Acknowledgments

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ACES Career Services specifically serves students in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences. We help students explore potential careers, prepare for the job search and graduate or professional school, and connect with potential employers.

ACES Career Services is part of a large network of career development offices and services available at the University of Illinois. You can learn more about all career development resources available at Illinois by visiting www.careerservices.illinois.edu.

RESOURCES AND INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS

Resource Center
ACES Career Services maintains online resources at careerservices.aces.illinois.edu. Printed resources are available in the ACES Career Services Office located in 115 ACES Library. Resources cover topics such as these:

- Career exploration
- Writing résumés and cover letters
- Interviewing
- Attending graduate or professional school
- Networking
- Searching for a job or internship
- Business etiquette

Career Exploration
Choosing a career that meshes with your values, skills, and interests is important. We offer several web-based tools that can help you find your career focus. ACES Career Services provides individual advising by appointment and during posted drop-in hours which can be found at our Career Services website or on the digital sign in the lobby of the ACES Library. Career counseling is also available through The Career Center, located at 715 S. Wright St., Champaign (across from the Alma Mater statue).

Résumé Critiques
Your résumé is the most important document you will need for your job search. ACES Career Services can assist you in making sure your résumé is professional, free of errors, and an accurate description of your qualifications and competencies. Arrange an appointment or take advantage of drop-in hours to get the feedback you need.

Career Fairs
ACES Career Services hosts the College of ACES and Sciences Career Fair every October. Over 100 organizations attend the fair each year in search of new talent to fill both full-time and intern positions. Students are also encouraged to attend career fairs hosted by other units.

On-Campus Recruiting
ACES Career Services receives hundreds of job announcements annually, which are posted on I-Link, the campuswide recruiting network. Some organizations also conduct on-campus interviews, typically from October 1 to November 15 in the fall semester and from February 1 to April 15 in the spring. To participate in any on-campus recruiting activity hosted by ACES Career Services, students must set-up an I-Link account at https://I-Link-illinois-csm.symplicity.com/.

Graduate and Professional School Events
Since more than 40% of ACES graduates pursue advanced degrees, ACES Career Services hosts events pertaining to graduate and professional school. We also review personal statements and can help identify graduate programs that fit your aspirations.

I-Link Network
The I-Link Network is your free one-stop online location for all job postings, on-campus interviews, and career development events hosted by ACES Career Services. Students can register to use the I-Link Network at https://i-link-illinois-csm.symplicity.com/.

There is no registration fee.

How to Reach Us
ACES Career Services
Suite 115 ACES Library, Information, and Alumni Center
MC 632
1101 S. Goodwin Ave.
Urbana, IL 61801

Monday through Friday
8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
careerservices.aces.illinois.edu
Phone: 217-333-0981
**DEVELOPING A RÉSUMÉ**

In this publication, there are general recommendations about what to include in your résumé and how to present your information. It is up to you to decide how to best market yourself based on your experiences and career goals. Use common sense and imagination to highlight your best attributes in your résumé. Another way to think about it is to consider your résumé a marketing document. What knowledge, skills, and abilities do you have that would make you attractive to an employer?

Remember, the purpose of a résumé is to get you a job interview. The interview is what gets you the job.

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**Length**

As an undergraduate, you should be able to select and highlight your most marketable skills in a one-page résumé. If you have an extensive work history, limit information to what is relevant to the position for which you are applying. A graduate student with published works will likely have a curriculum vitae instead of a résumé. In the United States, a curriculum vitae is typically used to find academic positions.

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**Appearance**

Recruiters take very little time to review a résumé, so make your information as organized and concise as possible. An aesthetically pleasing layout may determine whether a résumé is read or tossed aside.

Some résumé tips for improved appearance:

- **Use bullet points selectively.** Reserve bullets to highlight something of significance. Consider a bullet point like an exclamation point—if your entire résumé was full of exclamation points, would anything stand out?

- **Using metrics attracts the reader's eye because they break up the text.** Quantifying your experience also gives relevance to your positions by creating scale—e.g., “Lifeguarded at community pool” vs. “Lifeguarded at a 2,500-square-foot aquatic facility.”

