given to grammar, spelling, and neatness. The cover letter should represent your very best efforts. It may be beneficial to have a friend, relative, or a Career Counselor review your letter prior to sending it to an employer.

Each cover letter should be tailored to the organization to which you are applying. Your letter should not read as if you just filled in the blanks.

Cover Letter Sample - Internship

101 Nittany Pike
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702

Dear Ms. Ziner:

To succeed in advertising, one must possess a flair for creativity, the ability to work effectively with clients and associates, initiative, and perseverance. Through this letter I would like to demonstrate such qualities and express an interest in an Account Services internship with Advertising, Inc. When I read the announcement posted to my department’s listserve, I was immediately drawn to the opportunity for professional development that this position would allow in regard to client relations and media placements.

I have enclosed a resume for your review, which outlines my experience in the field of advertising and promotion. As an advertising salesperson for my local newspaper, I work successfully with a variety of clients and with the media in designing and arranging advertisements. My responsibilities in this position enhanced my skills in writing, design, promotion, marketing, and follow-through. I quickly learned to identify appropriate markets and to promote the newspaper as an effective medium to reach those markets.

Much of my success is due to my customer orientation, my skills in identifying client needs, and in marketing the services of my employer. I am a self-starter, persistent, and possess the ability to learn quickly. I feel these skills and experiences would be a strong addition to your firm and am excited about the prospect of putting them to work for you.

I hope you agree that my qualifications seem to be a match for this internship. If so, I would appreciate the opportunity for an interview. I look forward to speaking with you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best Regards,

Mark E. University

This candidate demonstrates an understanding of the internship requirements and is effective at relating specific details about his accomplishments and skills to the employer’s needs.
2014 Pittsburgh Pike
Fayette, PA 15438

Date

James Donavan
HR Administrator
Xyntek, Inc.
301 Oxford Valley Rd.
Monroeville, PA 15146

Dear Mr. Donavan,

After reading your brochure and researching Xyntek, Inc., I became quite interested in possible employment in IT software and systems consulting. I am submitting this letter in application for this position.

I have a great deal of experience using several programming languages, including SQL, ORACLE, JavaScript, HTML, CSS and XML. In addition, I have worked with jQuery and Microsoft .NET.

In my internship at XYZ Corporation I was part of a team responsible for the design, development and production of database candidate processing systems for their human resources department. My specific role involved testing and trouble-shooting databases as they were developed. This has proven very successful for XYZ and has increased efficiency of the recruiting process for the HR administrators. I've also been web page editing on contract. In a project for the Fayette Federal Credit Union, I developed an internal search engine and an online loan application, and kept their web page up to date and added new features as needed.

I am an enthusiastic hard worker with the desire to learn many new concepts and skills. I would enjoy applying my skills and talents to a position with Xyntek, Inc. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time.

Cordially,

Mary E. Smith

---

Note that this candidate refers to the research she's done on the company and expresses a sincere interest. She also points out the amount and types of her relevant experiences in the field.

321 Beaver Avenue
State College, PA 16801

Date

Terra Justice
Marketing Director, XYZ Company
54 Shady Lane
Yourtown, Anystate 54321

Dear Ms. Justice,

Sustainability has long been a passion of mine. As I complete my senior year at Penn State, my interest in working for an organization that shares my passion has become paramount. Recognizing the need to preserve natural resources and look for sustainable business practices is something in which all companies should be engaging. I was excited to learn of the ways that XYZ Company has been making strides to become a nationally recognized green organization within the retail industry. As I look to the future and consider where I would like to begin my career after college, the XYZ Company seems like the perfect fit.

Throughout my time at Penn State, I have been involved in numerous student organizations that reflect my professional interests. As early as my freshman year, I was representing green initiatives as an EcoRep within my residence hall. I went on to become an active member of EcoAction, where I helped to educate students about sustainability through events and informational workshops. I put theory into practice through my involvement in the Penn State Marketing Association, by encouraging more electronic communication, less printing, and a more conscious effort to be mindful of environmental concerns. Due to my encouragement, PSMA took on a new client, working with them on how to market their green practices to enhance their customer base.

Academically, I pursued a minor in Environmental Inquiry, in addition to my major in Marketing. With a solid business background obtained through my coursework in the nationally ranked Smeal College of Business, I recognize that business is more than just the bottom line. It is about building and maintaining relationships; relationships that are founded on a common set of values.

I believe that XYZ Company and I share common values. This, coupled with my professional aptitude, would make me a respected employee within your Marketing department. During the week of March 15, I will be in your area and would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you further about any potential openings that you expect within the next few months. I will be graduating in May and could be available for work as early as June. I have attached my resume for your reference, which includes my contact information.

I appreciate your time and consideration, and look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Dawn Greenfield

---

Notice how this candidate relates her personal interests, abilities, and values to the type of organization that she would like to work for following graduation.
Thank-You Letter

1. As soon after the interview as possible, a letter should be sent to express your appreciation for the opportunity to present yourself.
2. Use the letter to express your continued interest in the position and organization. Add some details to your letter of things that impressed you during the interview. This is a nice way to personalize your letter and convey your interest more convincingly.
3. Supply any additional information that was requested at the time of the visit or interview.
4. It is acceptable to email your thank-you letter. Be sure it retains the degree of professionalism you would maintain in a hard copy letter.

Acceptance Letter

1. Be business-like but also tailor your letter to the specific employer so you look sincere and genuinely interested in the company and job. Never copy example letters.
2. Write to the person who wrote and/or interviewed you.
3. Thank the person and/or show your enthusiasm for the offer.
4. State what you are accepting.
5. Concisely, yet descriptively, give some details about what has impressed you about the company and/or interview.

When a rejection is received, special consideration should be given to your response. Don’t take a rejection letter as a definite NO! A demonstrated interest in the company and respectful letter may lead to further consideration for other positions as they become available.

1. Acknowledge receipt of the letter.
2. Thank the interviewer for considering your application, indicate that you are still interested in a position with the company, and give some specific information to illustrate what you like about the company, position, or both.

Rejection Letter

1. It is important to turn down a site visit or job offer graciously.
2. Write to the person who wrote you.
3. Thank them for the offer.
4. Briefly state that you are declining and why (don’t get too personal).

1234 College Ave.
Reading, PA 19607

Date

William Johnson
LMO Pharmaceutical Company
9183 Short Hills Road
Philadelphia, PA 19111

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview with you on Friday, October 23. The Account Representative position we discussed is a wonderful opportunity for which I feel uniquely qualified.

As we discussed, my background in both the sciences and business will enable me to interact effectively with physicians and pharmacists. Not only am I able to discuss the technical aspects of your products, I understand marketing techniques and the importance of the bottom line.

If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or email. Again, thank you for meeting with me. I look forward to speaking with you again soon.

Sincerely,

Martin A. Student

1001 Progress Avenue
Hazleton, PA 18201

Date

Harold Sherman
XYZ Corporation
678 5th Avenue
Albany, NY 12208

Dear Mr. Sherman:

Thank you for your recent offer of employment as a management trainee with XYZ Corporation. I am pleased to accept this offer. The position sounds quite challenging, particularly the 12 month rotation among your regional plants. I am looking forward to this challenge and believe I will be successful at meeting it.

I understand that your offer involves a starting date of June 6, 20XX. I also understand that the salary offered is $43,500, plus benefits as discussed at my most recent interview. I will contact you within the next several weeks to discuss travel and moving details as you requested.

Once again, thank you for your offer. I am excited about becoming part of the XYZ Corporation team.

Sincerely,

Jane C. Doe
Searching For A Job or Internship

Key Steps
Whatever your goal, you need to:
1. Know what you want to do and the skills you bring.
2. Identify and target the employers that have what you want.
3. Develop effective marketing materials: resumes, cover letters, and interview skills.
4. Secure and successfully engage in the interview process.
5. Evaluate and accept (and often decline) your offers.

Steps 1 & 2
The most important steps in the job search are identifying what kind of job you want, what you have to offer, and finding the employers that offer the opportunities you are targeting. Employers are most interested in individuals who have focused their career interests. Therefore it is important to:
• Identify and be prepared to discuss your interests, skills, experiences, knowledge, and attributes.
• Identify and research employers that have the type of positions and environment that fit your interests.

Steps 3 & 4
Effectively promoting your skills and experiences will catch the attention of employers. Your communications might take the form of resumes or cover letters, informational interviews, networking, meeting at a career fair, or telephone calls. You must express why you are interested in that particular employer and position and why you believe you are qualified for the job.

Step 5
As you can see, the job search process involves a great deal of thought and time to eventually have offers to consider. Deciding on the best offer for you is an important final step and often involves sensitive communications and some negotiating.

Repeat Steps 1-5
For even highly qualified people, rejection and disappointment are part of the job search process. You may need to reassess your job objectives. Are they focused enough? Are you following up on leads? Are your resumes and cover letters tailored to the positions you are applying for? Are your interview skills strong enough? You may also need to look at the amount of time you are spending on job search activities to determine if you are doing enough.

Don’t get caught without experience.
Through internships or other experiential opportunities, you will benefit enormously from getting real world work exposure. Employers expect you to supplement your academic background with work experience. You also get the chance to develop contacts in your chosen career. The people in your network can be valuable for advice, information, and job leads. Remember to check with your academic college about internship possibilities.