- **Make sure there are no typographical, spelling, or grammatical errors.**

- **For printed copies, use high-quality paper.**

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**Résumé Styles**

Most résumés are written in chronological style, which employers tend to prefer—with work experiences listed in the reverse order of when they occurred. Functional style highlights knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs); it is often used by individuals who have been out of the job market or who are changing careers. A combined style incorporates the KSAs of a functional résumé first and then includes the employment history.

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**Content**

If you are using your résumé as a marketing tool, you will want to highlight your most marketable attributes. For many undergraduates, your degree is of most significance. As you grow in your profession and have meaningful positions, you may consider placing your educational information at the end of your résumé. (Hint: Recruiters will look to the end of a résumé for education but they may not look for the relevant work experience if it is placed too far down the sheet.) List information in reverse chronological order (i.e., list the most recent positions first). The reason for using reverse chronological order is that employers know that relevant, recent past experience is the best predictor of future performance. As you progress through your undergrad years, you should replace high school activities and experiences with college-level or professional experiences. Keep these guidelines in mind as you create and modify your résumé.

- **Sell yourself—attract attention to your special abilities.**

- **Concentrate on your skills and competencies.** Be sure to use action verbs to describe your background. (See the Action Verbs list on page 11.)

- **Remember to indicate the result of the work you did and how it applies to future roles.**

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**Contact Information**

Make sure your name is the most obvious information on your résumé. Remember, you are marketing yourself, so your name must be prominent. Also include your mailing address, email address, and phone number. Do not include personal details such as age, marital status, or health condition.

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**Education**

List your educational background in reverse chronological order, starting with your highest college degree and working backward. Do not include high school information. If you have not yet completed your degree, be sure to include your expected graduation date. Dissertation and thesis topics may be included in this section as well as honors earned. Formal study abroad experiences may be included here, or you may list them in an activities section.

If you attended a different college and later transferred your credits, you only need to list the college where you earned your degree.
Experience

This category includes military, volunteer, and intern experience as well as employment. Include job titles, employers, responsibilities, and dates. Concentrate on your contributions and your impact describing them with action verbs (see the Action Verbs on page 11). You may include paid work experience, academic assignments of significance, and extracurricular assignments relevant to your desired field of employment. If your experience has not been relevant to your desired field of employment, you should still include a description of your responsibilities. Strive to show your growth or contributions while in each assignment.

Miscellaneous Information

Skills, activities, honors, awards, membership on committees or in honorary societies, public service, and even language ability can be placed in a miscellaneous category or a more specific one.

References

Do not include references on your résumé unless specifically requested to do so. Also, do not waste valuable résumé real estate by including the phrase “References available upon request.” Rather, create a separate sheet with your references and share the list when requested. Generally, a reference sheet will consist of the name, title, business mailing address, email address, and phone number of three to five academic or business references. Do not use relatives, friends, or other students as references. Be sure to obtain permission from each person you plan to list as a reference.

OPTIONAL RÉSUMÉ CATEGORIES

Profile

A profile, also known as a summary, is an excellent marketing tool to include on your résumé highlighting the knowledge, skills, and abilities that you have to offer an employer. A profile generally consists of three or four sentences that capture your main skills or strengths and your area of interest.

Objective Statement

In contrast to a profile, which describes what you can do for an employer, an objective statement tells an employer what you are seeking from them. This is a less effective marketing strategy because you are not showcasing your knowledge, skills and abilities. Additionally, you may appear self-centered or entitled. The one time an objective statement may be appropriate is for a career fair when you want to distinguish between seeking a full-time position vs. an internship.

Qualifications

Qualifications, or technical skills, may be established from any prior employment, educational achievement, internship, volunteer experience, hobby, or community service. This category is particularly helpful to students whose major is not obviously related to their career goal.

Language Ability

You can list this section separately, as a part of the qualifications statement, or in the additional information section only if there is likelihood that this ability will be viewed as beneficial. Specify the language(s) you read, write, and/or speak and your level of proficiency in each.