Search Methods

There are many ways to look for job opportunities. The most successful job search plan is one in which a variety of search strategies are used. Presented below are some of the most popular strategies for the job search as well as benefits, challenges, and tips.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY/TOOLS</th>
<th>BENEFITS</th>
<th>CHALLENGES</th>
<th>TIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAREER FAIRS</td>
<td>Aligned career fairs sponsored by Career Services and academic colleges</td>
<td>Opportunity to meet with a number of recruiters in person and in one location; Build networking contacts</td>
<td>Not all fields and areas of study are equally represented; Students with very specific career goals may benefit from seeking field-specific or geography-specific fairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ON-CAMPUS INTERVIEWING</td>
<td>Primary way in which companies recruit for business and technical positions; Employers are specifically seeking Penn State students to fill employment openings</td>
<td>Not all industries use on-campus interviewing as a recruitment strategy</td>
<td>Check job listings on a weekly basis paying close attention to deadlines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINTY LOGO CAREER NETWORK</td>
<td>Update your personal and academic information, upload a resume, search for job postings and leads or prospects postings, filed details on information sessions, and more.</td>
<td>Access to a wide variety of jobs posted by employers who are not coming on campus to interview</td>
<td>Check job postings regularly as they come in on a daily or weekly basis. Be sure to also check any discipline-specific job posting site your college may provide, such as SmalConn or Career.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NETWORKING</td>
<td>Talk to everyone you know to develop a list of contacts, Ask for information on jobs and companies, and circulate your resume.</td>
<td>One of the top job search strategies to identify potential job opportunities and learn more about a position, company, or industry</td>
<td>Takes time and effort to build your network; Requires skill in organizing contacts and following through on recommendations received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TARGETED SEARCH</td>
<td>Identify the types of organizations you would like to work for, develop a targeted list, and research companies</td>
<td>Enables you to be more proactive and take charge of your search, instead of waiting for companies to post positions</td>
<td>Takes time to research and tailor your resume and cover letter to the organization and the position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERNET</td>
<td>Scan job openings on various job search and employer websites.</td>
<td>May help you identify types of positions available</td>
<td>Overwhelmed number of sites and positions to sift through. May not receive responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS</td>
<td>Research professional associations related to your career interests, as most provide a “member opportunity” section on their website</td>
<td>A source of networking information and career opportunities, Build contacts with individuals who share your professional interests</td>
<td>Entry-level positions may be limited; May need to belong to association to access job postings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES</td>
<td>Employers offer experiences in your career areas</td>
<td>Helpful in identifying local businesses and employment opportunities</td>
<td>May have fees associated with the employment services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Avoiding Scams while Searching for Jobs and Internships

Enter with Caution: Tips for Avoiding Job Posting Scams

• Do not give your personal bank account, PayPal account, or credit card numbers to a new employer.
• Do not agree to have funds or paychecks direct deposited into any of your accounts by a new employer. You should know them first. Most employers give the option of direct deposit or a paycheck. Make these arrangements during your first day or week of actual employment, not before.
• Do not forward, transfer, send by courier (i.e., FedEx, UPS), or wire any money to any employer, or on behalf of any employer, using your personal account(s).
• Do not transfer money and retain a portion for payment.
• Do not respond to suspicious and/or “too good to be true” unsolicited job emails.
• In general, applicants do not pay a fee to obtain a job. There are some rare exceptions, so be careful and consult with a Career Services professional first.
• Do not pay to participate in high priced international internships. Not only are these internships unpaid, but the students must pay the organization to intern with them.
• Stay away from high-pressure sales pitches that require you to pay now or risk losing out on an opportunity.

Warning: Signs of a Possible Scam

• “Employer” asks you to generate “leads” as part of the interview process.
• Emails sent to you contain poor spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
• “Employer” asks you to generate “leads” as part of your interview.
• Close all bank accounts at the bank(s) where transactions were made related to the scam.
• Order a credit report from all three credit bureaus every 2 to 3 months. Look for unusual activity.
• Victims of payment-forwarding scams should contact their local Secret Service field agent. The Secret Service handles complaints of international fraud.
• Fraud victims should file a police report with local law enforcement officials.
• Victims should report the company name, the job posting, and all contact names to the job site where the scam was posted.
• Victims should permanently close all email addresses that were associated with the job fraud where possible.
• Notify Career Services.

Warning: Signs of a Possible Scam

To have a successful online job search:

• network through blogs and social networking sites.
• check employer sites for job postings.
• research and target employers.
• post an online-friendly version of your resume to websites and use good judgment before you post.

Using Online Resources in Your Job Search

You can find a lot of information about job listings, salary statistics, employer information, and more online.

To have a successful online job search:

• post an online-friendly version of your resume to professional networking & job sites.
• research and target employers.
• check employer sites for job postings.
• network through blogs and social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.

Below is a list of several helpful career sites.

Nittany Lion Career Network (NLCN)

This easy-to-use database has many internship and full-time opportunities especially for Penn Staters. NLCN accounts have already been created for all registered Penn State students. Login to your account today and use the job search agent feature that sends you email updates with jobs that meet your skills and needs.

Also, be sure to check any discipline-specific job posting site that your academic college may provide, such as Compass, eCareer, Network Symplicity, or SmealConnect.

Career Information Center

Online Resources

Access major, internship, and career information from WetFeet, Vault, CareerBeam, What Can I Do With This Major?, and more.

Industry-Specific & Salary Information

Access industry-specific information on topics ranging from Consulting to Careers in Sports and access the latest starting salary information from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

Job Search Via Social Media

LinkedIn – Facebook – Twitter

Social media sites are excellent places to learn about careers and internships and cultivate a professional network. Recruiters are also using social media tools like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter to identify and connect with potential candidates.

If you choose to search for jobs on these networks, be aware that companies are using them to conduct background checks on applicants looking for jobs. They want to uncover questionable judgment, illegal activity, or other things that they consider to be red flags. Some companies even gain access to information that students might consider relatively private by asking interns who have strong campus connections to perform online background checks.

EXERCISE CAUTION: Recruiters report that students who use these sites to brag about drinking habits, illicit drug use, etc. are likely to hurt their chances of obtaining a job offer. Students who would never dream of bringing up such subjects in an interview or showing a recruiter risqué photographs sometimes do that very thing online, thinking that a company will never uncover this information. That’s a dangerous and incorrect assumption.

Investigate the privacy settings on social networking sites and use good judgment before you post.

Other Career Sites

www.quintcareers.com
www.simplyhired.com
www.collegesgrad.com
www.onedayonejob.com

See page 7 for more information on the resources available.

See page 13 for more tips on how to manage your online presence.

Avoiding Scams while Searching for Jobs and Internships

Enter with Caution: Tips for Avoiding Job Posting Scams

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• Do not agree to have funds or paychecks direct deposited into any of your accounts by a new employer. You should know them first. Most employers give the option of direct deposit or a paycheck. Make these arrangements during your first day or week of actual employment, not before.
• Do not forward, transfer, send by courier (i.e., FedEx, UPS), or wire any money to any employer, or on behalf of any employer, using your personal account(s).
• Do not transfer money and retain a portion for payment.
• Do not respond to suspicious and/or “too good to be true” unsolicited job emails.
• In general, applicants do not pay a fee to obtain a job. There are some rare exceptions, so be careful and consult with a Career Services professional first.
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• Notify Career Services.

Content adapted from How to Avoid Job Scams while Job Hunting – a publication of the Academic and Career Planning Center at Penn State Erie, The Behrend College.
Federal, state, and local government continue to offer a variety of opportunities to graduating students. Students from across all of Penn State's colleges and majors can find career connections within government agencies, departments, and settings. Government jobs offer many competitive benefits and can offer competitive salaries with the private sector.

Federal Jobs
The federal government's official Employment Information System, USAJOBS at www.usajobs.gov, contains job postings from all Federal agencies. However, students may want to check out Pathways for Students and Recent Graduates to Federal Careers, available at www.usajobs.gov/StudentsAndGrads.

Pathways is a federal job website geared towards those seeking entry-level jobs as well as pre- or post-baccalaureate internship experiences. Because each agency does their own hiring, procedures and information required are often varied. Federal resumes may differ from standard resumes in the amount of information necessary. Examples of additional information required to complete your application may include transcripts, application forms, narrative descriptions of competencies, questionnaires, etc. Be sure to follow the instructions very carefully as information not submitted can result in your application not being evaluated.

Tips for the application process can be found at gobegovernment.org. This website also contains information about hiring trends within federal government, and provides examples of how academic majors and fields of study relate to federal agencies and internship or employment opportunities.

State Jobs
State and local government opportunities exist in all 50 states. The application process, information required, and procedures will vary by state. Information about state and local government structures and employment opportunities can be found at www.statelocalgov.net.

PA State Jobs/Civil Service
Pennsylvania state residency is required at the time of application for most state civil service positions. Students who currently reside and are enrolled in colleges, universities, or technical schools in Pennsylvania and who have Pennsylvania mailing addresses are eligible to apply prior to graduation for positions requiring Pennsylvania residency.

View job announcements at the Pennsylvania State Civil Service Commission website: www.scsc.state.pa.us (click on “Job Seekers”). The announcement provides information on the nature of the work, job requirements, job opportunities, testing and test results, and how to apply. It also indicates the opening and closing dates for applications. To find more information on the Civil Service tests and applications go to the website listed above and click on “General Information.”

Local Government
Research is the key to a successful job search campaign in local government. Locate the agencies and departments in which you are interested and contact them to learn about the application procedures. Look online to learn about local municipalities and their application processes.

In some places, for example, you look at job listings, apply for positions, and, if qualified, take a city civil service test. If you pass, your name will be added to a list of eligible candidates and stays there for a period of time unless you are hired. Many positions in local government offices have standard applications for interested individuals to complete.

Additional Opportunities
There are numerous other opportunities for employment working within or around the various levels of government. Many organizations are not part of the federal or state government system, but work very closely with these governments in the public arena. These organizations range from nonprofit foundations and charitable organizations to lobbyists, professional associations, and consulting firms. Opportunities also can be found in legislative agencies such as the General Accounting Office and the Library of Congress, on personal staffs of members of Congress, and in the judicial system. The job search for each of these areas differs, though each relies heavily on networking.
Many international students are interested in exploring short-term and long-term work opportunities in the United States. Current U.S. immigration laws permit international students to be employed in the U.S. during and after a course of study. However, these regulations have specific requirements and restrictions.

If you wish to work in the U.S. you must plan ahead and be prepared to be persistent. First, it is important for you to understand what circumstances you may apply for work authorization on your student visa. In addition, unfamiliarity and discomfort with the American job search process may put an international student at a disadvantage when competing for a job. The following information is intended to help you understand and, thereby, overcome, some of the obstacles associated with seeking employment in the United States.

When and How to Start?

It is crucial to start the job search process right away by learning about the types and regulations of employment (i.e., part-time jobs, summer jobs, internships, work study programs, assistantships) both on-campus and off-campus according to the specifics of your student visa and program area of study. You should obtain the most up-to-date information about your employment eligibility (i.e., work or internship authorization) from the Office of Global Programs and the Career Information Center. Although you do not need work authorization for non-paid internships and other volunteer positions, you will need to educate many employers about your employment options such as Curricular Practical Training (authorization for work experience in your area of study when you are a registered student) and Optional Practical Training (authorization of work experience in your area of study after your graduation, or after your thesis or dissertation defense for graduate students). You can obtain and bring brochures about the CPT and OPT process to career fairs and job interviews to help employers overcome the perceived burden of work authorization paperwork. To be proactive, you should also use social media networks and develop an online profile and/or portfolio to network (i.e., searching and learning from professional profiles of individuals and companies on LinkedIn) to gather further tips and strategies.

Approaching the Topic of H-1B Visas with Employers

Many employers are intimidated by the U.S. immigration process and are reluctant to sponsor H-1B visas, or simply have a policy against it. If you attended school in another country and you don’t say on your resume or in your cover letter that you are a citizen or permanent resident of the U.S., a savvy employer will probably assume that you have a student visa. On an employer’s form I-9, if there is a blank for visa status, you need to fill it in with the correct information. On your resume, you may either make no mention of your visa status or make the most positive statement that you can truthfully make. For example, “Visa allows 12 months U.S. work permission” or “Permanent residency to be awarded within the next four months.” If you are already a permanent resident, be sure that your resume says “U.S. permanent resident” in a spot where it cannot be overlooked, because it will mean that your employer does not need to worry about work permission. Needless to say, you should only say things that are true, and you should be prepared to document them.

When You Should Bring Up the Issue

Do not begin an employment interview with an inquiry regarding H-1B sponsorship. In general, you may want to raise the issue sometime near the end of a positive first interview, or, perhaps, at the time of being invited in for a second interview. You should definitely talk to a potential employer about your status before you are offered a job. Some employers aren’t necessarily aware of work permission issues, and if someone offers you a job and only then learns that they have to apply for an H-1 visa in order to keep you, the person may be angry that you didn’t provide this information up front.

What Can You Do to Maximize Your Chances?

Begin your job search early and be prepared to devote extensive time to it. Learn everything you can about the process through which an employer can obtain an H-1 visa for you. In some cases, you’ll need to be the one to explain it to an employer. Don’t vaguely tell an employer that it’s “no problem.” Rather, be prepared to explain exactly what steps are involved. Refer to The Department of Labor’s site at www.foreignlabor-cert.doleta.gov for instructions for both candidates and employers. There may also be some advantage to having the paperwork handled by a lawyer who is thoroughly familiar with the process. If you’d be willing to pay any associated fees, let the employer know that. You can also tell an employer that they can consult with the staff at the Office of Global Programs for more information about the process. As an independent third party, Office of Global Programs may have more credibility than you will in explaining the process.

To seek out companies that have a history of H-1B sponsorship consider the following sources.

1. GoingGlobal provides a database of US H-1B plus visa sponsoring employers: in-depth information for the international job search, as well as employment information for major U.S. cities and states. Penn State Career Services has a subscription to this service which can be accessed through the Career Information Center online at http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/cic.
2. ForeignMBA.com is reportedly the #1 internet community for MBA students from around the world. The site includes a list of more than 70 employers that have a history of hiring foreign MBA students.
3. H1VisaJobs.com is a website hosting 10 databases: listing companies that have sponsored H-1B visas within the past several years as reported by the federal government. There is an access fee for each database for a six-month period. Penn State Career Services does NOT have a subscription to this service.

Other Links for International Students

The following links give more information on living and working in the U.S., as well as job announcements.

www.phds.org – Covers all levels of students: Bachelors, Masters, PhDs, and Post-Docs
www.istudentcity.com
www.h1base.com

Career Services counselors are familiar with the special situations you face and can help you at all stages of your job search. We also strongly recommend that you work with the Office of Global Programs to use the appropriate office on your campus to learn more about work permission and immigration regulations. The Office of Global Programs can acquaint you with current requirements and help you avoid being offered a job but having no legal basis upon which to accept it. Besides such information and guidance, you should remember the importance of being persistent, especially with networking, and follow up with contacts in a professional manner.

The Office of Global Programs has Employment Information and Resources available online at www.global.psu.edu/info/internationals-psu/students/employment
Nittany Lion Career Network (NLCN) is the primary online resource for connecting students with employers. As a registered Penn State student, a free NLCN account has been created for you. With your NLCN account you can:

• Search for job and internship opportunities
• Participate in On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)
• See which employers are presenting information sessions on campus
• Research organizations using the Employers tab
• Participate in online resume books (employers use these books to locate qualified candidates)
• Receive announcements about upcoming events and career fairs
• Search the list of organizations attending career fairs
• Network with Penn State alumni through LionLink
• Find someone to job shadow

Job Postings
Our online job posting service is available for you to look at full-time, internship, and part-time positions with employers who are not conducting on-campus interviews, but are specifically seeking Penn State candidates from all academic colleges. Much like other online systems, Nittany Lion Career Network allows you to maintain multiple versions of your resume, apply for positions online, and to keep a history of applications you have submitted through the system. To view job postings, use the Jobs & On-Campus Interview Postings tab in NLCN.

On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)
The On-Campus Interviewing system offers students the opportunity to interview with employers at select campuses. This service is most advantageous for students who are graduating and looking for full-time employment after graduation. Many positions are offered in business, industry, and government and are for students with an interest and background in business and technical fields.

To view OCI postings, use the Jobs & On-Campus Interview Postings tab in NLCN. OCI access is automatically given to graduating seniors at the beginning of the fall semester; no additional steps are necessary to access OCI jobs through NLCN.

If you are selected to interview at one of the campuses offering OCI opportunities via NLCN, you must be willing to travel to that location for an in-person interview. This is a benefit to both you and the employer.

Information Sessions
Employers hold information sessions throughout the year. These sessions provide a chance for you to learn more about an employer, meet with recruiters, ask questions about various opportunities, and express your interest in current or future opportunities. These sessions are open to students who have an interest in the company and are required for students interviewing through OCI. To view upcoming information sessions, use the Events tab in NLCN.

Career Fairs
Many career fairs are offered each semester to meet the varying needs of students seeking employment opportunities.

Fall and Spring Career Days support students from all majors pursuing full-time, internship, and co-op opportunities in government, industry, corporate settings, and more.

Graduate and Professional School Week is held each October which features graduate schools, medical and health-related programs, and law schools for those planning to continue their education.

For students interested in the helping professions, we offer the C.A.R.E. Fair in the fall.

An Education Career Day is also offered in the fall and spring for students interested in pursuing positions in K-12 education.

For information on upcoming career fairs, visit careerfaire.psu.edu. A list of employers attending is available under the Events tab in NLCN.

Education Credential Services (ECS)
This service provides students and alumni a secure place to store letters of recommendation for job search or graduate or professional school applications. You can establish a credentials file online at studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/credentials. This service is available free of charge for up to two years after graduation.

You may manage your own credentials file or have ECS send your credentials to prospective employers or graduate schools at your request. A fee of $8.00 is required for each copy sent via regular mail/email.

LionLink: A Professional Networking Program
LionLink is one of the many programs and services offered through Alumni Career Services, a partnership between Career Services and the Penn State Alumni Association. LionLink is a professional networking program that links Penn State students and alumni with alumni volunteer Career Coaches. Career Coaches provide valuable information and advice on jobs and careers to Career Explorers, who are alumni or students looking for a job or seeking career-related information.

Through informational interviews, student and alumni Career Explorers can gain valuable inside information on careers, industries, companies, and geographic areas from a trusted resource. LionLink can help you gain the information you need that you can't get in a classroom as you build your own professional network. To connect with a LionLink Career Coach, use the LionLink tab in NLCN.