Publications

List any articles you have published or that have been accepted for publication. Follow standard citation guidelines for your field.

Research

Give employers insight into your professional abilities and training by listing any relevant research projects on which you have worked.

Extracurricular Activities

Employers often look to extracurricular activities as an indication of your interests and leadership abilities. The extracurricular activities you list should include organizations in which you are a member and offices you have held. You may also wish to include awards, honors, and interests in this category. Avoid listing potentially controversial activities, particularly any that are political or religious in nature.
DAVID YANG
1122 Village Lake Dr., Urbana, Illinois, 61820 • 217.111.2233 • DYang123@illinois.edu

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN, URBANA, ILLINOIS
Bachelor of Science in Technical Systems Management

PARKLAND COLLEGE, CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS
Associate Degree in Geographic Information Systems

EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN, URBANA, ILLINOIS
Pilot Plant/Agricultural Bioprocess Assistant Lab Technician
October 2016 – Present
Refurbished 7,500-square-foot facility on the University of Illinois campus. Perform experiments and tests to determine use/functionality of equipment. Maintain equipment used in food processing and bioprocesses.
• Selected to train new hires in operational procedures to standardize lab procedures.
• Completed lab tests in a timely manner to ensure final project completion.

GOOD TIMES FITNESS CENTER, CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS
Sports Fitness Instructor
July 2014 – August 2016
Instructed children ages 5 to 13 in sports and fitness. Taught swimming techniques and facilitated teamwork.
• Created lesson plans for the weekly swimming activities and directed fellow instructors to teach the children various sporting activities.
• Ensured children’s safety by following protocol and enforcing pool rules.

JIMMY JOHNS, CHAMPAIGN-URBANA, ILLINOIS
Delivery Driver/Sandwich Maker
June 2013 – July 2014
Independently delivered food to customers quickly and efficiently; worked as a team member to prepare food. Handled phone orders and operated the cash register.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Global Engineers: Costa Rica Volunteer Trip
January 2016
• Built greenhouses as a team member in Costa Rica to support year-round food production.
• Taught communities about sustainability: worked with the native Costa Ricans to reduce biodegradable waste and continued community beautification.
• Gained cultural awareness and a unique opportunity to make an impact towards the efforts of global sustainability.

University of Illinois Environmental Club
August 2015 – Present
• Promote environmental sustainability throughout campus. Participate in fundraising, trash pickup, and campus cleaning.

Parkland College Sustainability Committee
August 2014 – May 2016
• Served as President, led group to gain awareness of sustainability, acquired new members through campaign efforts.

ADDITIONAL SKILLS
• Proficient in AutoDesk, Pro-E, Adobe applications and Microsoft Office applications.
• Fluent in Mandarin, proficient in Spanish, familiar in Portuguese.
JOSEPH BRINKS
professional@gmail.com
(217) 111-2222
1111 Prairie Street
St. Charles, IL 60025

PROFILE
Hardworking entry-level candidate with research and teamwork experience. Able to work in high-stress environments, such as areas recently devastated by storms. Strong interest in the integration of natural resource research with government policy.

EDUCATION
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences May 2020

Relevant Courses:

WORK EXPERIENCE
United States Department of Agriculture -- Agriculture Research
Research Technician -- Global Change and Photosynthesis Research Unit May 2018-Present

Studied the physiological, biochemical and molecular mechanisms that guide plant responses to environmental stressors such as heat, drought, and elevated levels of O₃ and CO₂ on field crops for cutting-edge biofuel research station. Collect data, manage multiple projects and communicate scientific concepts to both researchers and practitioners.

- Design, implement, and analyze comparative soil moisture experiment utilizing frequency domain reflectometry.
- Perform field observations on development of recombinant inbred line soybeans in response to elevated ozone for QTL mapping study.
- Conduct various biochemical assays on plant tissue, including DNA/RNA extraction, thermocouple psychrometry, PCR, and protein extraction.
- Presented research developments to annual symposium of 1,000 people.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE
Habitat for Humanity
El Salvador and Mexico May-July 2018

Worked as a team member with 9 local volunteers to construct a house for a homeless family.