Networking Program
Network with Penn State alumni through LionLink:

• Find someone to job shadow
• Network with Penn State alumni through LionLink
• Search the list of organizations attending career fairs
• Search for job and internship opportunities
• Participate in On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)
• See which employers are presenting information sessions on campus
• Research organizations using the Employers tab
• Participate in online resume books (employers use these books to locate qualified candidates)
• Receive announcements about upcoming events and career fairs
• Search the list of organizations attending career fairs
• Network with Penn State alumni through LionLink
• Find someone to job shadow

CAREER SERVICES
http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/
Making the Most of Career Fairs

Throughout the fall and spring semesters, several career fairs will be sponsored by various colleges, campuses, and Career Services. At these career fairs, you can come in contact with many employers in a few short hours. You can speak with the organization’s representatives about career opportunities and present your qualifications for positions you may be seeking.

Employers will be looking for candidates who are professional, articulate, career-directed, and prepared. Although many employers attend career fairs to promote their organization and opportunities, most use career fairs as a pre-recruiting screening tool. Therefore, you should present yourself to them as a prime candidate.

You are encouraged to use career fairs as part of the career exploration and development process. Talk with employers to learn about careers in various industries and get advice on increasing your marketability within your field. It is a valuable opportunity to start and/or enhance your job search network. If you are a first-year student, consider volunteering at the fairs to get an inside look of how things work before you have to start the internship/job search process yourself! Sign up on the career fair web page.

To make the most out of career fairs, we recommend that you:

1. Prepare your resume and have several copies available to bring with you that day. Attend resume workshops, use this guide or the Career Services website for assistance in preparing your resume. Don’t forget to have it reviewed by a Career Services professional!

2. You will only have a few minutes to present yourself as a candidate; positive first impressions are vital. Dress appropriately. Suits are usually expected, but visit the fair webpage to find out what dress is suggested for different events.

3. Go online and research the organizations attending the fair. Identify the organizations with which you are interested in speaking and narrow your list down to your top ten. Be ready to articulate state why you are interested in each particular organization.

4. Introduce yourself to the representative in a positive and confident manner; offer a firm handshake. Include your name, your major, and the year you are graduating in the conversation.

5. If looking for a job, give the representative a resume and be ready to discuss your background, qualifications, and career goals. Ask what you should do to apply for a position.

6. Tell him/her what your interests are, such as:
   - discussing a particular career or job with that organization,
   - discussing something of interest you learned from their website,
   - learning more about what someone in a particular career does,
   - discussing internship or summer job opportunities.

7. Think of questions regarding your area(s) of interest. Take notes on what you learn. Some questions might be:
   - What are common career paths with your organization?
   - What is the training program for new hires?
   - What do you look for in a candidate?

8. Make sure you obtain the representative’s name, title, address, and phone number in order to follow up. Collect business cards and literature. Take a few moments after speaking to a recruiter to jot a few notes about the conversation on the back of their business card. Utilize these notes in your follow-up thank you email. After the career fair, you should make it a point to follow up with an additional resume and a letter or email expressing your interest in the company and in what they have to offer.

For information on all career fairs, visit careerfairs.psu.edu
Interviewing

The interview is one of the most important steps in the job search process, and thorough preparation is essential. To interview effectively you need to know what you have to offer, what the employer is looking for, and the kind of questions to expect. Being able to answer questions with relevant details and in a conversational manner is very important.

First Impressions
It is always important to make a good impression on the interviewer:
- Arrive at least 10 minutes early
- Look polished: Dress professionally, avoid perfume or cologne, and wear only simple jewelry
- Give a firm handshake, make good eye contact, and smile

The Purpose of an Interview
- To determine if you match their needs. There are many types of interview styles or formats. Some of the most common are described here. You may encounter any of these, sometimes in the same interview.
- To give an opportunity to the interviewer to determine a match between you and the organization or school.
- To ask for your qualifications and skills.
- To determine if the organization or graduate school is one you want to work for.
- To secure a job offer.

The 3 criteria employers are looking for in candidates
1) Can you do the job? (skills)
2) Will you do the job? (interest and motivation)
3) Are you a good fit with the organization? (personal qualities)

As such, they will be asking a variety of questions to determine if you match their needs. There are many types of interview styles or formats. Some of the most common are described here. You may encounter any or all of these, sometimes in the same interview.

Traditional Interview Questions
Traditionally employers have asked questions designed to help them gain a feel for who you are and what makes you unique: your motivation level, your background and strong points, your interest in the position, and the aspects of your personality that may affect how you perform on the job, such as organization, interpersonal skills, decision-making, teamwork, etc. The questions asked might be seeking expansion of information presented on your resume, or focus on the qualities and skills that you can bring to the table.

Behavioral Interview Questions
Based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to examine past behavior, behavioral interviewing is now widespread among recruiters. The technique involves asking a series of questions designed to get the candidate to talk about how she or she handled certain situations in the past. Interviewers feel that they can make more accurate hiring decisions by focusing on an applicant’s past actions and behaviors, rather than subjective impressions of a candidate’s self-proclaimed qualities.

Here’s how it goes:
Typically, the interviewer will have determined several behavioral characteristics that would be most important for on-the-job success and will base questions on the characteristics identified. You will be asked to share situations in which you may or may not have exhibited these behaviors. You won’t be able to theorize or generalize about events, rather, you will be asked to provide details. The interview will be a more structured process that will concentrate on areas identified by the interviewer, rather than on areas that you may feel are important.

Follow-up questions will test for consistency and determine if you exhibited the desired behavior in that situation: Can you give me an example? What did you do? What did you say? What were you thinking? How did you feel? What was your role? What was the result? You will notice an absence of such inquiries as, “Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses.”

One of the supposed benefits of this technique for employers is that candidates cannot prepare for these questions in advance. However, you can help yourself by anticipating the types of questions you might receive and dredging your memory for examples of past behavior. You may be able to guess some of the questions by analyzing the job requirements beforehand.

Mock Interviews
Practice interviews may be available by appointment or as part of the career counseling process on your campus. See a career professional for more information.

Also, InterviewStream is a powerful online practice interviewing tool that is available at all Penn State campuses. Record and view your own practice interviews and share the link with a career professional on campus, a faculty member, or whomever may be most appropriate to gain feedback.

Case Interview Questions
Another common interview format, especially for consulting firms, is the case interview. It is also probably one of the most difficult and feared formats. In it, you’ll be asked to analyze a hypothetical business problem and come up with solutions on the spot. Case interview questions are designed to test your ability to think analytically under stress, with incomplete information. Every case interview problem presented is trying to judge all or some of the following:

• Your ability to identify key concepts, process thoughts in an orderly manner, and separate important facts from irrelevant facts.
• Your insight and knowledge of relevant issues in a business problem scenario. Some examples: competitive threats, barriers to entry, competi-
How Can I Best Prepare for Interviews?

Know yourself, first. Know what kind of job you want and what makes you feel qualified. Think about what information you want to include in your responses. Don’t go in cold and expect to do well, but don’t memorize, either.

Research the employer. First get the basics, including the company’s size, location(s), products(s), and services(s). Then look for details relevant to the position you seek: job description, training, advancement paths, etc. You may need to look several places to get this information, including:

1. The company’s information session, if they are holding one.
2. The Career Information Center online at studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/cic.
3. Company websites, many of which can be found from links in Nittany Lion Career Network.
4. The Business Library online at www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/business.html. You can link to Hoover’s Online, Factiva, Standard and Poor’s Net Advantage, and more.
5. Contacting the local chamber of commerce or the company’s public relations or personnel department.
6. Talking with someone in the company or agency in the type of position of interest to you.
7. Search online news sites to review any recent articles regarding the company.

Use Career Services

Take advantage of the variety of free services:

1. Workshops on interview skills are presented throughout the semester.
2. InterviewStream: Record and view your own practice interviews and share the link with your professor.
3. The Business Library online at www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/business.html. You can link to Hoover’s Online, Factiva, Standard and Poor’s Net Advantage, and more.
4. Contacting the local chamber of commerce or the company’s public relations or personnel department.
5. Talking with someone in the company or agency in the type of position of interest to you.
6. Search online news sites to review any recent articles regarding the company.

What Is the Best Approach to Answering Questions?

Recruiters are surprisingly accurate in sensing canned responses. Canned responses don’t give interesting or specific questions convey genuine interest.

Questions to Ask Employers

- Can you describe a typical first year assignment?
- What are the most challenging aspects of the job?
- How would you describe your organization’s culture?
- Why do you enjoy working for your organization?
- What initial training will I receive?
- What opportunities for professional growth does the organization offer?
- How will I be evaluated and promoted?
- What are the characteristics of a successful person at your company?
- What are the organization’s plans for future growth?
- What is a typical career path at your organization?
- What are the biggest challenges facing the organization or department?
- What is the management style of the organization?
- What are the goals of the department? Of the organization?
- What opportunities for professional growth does the organization offer?
- How much decision-making authority is given to new employees?
- What are your long-term career goals? How do you plan to achieve those goals?
- What areas of your study have excited you the most?
- How have you handled the challenge of developing your skills in a situation where feedback and/or coaching was delayed or limited?
- How will I be evaluated and promoted?
- What are your long-term career goals? How do you plan to achieve those goals?
- What type of work environment appeals to you most?
- In what ways do you think you can contribute to our organization?
- What are your long-term career goals? How do you plan to achieve those goals?
- What type of work environment appeals to you most?

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

Give me an example of a time at work when you had to deal with unreasonable expectations.
- Have you handled a situation in which the information presented to you was conflicting or there was no clear right or wrong answer?
- Tell me about a time when you encountered a problem you had no clear right or wrong answer?
- How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome?
- How did you handle the challenge of developing your skills in a situation where feedback and/or coaching was delayed or limited?
- Give me an example of a time at work when you were asked to do something you had never done before.
- Give me an example of a time in which you were especially skillful in making a decision quickly.
- Tell me about a time when your ability to work with others created positive motivation.
- Give me an example of a time when you actively defined and evaluated several alternative solutions to identify a way to resolve a problem you encountered.
- Tell me about the most important time in your work history when you successfully prioritized your goals and objectives.
- Tell me about a time when you used realistic schedules and timetables to generate a plan leading to a specific goal.
Points to Remember

1. The recruiter saw something in your resume that was impressive. Go into your interview remembering that this person already likes what they saw.
2. The interview is a two-way conversation. Try to relax and enjoy the opportunity.
3. Be specific, not vague. You’ll be much more interesting.
4. Think about your answers ahead of time. Don’t memorize, but have a focus and don’t ramble.
5. Be prepared to describe why you are interested in that employer and give specific characteristics about the kind of position that you want.
6. Sell yourself. If you don’t state what your strengths, skills, and accomplishments are, the recruiter will be unable to see you as a good candidate.
7. Genuine self-confidence and confidence in your ability to perform well at the job are your best assets in any interview. This attitude of confidence is one of the best indicators to the employer that you are the person needed for the position.
8. Don’t forget to assess the company to see if you would like to work for them.

Sample Case Interview Questions

- You are consulting for a major personal care products manufacturer that mainly produces and distributes products such as soaps, shampoos, conditioners, etc. Every year their profits are shrinking. What could be the cause of this?
- You are in marketing with one of the largest and fastest growing supermarket chains in the country. This chain is considering opening its own bank branches in its supermarket locations. What is your advice?
- Your client is a small regional bank in the U.S. They are considering closing branch locations, and diverting their resources to telephone and Internet banking facilities. Should they implement this strategy? What are some of the basic areas they need to research before this strategy is recommended?

Think of a skill you would like to highlight during an interview. Outline a scenario below that demonstrates that skill.

Skill to highlight: __________________________

Situation: __________________________

Task: __________________________

Action: __________________________

Result: __________________________
The Site Interview: What to Expect

The visit or interview is the make or break point for job offers. If you are offered an interview at the employer’s facility, you can consider yourself in a strong position. But don’t think that an offer is a sure thing. Rather, think of this phase of the interview process as the way for both you and the employer to conduct a more in-depth assessment of each other.

An employer is offering you the opportunity to convince all of the principal players that you are the right candidate. After a site interview you can make a more informed decision about the position, the people, the environment, long-term career opportunities, and the community.

- Learn as much as you can about the company by reading the company’s literature, looking at their web page, and reviewing industry and business publications. You can also talk to employees who are Penn State alumni through LionLink (see page 41) to learn more about the company.
- If you receive an offer for a site interview, respond promptly and professionally. If you are not interested in that company, decline politely. Never go on a site interview for practice. Don’t not order alcohol. Do not chew with your mouth open. Do not swear.
- You should be prepared to discuss salary, understanding what the going rates are for people in your field and how certain geographic areas affect salaries. For more information on salaries, talk to a Career Counselor or review the resources in the Career Information Center (see page 8).
- Often the final meeting of the day is with your contact person or employment manager. During this session they often offer answers to any final questions you may have, explain follow-up procedures, and discuss reimbursement of your expenses. Make sure all of your questions are answered.
- Most companies only offer site interviews to candidates they are seriously considering, so you may find yourself with an offer at the end of the day or very soon afterwards. Do not feel compelled to accept an offer on-site. You should take time to consider the offer in terms of your needs and in comparison to other offers you may have.
- After your interview, you should manage expenses according to the company’s policies.
- Send out thank-you letter(s) to the person(s) who will be making the hiring decisions. You may also want to write thank-you letters to people with whom you want to continue to network.
- Feel free to contact the company if you have not received a response in the agreed upon timeframe. Also contact any of the interviewers for whom you have additional questions.

If you decide that the job and the employer are right for you, don’t feel shy about telling the employer that you are eager to join their team. But, never be afraid to decline an offer if it is not right for you. Remember that long-term career satisfaction is the goal of the whole process.

When you accept an invitation for a site interview you are making a commitment to that company. Employers have reported students not showing up for site interviews, after extensive arrangements have been made. This is not acceptable behavior.

If you are no longer interested in an opportunity or cannot make an interview, it is professional courtesy to contact the employer and let them know of your situation. Employers generally understand when situations change. But, simply not attending a scheduled interview will ensure that you will not be considered for a position with that company in the future. Your actions can also jeopardize Penn State’s relationship with the company, making interviews difficult for future students.

Career Services expects that students using our Nittany Lion Career Network services maintain professional behavior. In fact, when you utilize the Nittany Lion Career Network system, you must agree to maintain professional conduct throughout the recruiting process.

http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/
Making an impressive first impression gives you a powerful edge when interviewing for an internship, co-op, or full-time position. During interviews, employers will be evaluating your skills and abilities, but remember the old adage, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression.” The following guidelines can help you dress for success.

Men
- Present a clean-shaven face or neatly trimmed facial hair
- A tailored suit is preferred
- Wear a dark, conservative suit with a white, long-sleeved, pressed dress shirt (blue or gray suits are acceptable in a less conservative environment)
- A sport coat or collared button-down shirt and dress pants or khakis may be appropriate for internship and co-op interviews
- A tie should be silk, coordinate with your suit, and neatly knotted (avoid flashy patterns)
- Wear polished dress shoes with dark dress socks
- Hair should be combed, clean, and neat

Women
- Wear natural-looking makeup, avoiding bright colors, sparkles, or glitter
- Wear a dark conservative skirt suit or pant suit
- Skirts should be no more than two inches above the knee. Avoid thigh-high or ankle-length
- Wear a blouse with a tailored collar or jewel neckline
- Avoid large scarves that are distracting
- Wear polished dress pumps with 2-3 inch heels
- Hosiery should be sheer or blend with the suit color
- Keep jewelry to a minimum
- Avoid strongly scented perfumes, colognes, lotions, and soaps
- Fingernails should be neat. Avoid bright colors and designs
- Hair should be combed, clean, and neat with long hair pulled away from the face

Everyone
- Turn your phone off or set to vibrate
- Carry a small leather or leather alternative briefcase or portfolio with extra copies of your resume, pen, and paper
- Avoid strongly scented perfumes, colognes, lotions, and soaps
- Fingernails should be neat. Avoid bright colors and designs

Resources for Researching Salary

- A Comprehensive Site for Researching Salary Information
  salary.com
- NACE Salary Calculator
  www.jobsearchintelligence.com/NACE
- Wage, Earnings, and Benefit Data from the U.S. Department of Labor/Bureau of Labor Statistics
  www.bls.gov/oes
- Company Salaries, Reviews, and Inside Connections for Thousands of Companies
  www.glassdoor.com
- Penn State Post-Graduation Data
  studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/postgrad.shtml

Evaluating the Entire Job Offer: It’s Not Just About Money

There are many things to consider when making a decision about a job offer. While financial compensation is certainly important, it’s also important to weigh in other factors such as reputation of the organization, the quality of their training program, possibilities for promotion, and satisfaction of the employees.

Following is a list of important factors to consider in order to examine the whole offer:

The Type of Work
Your assignment should be challenging, satisfying, and a good match with your skills and interests. You should know what your responsibilities will be as you begin your job.

Training/Continuing Education
Life-long learning is essential for long-term career success. Explore whether you will be offered continuing education or training to keep you current in your field. Company courses, professional seminars, and tuition reimbursement for university course work are ways in which the company can contribute to your growth and development.

Benefits
You will also want to be sure what the benefits package includes, for example: insurance coverage, retirement plan, health care plan, paid vacation and sick leave, income supplements (such as profit sharing), relocation assistance, etc.

Company Culture
Company culture, or values which underlie the work environment, is also a key to your decision. The company’s culture should match your own values so you feel no conflict of interest.

Supervisor and Colleagues
Is your supervisor to be interested in your professional growth? Your supervisor can be especially critical as you learn your job and the company’s way of doing things, and he or she can greatly impact your ability to move ahead. Are you compatible with your colleagues? You will want to choose a job that involves people with whom you feel comfortable.

Opportunity for Growth
Will you have the opportunity to grow professionally? A position that will serve as a springboard offers greater challenges over time, additional responsibilities, and a variety of activities in which you can become involved.
Negotiating Job Offers

Strategies and Tips
Students often find that the competitive nature of negotiating job offers is one of the most stressful and unpleasant parts of the job search process. To help you approach the negotiation process more positively, we have provided you with a few useful strategies and tips.

Adopt a Win/Win Mindset
The ultimate goal is to achieve an outcome that is pleasing to both you and your employer. The goal of your potential employer is to gain a valuable new employee who will add value to their organization at a reasonable cost. Your goal is to gain employment with a desirable company where you can add value and be fairly compensated for your talents and efforts. It is our belief that if you approach your negotiation with the attitude that you also want your employer to get something out of the interaction, and that it’s not an issue of “I win if they lose” (or vice versa), then you are in the right frame of mind for moving forward.

Negotiation Is Not a Bad Word
Life is about compromise and negotiation. You do it unconsciously every time you bargain with your friends about whether to go out for pizza or burgers, go to the pool, or to the gym. In most cases, employers expect some degree of negotiation. It’s the manner in which you negotiate that can make the difference between a positive and negative negotiation experience. As with any interaction, be respectful, understand that you may have to give a little to get a little (remember win/win), and always express appreciation that you have received an offer.