Biloxi, MS June 2017

Assisted in Hurricane George disaster response as a part of a cleanup and rebuilding crew.

- Collaborated with a team of 7 members to develop an effective rebuilding plan.

Ulan Bator, Mongolia June 2016

Assisted with a project to provide homes of impoverished families with better insulation.

Champaign Chiefs Youth Hockey Club
Assistant Coach August 2017-Present

Train and educate children ages 8-16 on the skills needed to play hockey.

Emphasize sportsmanship and self-confidence.
Alice Doe

Permanent Address: 1112 Village Park Way ● Joliet, IL 60431 ● (111) 241-3333
Current Address: 333 Airport Road ● Urbana, IL 61801 ● (111) 545-3333
doe19@illinois.edu

Education
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Bachelor of Science in Agricultural and Consumer Economics
Concentration in Agri-Accounting; Minor in Communications
Expected Graduation Date: May 2019
GPA: 3.98/4.00

Work Experience
ACES Career Services—Urbana, Illinois
Administrative Intern
August 2017-Present
Manage day-to-day on-campus recruitment activities, including securing parking for employers, creating interview packets, reserving interview rooms, posting jobs/internships on I-Link, updating website content and occasionally hosting evening events for career services office serving 3,000 students.
• Prepare for ACES and Sciences Career Fair with more than 100 companies attending.
• Collect, analyze and summarize data to create Graduate Destination Report.

Young North America—St. Louis, Missouri
Accounting/Finance Intern
May 2017-August 2017
• Determined elevator commodity prices using the futures market.
• Assisted in building financial statements.
• Prepared month-end expense reports, inventory price worksheets, and inventory measure-ups.
• Ran daily Fertilizer Position Report and worked with traders to project future purchases and sales.
• Produced invoices and applied tickets to various contracts.
• Edited and reformed Sarbanes-Oxley Narratives for Grain Accounting Department.
• Attended company meetings and shadowed traders.
• Worked with SAP Business Accounting Program.

James Brown Research Park—Pekin, Illinois
Seasonal Worker
May 2016-August 2016
• Pollinated different genetic varieties of corn to full adulthood.
• Gained hands-on experience while working in team environment.
• Trained new employees and provided guidance on procedures and protocols.

Artistic Gardens—Danville, Illinois
Landscape Artist
June 2015-August 2015
• Visualized finished landscape and coordinated employees.
• Purchased products to be sold in store and to be used in landscaping.
• Managed work sites when the manager was not present.

Volunteer Experience
Relay for Life—Champaign, Illinois, Participant and benefactor
April 2016
Ag in the Classroom—Champaign, Illinois, School Educator
August 2015-March 2016
MS Walk—National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Participant and benefactor
August 2015

Activities
Field and Furrow Club, Member
August 2016-Present
Hoof and Horn Club, Member
August 2016-Present
Sigma Alpha Professional Agricultural Society, Professional Development Chair
August 2015-Present
Sigma Alpha Lambda Honor Fraternity, Member
August 2015-Present
Isabella Santiago
327 N. Kensington Rd, LaGrange Park, IL 60525
santiago38@illinois.edu | 111.703.3333

OBJECTIVE
To obtain an internship in the food industry to further my knowledge of food science.

EDUCATION
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
College of ACES, Bachelor of Human Nutrition
- Cumulative GPA: 4.00/4.00
- James Scholar participant

EXPERIENCE
Research Assistant, University of Illinois Bevier Food Lab, Urbana, IL September 2018-present
Prepare samples and specimens for laboratory analysis by utilizing advanced laboratory techniques.
- Develop standard operating procedure for research project about third-world food product.
- Collected vitamin degradation data for research paper awaiting publication in scientific journal.

Senior Cashier, Banana Bread Company, Champaign, IL March 2018-September 2018
Implemented new sales techniques on behalf of company headquarters, and trained incoming staff on company policies, service strategies and sales techniques.
- Improved and optimized restaurant database of monthly expenditures.
- Assisted management with data organization and account balances.