Timing Is Key
The time for negotiation occurs at the point that you have been extended an offer of employment, no sooner. This may seem like common knowledge, but people still make the mistake of talking money and benefits too soon in the process. Prior to an offer, the focus should be on explaining how you can add value to their organization and on obtaining information about the specifics of the actual job and the organization. The company should get the impression that your primary focus is on your investment in their organization. The money will follow.

Do Your Research
You stand a better chance of having a successful salary negotiation if you present a well-reasoned argument that is backed up by data, such as average salary, adjustments due to geography, and your level of education, background, and skills. For example, according to Salary.com, you would need a salary of $78,000 to secure the same lifestyle in Washington, D.C., as $48,000 would in Pittsburgh, PA.

Practice, Practice
The art of negotiation, like so many aspects of communication and interpersonal effectiveness, requires practice and experience to be really good at it. In the same way that you might prepare for a job interview, we urge you to put similar effort into your negotiation preparation. Career Counselors can help you with preparing a negotiation strategy, answer your specific negotiation questions, as well as help you role play a mock negotiation scenario.

Rank the following in order to help you compare job offers. Repeat this exercise for each job offer you are considering and compare the totals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors to consider</th>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Work</td>
<td>How Important it is to You 1 not at all, 2 somewhat, 3 very much</td>
<td>Job Offer 1 1 doesn’t meet this need, 2 meets this need, 3 exceeds this need</td>
<td>Multiply Column 1 by Column 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Company Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong> (add column 3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding the Ethics of Offers

Remember that you’re representing Penn State!
You may receive several offers during your job search. You aren’t required to accept the first job offer that comes along and can continue to interview and consider all of your job offers until you have accepted a job. But once you have accepted a job offer, verbally or in writing, you are bound by ethical standards and values, and remember that you are representing Penn State to the outside world of employers.

Once you accept a job, you should:
- Withdraw from the recruiting process. You have made a commitment when you accept an offer. The employer stops interviewing and holds the position for you. Accepting an offer as a precautionary measure, hoping that something better will come along, is not only misleading to the employer, but also limits the opportunities for other students who are genuinely interested in that employer. Also, you may change your mind and want to work for that company someday.
- Let all employers who are actively considering you know that you are no longer available and that they should consider other candidates.
- Notify Career Services via an email at interviewing@psu.edu so that we will not refer your resume to any other employers.
- Cancel all pending interviews.
- If you face extreme circumstances that force you to renge on an acceptance (i.e., critically ill parent, marriage), you should notify your employer immediately and withdraw the acceptance. If you have accepted a signing bonus, you should return it.

Employers are also bound by ethical standards. They should:
- Provide accurate information about their organization, positions, career advancement opportunities, and benefits, as well as timely information on your status in the hiring process and any hiring decisions.
- Not exert undue pressure. Employers are expected to provide candidates with a reasonable amount of time to make a decision about an offer as well as a reasonable process for making a decision.
- Offer fair and equitable assistance, including, but not limited to, financial assistance and outplacement services, if, because of changing conditions (i.e., downsizing or withdrawn contracts), an employer must revoke a job offer that you have accepted.
Applying to Graduate or Professional School

Graduate education appeals to students who seek to extend their knowledge or research beyond the bachelor's level. Individuals pursue graduate education to support a desired career change, or to attain a greater level of leadership and responsibility, based upon one's experience and education. Depending on your career goals and readiness, you may choose to go directly to graduate school or work for a few years and then attend graduate school in a part-time basis. The following information will help you plan, prepare for, and move through the process of applying to graduate programs of all types.

Identify Your Rationale for Pursuing Further Education:
- Access to a career goal requires further education
- Extend knowledge or research of a particular area of study
- Pursue a new career direction or goal

Obtain Information About Schools and Programs:
- Admission requirements and deadlines
- Costs
- Sources of financial aid and how students pay for graduate education
- Faculty research and teaching interests
- Curriculum and degree requirements
- Opportunities for experiential learning

Ways to research graduate programs
- Graduate and Professional School Week careerfairs.psu.edu/gpweek
- Individual graduate program websites
- Faculty contacts and networks, beginning with faculty here at Penn State
- Professional and educational associations
- Accreditation agencies
- General graduate school websites Petersons.com, gradschools.com, gradprofiles.com, graduate-school.phds.org

The Application Process
Transcripts
Official transcripts of your undergraduate work and any other graduate work you have completed must be sent to the graduate schools. This may be done at the end of your junior year or in the middle of your senior year or, for those going on later, at any point after you have graduated. Contact the Registrar’s office or login to eLion to request transcripts; you should anticipate a fee for this service.

Letters of Recommendation
Letters of recommendation are endorsements of your capacity to succeed as a graduate student and also as an emerging professional within your field. Consider seeking letters from people who have observed you in field-related classes or work settings. Most graduate programs require that two or three recommendation letters be sent. These letters are frequently submitted to programs directly by your reference providers, often electronically.

Application Essay / Personal Statement
Most schools will require that you write an essay or statement on your background and interests as they relate to your field of study. These are often used as an opportunity to see beyond the “numbers” in the admissions criteria. Many schools will also ask you to provide short answer essays to specific questions within your field to assess your understanding and standing of the field you are entering. These essays are one measure of your ability to write, to build arguments, and to think critically. They also assess your enthusiasm for the field of study, creativity, maturity, and uniqueness.

For most personal statements or letters of intent, schools will expect you to be clear about your career goals and readiness, you may choose to go directly to graduate school or work for a few years and then attend graduate school in a part-time basis. The following information will help you plan, prepare for, and move through the process of applying to graduate programs of all types.

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56 CAREER GUIDE

57 http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/
goals and your reasons for applying to that institution. In your essays, you want to demonstrate that you have specific career goals (i.e., to become a lawyer) and understand how that particular program will assist you in achieving your career goals. It can be helpful to incorporate into your essay specific research being conducted by faculty members or particular classes you are interested in from that institution.

Have someone review your essay for content, grammar, and spelling. Often the best people to critique your essay are people who understand your field and have some awareness of your background and current work, (i.e., your references). Take your time developing your essay(s); they are often the most crucial part of your application.

Financial Aid

Three kinds of financial aid are available:

1. Work programs, such as graduate assistantships and college work study programs;
2. Monetary awards, including grants, fellowships and scholarships; and
3. Loans, usually administered through banks, the government, or the educational institution.

Because every graduate school has its own application process and system of awarding aid, you must obtain that information directly from each of the institutions to which you are applying. You can check with both the financial aid office and the graduate academic department.

Graduate assistantships often pay tuition and a stipend for living expenses. Most are administered by academic departments and involve either 10 or 20 hours of work per week. Teaching assistantships involve assisting a professor with grading, office hours, and recitation sections or being responsible for the entire teaching of one or more courses. Research assistantships provide the opportunity to participate in ongoing research and can evolve into conducting your own research project for a thesis.

Loans and college work study programs are awarded on the basis of financial need. To determine need, you must provide information on your family’s income and assets, and the cost of attending graduate school. Financial aid officers base their decisions on the information you provide. If you are a dependent student, your parents must also provide information.

Because many graduate schools require you to pay tuition and fees as soon as you enroll, you must arrange your financial aid before you begin classes. You can apply for financial aid throughout the year. Most financial aid officers will continue to award aid until the funds are depleted.

Financial aid officers are often willing to help you. You should contact them if you have questions about your aid award or if you need additional aid.

Application Action Plan

Fall and Spring of your Junior year

- Research areas of interest, institutions, and programs.
- Talk to advisers about application requirements.
- Register and prepare for appropriate graduate admission tests.
- Investigate national scholarships.
- If appropriate, obtain letters of recommendation.

Summer between Junior and Senior year

- Take required graduate admission tests.
- Work on your application materials.
- Visit institutions of interest if possible.
- Write your application essay.
- Check on application deadlines and rolling admissions policies.
- For medical, dental, osteopathy, podiatry, or law school, you may need to register for the national application or data assembly service most programs use.

Fall of your Senior year

- Obtain letters of recommendation.
- Take graduate admission tests if you haven’t already.
- Send in completed applications.
- Complete the FAFSA, if required.

Spring of your Senior year

- Check with all institutions before the deadline to make sure your file is complete.
- Visit institutions that accept you. Send a deposit to your institution of choice.
- Notify other colleges and universities that accepted you of your decision so that they may admit students on their waiting lists.
- Send a thank-you note to people who wrote your recommendation letters, informing them of your success.
All of the services and resources described in the Career Guide are available to undergraduate and graduate students. The articles that follow are specific to the needs of graduate students and will help you to prepare for and explore career options.
When to Consider Going on for a Doctorate
As any graduate student understands, completing an advanced degree takes a strong commitment of time, energy, and financial resources. Many students on the verge of completing their master’s degrees ask the question, “Should I continue on with a Ph.D. or another doctoral-level program?” For many, pursuing a doctorate immediately following master’s degree conferral serves as a natural next step based upon the professional goals of those students. However, those with other professional aspirations may prefer to postpone the doctoral degree until after they have gained a substantial amount of work experience in their chosen field—or they may choose not to pursue the doctoral-level degree at all. Entering an advanced degree program is an important decision that should be carefully weighed and well-informed.

Understanding Master’s vs. Doctoral Degrees
Gaining a clear understanding of the distinctions between the master’s and doctoral-level degrees can be an important first step in deciding where to go on the next leg of your professional journey.