Financial Assistant, Werner Recycling Enterprises, LaGrange Park, IL January 2017-January 2018
Created content for company website, social media and advertisements. Ensured accuracy of customer payments.
- Created content for company website, social media, and advertisements.
- Utilized bilingual skills to facilitate communication with customers.
- Ensured the fulfillment and accuracy of customer payments.
- Managed staff of 1-2 at company events.

ACTIVITIES
President, Spicy Peppers (short-form improvisational team), Urbana, IL October 2018-present
Producer, The Banjo Players (improvisational organization), Urbana, IL August 2017-present

SKILLS
Proficient in conversational and technical Spanish
Proficient in Microsoft Office (Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Access) and Adobe programs

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS
Recipient of the Glenna Lamkin Scholarship August 2017
Recipient of the Arlys Conrad Study Abroad Scholarship August 2017
Recipient of the Dad’s Library Award August 2016
Member of the Golden Key International Honour Society August 2016-present
**Action Verbs**

Action verbs describe your experiences and technical skills.

| Action Verbs                  | 
|-------------------------------|---|
| Abstracted                   | Compared                  |
| Achieved                     | Completed                 |
| Acted                        | Complied                  |
| Adapted                      | Composed                  |
| Addressed                    | Conceived                 |
| Administered                 | Conducted                 |
| Advertisement                | Conserved                 |
| Advised                      | Consultied                |
| Advocated                    | Contracted                |
| Aided                        | Contributed               |
| Allocated                    | Converted                 |
| Analyzed                     | Cooperated                |
| Answered                     | Coordinated               |
| Anticipated                  | Copied                    |
| Applied                      | Correlated                |
| Appraised                    | Counseled                 |
| Approved                     | Created                   |
| Arranged                     | Critiqued                 |
| Ascertained                  | Cultivated                |
| Assembled                    | Deal                      |
| Assessed                     | Debated                   |
| Assisted                     | Decided                   |
| Attained                     | Defined                   |
| Audited                      | Delegated                 |
| Augmented                    | Delivered                 |
| Authored                     | Designed                  |
| Bolstered                    | Detected                  |
| Briefed                      | Determined                |
| Brought                      | Developed                 |
| Budgeted                     | Devised                   |
| Built                        | Diagnosed                 |
| Calculated                   | Directed                  |
| Cared                        | Discovered                |
| Charged                      | Discriminated             |
| Chartered                    | Dispatched                |
| Checked                      | Displayed                 |
| Clarified                    | Dissected                 |
| Classified                   | Documented                |
| Coached                      | Drafted                   |
| Collaborated                 | Drove                     |
| Collected                    | Edited                    |
| Comforted                    | Eliminated                |
| Communicated                 | Empathized                |
| Indicated                    | Enforced                  |
| Influenced                   | Enlightened               |
| Initiated                    | Enlisted                  |
| Inspected                    | Established               |
| Integreated                  | Estimated                 |
| Interpreted                  | Evaluated                 |
| Interviewed                  | Examined                  |
| Introduced                   | Exceeded                  |
| Invented                     | Excellled                 |
| Inventoried                  | Expelled                  |
| Investigated                 | Experimented              |
| Judged                       | Explained                 |
| Kept                         | Explored                  |
| Launched                     |Expressed                  |
| Learned                      | Extracted                 |
| Lectured                     | FACilitated               |
| Led                          | Fashioned                 |
| Lifted                       | Financed                  |
| Listened                     | Fixed                     |
| Located                      | Followed                  |
| Logged                       | Formulated                |