The Master’s Degree: A Closer Look
The intended purpose of the master’s degree is to provide you with an increased level of understanding, depth of knowledge, and applicable skills to be used within your chosen field. Master’s degree programs require approximately two years of full-time graduate study. During the first year, schedules are comprised of a heavier course load which (unlike undergraduate education) consists of material that is field-specific rather than broad-based in nature. Students will begin working with an advisor during the first year in order to narrow their desired concentration within the field. Research on a master’s thesis or master’s paper topic may begin in the latter portion of the first year.

The second year experience consists of additional coursework that will serve to complete the degree requirements set for the program. The level of emphasis on research also increases as you progress toward the completion of the thesis or paper required for degree conformance. The thesis requirement is intended to serve as a demonstration of your specialization within the level of field-specific knowledge and research skill you have gained within the academic focus. You may participate in internship or practical learning experiences to stay at your current position during the second year, enhancing direct exposure to your selected area of concentration. A critical point of career decision making often occurs as the end of the master’s program nears. This is the period of time when you may be most strongly encouraged to consider applying for doctoral programs based upon your demonstrated research, skill, and professionalism in completing the master’s degree.

The Doctoral Degree: What to Expect
Choosing to enter a doctoral program is a major decision that requires the utmost commitment and a keen awareness of what to expect. A doctorate may take at least 4-6 years to complete, and the demands of this level of education are more rigorous than what is required at the master’s level. The two primary doctoral degrees are the Doctor of Philosophy, which is an academic degree, and the Doctor of Education, a professional degree. For the purpose of simplified explanation, the doctoral program may best be divided in half.

During the first half of the doctoral program, much of the candidate’s work is based in coursework that fulfills the degree requirements of the particular program. Areas of research interest are also narrowed by working with an advisor and possibly one or more additional professors in the field. The first half of the doctoral program typically culminates with the completion of comprehensive exams.

The final half of the doctoral program is usually defined by a candidate’s research work. The dissertation involves extensive research and development of the dissertation, depending upon the degree sought. The purpose of the dissertation is to showcase new and innovative research in one’s area of concentration or demonstrate the application of scientific principles to practical problems. Candidates experience a much greater sense of professional autonomy within this final stage of the program as compared with the more structured nature of the first half. Candidates may also be likely to teach a heavier course load and interact more closely with professors and other colleagues in the field. Finally, the candidate will defend his or her dissertation in front of a panel of faculty members.

Determine Your Readiness
Current Commitments
What commitments are currently impacting your decision to seek a doctorate? It is important to consider the commitments you have to your current job or workplace, to your family, and to other close associates. First, with regard to the workplace, what are the provisions made by your employer that serve to promote professional development? Would you be afforded the time away from your workplace to focus on your dissertation while seeking credits toward a doctorate on a part-time basis? Is there another feasible compromise that can be agreed upon between you and your employer that will allow for you to actively move toward your career goals? These are just a few questions that you may want to ask yourself or address with your current supervisor prior to applying to any programs.

Commitments to family and other close associates can also be highly influencing factors to consider when deciding to pursue advanced degrees. Your decision to enter the challenging and time-consuming process of attaining a doctorate does not typically involve you alone. What are your personal goals for life and family? Are you currently in a committed relationship? Do you have children? How will your home life and leisure time be affected by the financial challenges, time, and energy required to focus on your education? Discussing how this decision may impact you and those closest to you will be necessary for the well-being and understanding of all involved parties.

Emphasis of the Program
What is the emphasis of the doctoral program you are considering? How well does the specific focus of the program align with your future aspirations within the realms of academia or industry? Is earning a doctoral degree in your field a feasible—and necessary—next step that is consistent with your long-term career goals? These are very important questions to ask. If you can articulate only vague career goals related to the field you wish to study, or if you view the doctoral degree solely as an extension of previous education that will enable you to do the same work you are doing currently, you are not ready to seek a doctorate. Specific interest in an area of your field along with a strong commitment to clearly defined career goals, which make the doctorate desirable and/or necessary, are imperative to determining your readiness to become a successful doctoral candidate.

Funding Resources
Funding is an extremely important factor to take into account when deciding whether or not to pursue further education. The availability of loans and other financial aid can serve as a green light, or as a barrier, to realistically seeking an additional graduate degree. In addition, it would be wise to determine, in advance, if funding is available for your doctoral research. Such funding may be available via internal resources (through your academic department or institution) or externally provided through various grants, fellowships, etc.

Community and Support
As a graduate student, the demands of your program can be both exciting and overwhelming at the same time. For most advanced degree-seekers, having, or forming, a community of fellow graduate students and professionals who can relate to the challenges of academic life can create a more collegial graduate experience. Reaching the out-of-class experience at institutions you are considering can be helpful in establishing a starting point for finding community with similar interests to yours. When visiting the campus(es) you are researching on days that are not designated as official visitation days. This will enable you to obtain a more accurate sense of the campus culture and/or graduate student life as it exists on any given day.

In addition to establishing a peer community, it will be of great importance to find a mentor within your program. (http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career)
field or program who can help you to navigate the challenges that may arise as you enter into or progress through your chosen degree program. Finding an individual whose research interests and personality are compatible with yours may take time, but it is certainly possible. You may begin by reviewing faculty biographies on the department’s website, or you may choose to meet with a few individuals on a campus visit to help determine who may be willing to work with you in this capacity.

Because your resume or curriculum vita (CV) is usually the first and sometimes the only thing an employer will see about you, it is often the most critical item in determining whether or not you will obtain an interview. These essential elements of the job search serve as an advertisement of your skills, knowledge, and relevant experience.

What Is the Difference between a Resume and a Curriculum Vita?
Begin your vita preparation by brainstorming. List everything that you can imagine could be included—both your educational and professional history—being careful not to overlook anything. Then ask yourself what you actually did in each of those activities. Your answers to what you actually did are the sets of skills that you have to offer to an employer. Once you feel you have covered everything, you will decide what to include and what to exclude.

Curriculum Vita

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Read through the tips below and then look at the template suggestions in this section for guidance on placement of sections. Then, start with a blank document on the computer. Do not use a resume template. Resume templates are often inflexible and do not use formats that are conducive to presenting your information in a logical way. They are especially inappropriate for curriculum vitae.

If you are uncertain whether to use a resume or vita, ask yourself “Am I sending this document to other Ph.D.s? Is my Ph.D. required for this position? Is my scholarship relevant for this position?” If the answers to those questions are yes, you are probably going to use a vita. As a general rule of thumb, unless a vita is requested, you should send a resume.

Tips for preparing a resume can be found on page 17.

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### Resume vs. Curriculum Vita

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Resume</th>
<th>Curriculum Vita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outlines your personal, educational and work related experiences</td>
<td>Comprehensive summary of your educational and professional experience, including publications, presentations, professional activities, honors, and additional information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Resume</th>
<th>Curriculum Vita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One- or two-page document</td>
<td>Generally three or more pages in length, depending on your qualifications and level of experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Resume</th>
<th>Curriculum Vita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengths and qualifications for a particular position</td>
<td>Comprehensive biographical statement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective Statement Included?</th>
<th>Resume</th>
<th>Curriculum Vita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position Type</th>
<th>Resume</th>
<th>Curriculum Vita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business, non-profit, other non-academic positions</td>
<td>Faculty, research, clinical, or scientific positions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Best Format or Style?
Ideally your vita should emphasize your strong points while expressing your uniqueness and individuality. There are two basic formats to choose from:

Chronological Format
Present education and work experience in reverse chronological order, describing responsibilities and achievements under each entry. This is the most appropriate format if you have experience directly related to your career goal.

Functional Format
In this format, your experience is explained under major skill headings, while job titles, employers, and dates are listed separately. This format is especially useful when your degree or work experiences are not directly related to your career objective, for example, if you are pursuing employment in a field outside your area of academic study.

With either format, you should present yourself clearly, succinctly, and confidently.

Consistency
If you are inconsistent, the reader may think you are careless or confused. Be consistent in the following ways:

• Don’t mix styles in any category. If you put your job title first, followed by the employer name, list all job entries the same way. Likewise, state the name of the senior project author or director for all activities, not just a few. Leave no doubt about any entry.
• Do not use double entries. This means do not list a citation or activity more than once. Some people think these multiple listings of essentially the same activity strengthen their resume or vita. Actually, they weaken it because they create the appearance of loading up and repeating the same information to impress the reader. It usually does the opposite!
• Keep all tabs, margins, typestyles and sizes (except your name, which can be larger), and bullets consistent. Visual impact is affected by these minor details and inconsistency can detract from a positive initial impact.

NAME
Address
Phone Number
Email

SUMMARY STATEMENT/OBJECTIVE (Optional)
Discover key strengths

EDUCATION/Degrees Awarded
The Pennsylvania State University
Ph.D. Degree Concentration, Date
Dissertation
Institution, City, State
M.A. Degree Major, Date
Thesis
Institution, City, State
B.A./B.S. Degree Major, Date

POSTDOCTORAL TRAINING (Optional)

FELLOWSHIPS
Field of Research, Place, Title Date

PROFESSIONAL/TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Field of Research, Place, Title Date

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES, LEADERSHIP ROLES

PUBLICATIONS

You should note:

PAPERS PRESENTED
Use standard bibliographic format for your field, minus the author portion (if co-authoring, supply co-author’s(s’) names in parentheses).

GRANTS AND AWARDS

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

SKILLS
Languages
Computer

LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION (if applicable)

Type of License or Certification Date

REFERENCES

Heading/Contact Information
Your name is your heading (do not put “Curriculum Vita” as a heading). It should be bold and in larger print than the rest of the document.

Contact information includes your permanent and campus office address, your permanent and office telephone numbers with area codes (remember to use a professional message on your voice mail), your email address, and your web address, if you have one. Remember to check your email often. A vita should not include: sex, age, height, weight, marital status, dependents, race, ethnic background, religion or photographs.

Education
List degrees in reverse chronological order—most recent first. List the official name of your degree and/or certification that you have obtained, or will obtain, the month and year of your graduation, and your major and minor(s). Keep the information easy to scan. A list is preferred over paragraph form.

Experience
This section could be labeled a number of things: Experience, Work Experience, Research Experience, etc. Reverse chronological order is what readers expect, but if you have a mixture of experiences, you can break them into two major categories, such as Related Experience and Additional Experience. This allows you to put the most relevant items together and move older, but more relevant items to the beginning.

List your job title or position, the name of the organization for whom you worked, the dates of employment, the job title, and an active, descriptive summary of job duties. Give details of your accomplishments and responsibilities rather than a general list of duties. Numbers, such as volume, percentages, and/or dollar amounts, make strong statements and can enhance credibility.

Consolidate information when possible; avoid repetition and excessive details in describing experiences. Make the format easy to scan by using bulleted statements, not paragraphs, and start each with a strong action word. Use the Action Word List on page 30 for ideas.

Activities
List the most relevant activities and offices held first. Include professional, community, graduate level, and occasionally, outstanding college activities. You can add brief explanatory details of the position and your accomplishments, if it is appropriate. As this section can add individuality to your vita, you may want to include unusual or interesting items.

Honor/Awards
You should include this section only if you have several honors. If you have only one or two honors, you can include them in a combined section with activities or education.

Skills
You may want to consider a special skills section to highlight skills you have on specific computer hardware or software, foreign languages, or machinery required for performance on the job. You could also include certifications in this category.

References
References are usually listed as a part of the vita. Three to five references are appropriate. Consider individuals familiar with your academic achievements, research or teaching skills, and/or your work habits. Include the referee’s name, title, organization, mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address. PLEASE NOTE: You should always seek prior approval from individuals you plan to list as references and provide them with a copy of your vita.
Participate in three ongoing research projects. Conduct extensive literature searches.

The Pennsylvania State University 20__ - Present
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
Master of Arts in Comparative Literature, 20__
Dissertation: The portrayal of cities in 18th century French novels

1234 5th Street 111-C Burrowes Bldg
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

Greeted new students during their arrival to Gettysburg College. Spoke to new students, faculty members, and community members about the educational opportunities at Gettysburg College.

Orientation Leader
Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA
Summer 20__
- Greeted new students during their arrival to Gettysburg College. Spoke to new students, family members, and community members about the educational opportunities at Gettysburg College.

Library Student Employee
Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA
15__
- Assisted students, faculty, and community members in accessing library materials. Re-shelved books, and updated new library additions.

Gained experience using Oracle Database System.

The Library of Congress, Washington, DC. 20__ - 20__
International Literature Collections Consultant
International Literature Collections Consultant

International Literatures Collections Consultant
The Library of Congress, Washington, DC. 20__ - 20__
- Coordinated the acquisition and archiving of 16th - 18th century French and English literature.
- Granted the Council of Mayors to information on the establishment of Citizen.
- Gained experience using Oracle Database System.

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Cover Letters
The letter to accompany your curriculum vita should not merely summarize your vita; it should synthesize it, expand upon it, and explain connections, as well as talk about the skills and insights you gained from your experiences. Essentially search committees are looking to see why you are interested in that opportunity, and what you can bring to the opportunity beyond all the other applicants with similar experiences. A word of caution, though: a letter that is longer than two pages tends to be considered long-winded. Most committees prefer one-page letters.

Follow-Through
The importance of adequate follow-through cannot be overstated. Some schools have a system where they will send you a checklist of the materials received so you can check on the status of what is missing. If they do not, it is appropriate and recommended that you call the institution to check on the receipt of your application materials. It is also appropriate to ask about the time frame, if not already provided.

Reviewing Job Listings
Advertisements for potential job openings may be found in professional associations’ publications, journals, periodicals, or websites, on departmental bulletin boards, at conferences, through Career Services, or through word of mouth via faculty and peers or alumni. Remember that job announcements are simply a way for the specific institution to make candidates aware of a particular opening. They do not generally reflect the full scope of specific interests of the search committee or department, nor do they tell you all you need to know about the department or institution.

You may need to dig a bit deeper before you begin applying. If the announcements are not clear in their terminology (i.e., fixed-term vs. adjunct, indefinite tenure vs. tenure track), clarify the language by reviewing their web pages or contacting the institution. What does it say about the specialization sought? Are they strictly looking for one specialization or does the ad indicate that a variety of combinations of specialties and subspecialties will be considered? What you find in the job announcement and in your investigation into the opportunity will not only help you decide if it is an appropriate job for you, it will direct the content and focus of your application materials.

Make note of the specific information provided about application procedures and deadlines, materials to submit, etc. Read all of this information carefully. Be sure to follow application procedures exactly. An oversight could result in your application being discarded.

Unadvertised Openings
Another strategy to utilize is networking: talking with faculty, department heads, alumni, and fellow classmates within your field. Networking is a relatively time-consuming process but certainly a beneficial one. The more visible you make yourself, the more potential employers will recognize you, your abilities and interests. This is a proactive strategy that requires planning and follow-through. However, it will enable you to uncover opportunities prior to publication or that may otherwise never be published. It also provides you with the opportunity to get a feel for how the interview process works. In fact, often times referrals to other professionals result from this contact. With persistence, patience, and adequate follow-through, these strategies will undoubtedly bring positive results.

1. Faculty: As in your graduate career, faculty may be able to give you some direction in your post-graduate studies career. Through their own professional networks of colleagues, they often become aware of opportunities before they are published.
2. Peers/Alumni: Another method for building your network is to identify recent alumni from Penn State or your undergraduate college or university within your discipline. Set up informational interviews with them. More often than not, alumni are willing and eager to share with you their experiences and expertise.
3. Conferences/Conventions: Attending professional association conferences is a great way to begin to network effectively. Depending on the size and scope of the association, you will have the chance to talk with professionals from all over the country and perhaps abroad. As the opportunity arises, don’t be afraid to initiate conversations in which you could discuss your career and research interests, your career goals, along with their careers and current work. Gather as much information as you can about their institutions, positions, and departments.

Select Job Posting Sites for Academic Job Openings:
- The Chronicle of Higher Education - chroniclevitae.com
- Higher Education Recruitment Consortium - www.njepadhec.org
- Academic 360 - www.academic360.com
- Academic Employment Network - www.academicemploy.com
- Academic Jobs Today - www.academicjobstoday.com
- Academic Keys - academickes.com
- Higher Ed Jobs - www.higheredjobs.com
- University Council for Educational Administration - www.ucea.org
- PhDs.org - www.phds.org
- National Postdoctoral Association - www.nationalpostdoc.org

Questions that search committee members most often report having in mind as they peruse vitae:
- Does the candidate have the Ph.D. in hand? If not, how close are they?
- What is their area of specialization?
- How will this candidate’s research interests enrich my own research or lessen the teaching load of faculty in this institution?
- Does this candidate have a fair chance of producing tenurable work so we don’t have to go through the search process again soon?
- Has this person taught students like ours before, either under supervision or, better yet, as the sole instructor or creator of the course?
- How can this candidate lessen my own workload?
- Do I know of anyone they have worked with? Have they had good mentoring? What kinds of people are willing to support this applicant’s work record?

Finding a Post-Doc

Short for postdoctoral fellow, a post-doc is a research appointment of a fixed length of time for those holding a doctorate. It provides Ph.D.s with the opportunity to deepen their research in an area of expertise or acquire new areas of research expertise prior to pursuing an academic career or a career in industry. They often feature a lighter, if any, teaching load than faculty positions, providing young scholars more time to conduct more in-depth research and to publish.

Post-docs are generally sponsored by an academic institution, research center, government agency, or private industry. The post-doc has been a long-standing feature of academic careers in the hard sciences, and in many cases is considered a must. Although less common, post-doctoral positions do exist in the humanities and social sciences.

Finding a post-doc is similar to the job search for other academic positions. The key for post-docs is to start early, as some post-doc positions in top locations can be filled 1½ or 2 years in advance. Once you have any sense of when you might be completing your degree, you should be on the lookout. If you have the appropriate qualifications, a preceptor may be willing to hold a spot for you until you finish your degree.

Questions to Ask When Deciding and Evaluating Options

• Do you want to teach at a major research university or work in industry, and what kind of post-doc will best prepare you for that career goal?
• Do you want to dig deeper into your current area of research or would you like to become familiar with a slightly different area of research?
• What will be the Principle Investigator’s involvement with the lab? It is possible you will have very little interaction as high profile advisors are not necessarily very accessible?
• What is the reputation of the lab or research organization where the position is available, and where does the funding for the position come from? Will you be responsible for securing the funding for the position?
• How much freedom will the position give you to pursue your research interests?
• What is the feasibility of finishing the research, and finishing the research with publishable results within the terms of the post-doc appointment?

Remember, you will need to prepare for future job-hunting once you start your postdoctoral training. You should begin to determine what types of jobs are out there, what type of job you want, and what skills you need to start developing now to enhance your chances of landing a job in the future.