| Made                         | Fosteled                  |
| Managed                      | Founded                   |
| Manipulated                  | Gained                    |
| Mapped                       | Gathered                  |
| Mastered                     | Give                      |
| Mediated                     | Generated                 |
| Mediator                     | Governed                  |
| Mentored                     | Guided                    |
| Met                          | Handled                   |
| Minimized                    | Headed                    |
| Modeled                      | Helped                    |
| Modified                     | Identified                |
| Monitored                    | Illustriated              |
| Narrated                     | Imagined                  |
| Negotiated                   | Implemented               |
| Nominated                    | Improved                  |
| Obtained                     | Improvised                |
| Officer                      | Inaugurated               |
| Ordered                      | Indexed                   |
| Organized                    | Initiated                 |
| Originated                   | Integrated                |
| Performed                    | Interpreted               |
| Planned                      | Interviewed               |
| Projected                    | Invented                  |
| Promoted                     | Investigated              |
| Protected                    | Judge                     |
| Proposed                     | Kept                      |
| Provided                     | Launched                  |
| Published                    | Learned                   |
| Programmed                   | Led                       |
| Projected                    | Lifted                    |
| Promoted                     | Listened                  |
| Protected                    | Located                   |
| Proposed                     | Logged                    |
| Provided                     | Made                      |
| Published                    | Maintained                |
| Purchased                    | Manipulated               |
| Questioned                   | Mapped                    |
| Raised                       | Mastered                  |
| Ran                          | Maximized                 |
| Ranked                       | Mediated                  |
| Rationalized                 | Mentored                  |
| Read                         | Met                       |
| Reasoned                     | Minimized                 |
| Recorded                     | Modeled                   |
| Received                     | Modified                  |
| Reduced                      | Monitored                 |
| Referred                     | Narrated                  |
| Related                      | Negotiated               |
| Replied                      | Observed                  |
| Reported                     | Ordered                   |
| Researched                   | Operated                  |
| Responded                    | Restored                  |
| Revamped                     | Originated                |
| Reviewed                     | Oversaw                   |
| Scanned                      | Performed                 |
| Scheduled                    | Persuaded                 |
| Screened                     | Planned                   |
| Specialized                  | Projected                 |
| Spoke                        | Prepared                  |
| Stimulated                   | Present                   |
| Strategized                  | Prioritized               |
| Streamlined                   | Produced                  |
| Strengthened                  | Programmed               |
| Stressed                     | Projected                |
| Studied                      | Proposed                  |
| Substantiated                | Protected                 |
| Succeeded                    | Proved                    |
| Summarized                   | Provided                 |
| Supervised                   | Published                |
| Supported                    | Purchased               |
| Surveyed                     | Questioned                |
| Sustained                    | Raised                    |
| Symbolized                    | Ran                       |
| Tabulated                    | Ranked                   |
| Taught                       | Rationalized           |
| Talked                       | Read                     |
| Theorized                    | Reasoned                 |
| Trained                      | Recorded                 |
| Translated                   | Received                 |
| Upgraded                     | Reduced                 |
| Utilized                     | Referred                |
| Validated                    | Related                  |
| Verified                     | Responded                |
| Visualized                   | Won                       |
| Won                          | Wrote                    |

**Cover Letter Tips**

- Be brief and concise. Make every word count.
- Don’t mass-produce one letter; tailor each letter to an individual employer and the skills they desire in an applicant.
- Be persuasive.
- Use your own words; let your personality and enthusiasm show through.
- Avoid words that you are not comfortable using in everyday speech.
- Use strong action verbs.
- Don’t overuse the word “I.” Focus on the employer’s point of view.
- For a printed letter, don’t forget to sign it.
- Use the same format as in your résumé; for a printed letter, the paper should match your cover letter.

[careerservices.aces.illinois.edu](careerservices.aces.illinois.edu)
## Writing a Cover Letter

Your cover letter is an additional chance to tell the story of why an employer should select you over other candidates. A good cover letter shows employers how you will help them achieve their goals and encourages them to review your résumé. Often, though, recruiters look at the résumé first and then read your cover letter to support their instincts, so do not reiterate information from your résumé in your cover letter.

### Content

The first paragraph of a cover letter is the most important. It should capture the reader’s attention and motivate him or her to read the rest of the letter and review your résumé. Describe specific personal knowledge of the company and avoid broad generalizations. Tell the reader why you are writing. For instance, are you applying for a particular job, or are you inquiring about a possible position?

The next few paragraphs should describe how you are qualified to meet the challenges in the role you seek. Begin with a statement that summarizes the theme of your letter. Discuss why you want the job and what benefits you will provide the company. Explain how your experiences—academic, extracurricular, or volunteer—make you a good candidate. Do not repeat information from your résumé unless you elaborate or relate it to the specific position for which you are applying.

The final paragraph addresses your plan of action. Explain what you want and what you plan to do. Refer the reader to your enclosed résumé. Express your desire for an interview, and mention that you will call after a specified period of time. Thank the reader for his or her time, and provide your contact information. Close with a statement that encourages a response.

### Format

Your cover letter should be one page, single-spaced in the same font as your résumé, and follow one of three formats for business letters.

**+ Block Format**

All text is aligned to the left margin. Paragraphs are not indented. This is the most common style to use in a cover letter, and all sample cover letters in this book show examples of block format.

**+ Modified Block Format**

The date and the closing are aligned to the center, while all other text is aligned to the left.

**+ Semi-modified Block Format**

The date and closing are aligned to the center. All other text is aligned to the left, except the first sentence of each paragraph, which is indented.

For more information on formatting your résumé and more examples of the different formats, Purdue Owl is a great writing resource (owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/34/42).
SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION AND COVER LETTER

Cover letters should be tailored to the job.
A cover letter is by no means simply a document in which you tell the employer how great you are.

Before you begin writing, you need to have a solid understanding of what the company needs and wants, and what problems they are facing. You then write a letter in which you highlight how your skills and experiences are relevant to what the business needs.

The student applying for the intern position described below was able to focus his cover letter through a firm understanding of the position responsibilities.

JOB DESCRIPTION
Sales interns in both our food service and consumer products areas are responsible for calling on a variety of existing customers with the objective of increasing sales for their district. This 12- to 14-week internship will provide students with "hands-on experience" following a district sales manager who will act as a coach and mentor.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES
- Add products into distribution and expand the usage of existing products
- Implement marketing strategies for Food Services products
- Receive training on products, selling techniques, route building, and business planning
- Build a business plan for the territory and report results
- Work with sales and account management to gain new product placements
- Impact and contribute meaningful work that will affect the Food Service bottom line

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS
- Strong teamwork skills
- Strong communication skills
- Ability to persuade others
- Background in business or related field

Despite the fact that the student was emailing the recruiter, he was able to write a cover letter that presented his experiences in a formal and professional manner. This is a useful example if you are emailing your résumé to a recruiter, or if you are writing your cover letter in a word box on an online application. Ensure that your language is just as concise and planned as if you were writing a formal letter.

He is able to emphasize how eager he is both to learn and to apply his skills to a position with meaningful outcomes that will "affect the bottom line of the business." Many cover letters focus on "gaining experience" and "learning skills," but he is able to show how eager he is to offer his skills to an employer as well.

His experience as a resident advisor reflects his teamwork skills and his ability to persuade others. Both of these qualities are desired in applicants.

Since a background in business or a related field is required, the student emphasizes his diverse education in many of the domains of business, such as accounting and marketing. His background in agriculture allows him to further touch upon the fact that he understands business in an agricultural setting.

Black Cow District Sales Internship
Dear Mr. Jones,
I am writing in regard to the district sales intern position that I saw posted on your company’s website. I am currently studying Agricultural and Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois, and have been in touch with several of the past interns who had been chosen for this position. Having heard their positive experiences with your company I am certain that this position will stretch and challenge me, as well as allowing me to learn firsthand from a successful sales team.

My position as a resident advisor involves working with a team of five other resident advisors to manage approximately 200 undergraduate students, organize weekly events and provide academic advice and guidance to students who are having trouble transitioning. My role has allowed me to act as both a leader and a team member within the university community. Furthermore, I am often required to persuade students to attend events, and to guide students who are falling behind in school. This has taught me how to communicate in a persuasive manner which I know will be applicable to this internship in sales.

I understand that the district sales internship will be very "hands-on" and I know that I am well-prepared. My present accounting, financial, and marketing skills provide me with a strong business foundation and the ability to market products and services effectively. I have been raised in the agricultural industry, and am personally familiar with certain enterprises on which your business focuses. This internship will allow me to combine academic and personal experiences to directly affect the bottom line of the business.

Please find my résumé attached to this email. I am very interested in this position, and I believe that my experiences and education in agriculture and accounting will enable me to exceed your expectations.

Best regards,
Robert Musgrove

Robert Musgrove
Jones Hall Resident Advisor
(630)876-5432

MARKET YOUR PROFESSIONAL BRAND

careerservices.aces.illinois.edu

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BRANDING YOURSELF PROFESSIONALLY

Social media can be another outlet for marketing your professional brand. Use common sense so you can provide a positive first impression to an employer. Below are good checklists when creating your brand.

A good way to manage your professional brand is to develop a LinkedIn profile.

DIGITAL FOOTPRINT CHECKLIST

✦ Be careful what personal information you share – never post your address, phone number, etc.

✦ Though discrimination is wrong, it unfortunately exists. Think carefully before disclosing information about sexual orientation, gender, race, relationship status, political views, religious preference, and other potentially discriminatory information.

✦ Never post inappropriate photos, limit what is posted on your profile, and set privacy settings.

✦ Never discuss information about professors, employers, or clients.

✦ Think about the groups to which you belong. What do they say about your character?

✦ Always use social networking responsibly.

Looking Professional

Men

✦ A two-piece suit in a solid neutral color (blue, black, or gray) is the safest choice. A sports jacket and dress pants are acceptable in certain situations.

✦ Ties should be flattering in color and design.

✦ Wear polished shoes with socks that match your pants, high enough that no skin shows when you sit down and cross your legs.

✦ Cologne should be minimal.

✦ Hair should be neat, trimmed, and away from your face.

Women

✦ A suit with a knee-length skirt or slacks and a dress shirt is most appropriate. A professional-looking dress with a jacket is also acceptable.

✦ Legs and feet should be covered with appropriate hosiery (no fishnet stockings!).

✦ Shoes should be simple and polished, with no more than a 2-inch heel.

✦ Accessories should not distract the interviewer; keep any jewelry simple.

✦ Make-up should be natural looking, and perfume should be minimal.

✦ Hair should be neat and away from the face.

Avoiding fashion faux pas

✦ Never wear blue denim jeans or shorts unless the vast majority of others do.

✦ Do not dress to draw attention to your physical appeal.

✦ Casual dress does not mean sloppy attire; your clothes should be free of wrinkles, stains, and holes.

✦ Wear workout clothing at the gym, not at work.

✦ Be mindful of organizational codes for shoes. Some policies require closed-toe shoes or even steel-capped boots.
Once you have created your profile, you can start to connect with others. The more individuals you connect with, the more your network will grow, which will allow you to view more profiles. Additionally, more people will be able to view your profile and better understand your professional brand. As with any social media, you want to make sure your LinkedIn profile leaves a positive impression with viewers.

LinkedIn is the most developed business and career-oriented networking site on the Internet. LinkedIn has helped users research people and companies, reconnect with past businesses and colleagues, build relationship with influential people, and increase face-to-face networking effectiveness.

Who uses LinkedIn?
• 60,000 college alumni groups
• 225M+ professionals
• 150+ industries
• 30M+ students and recent grads
• 2.9M companies
• 88 of 100 Fortune 100 companies

LinkedIn is an online networking tool that is transforming recruiting. According to Tim Mote, the Director of Talent Acquisition for Kraft Foods Group, Kraft sourced 41% of their North American hires through LinkedIn in 2013. The next largest source for hires came from referrals. Only 13% were hired directly from universities. Clearly, a LinkedIn profile is becoming as critical as a résumé for job seekers.

What to include in a LinkedIn Profile?

Headline
• This section is where you succinctly indicate your position or career focus.

Photo
• A professional photograph is advised, but having no photograph is better than using an inappropriate one.

Summary
• In this section, you can highlight your key skills, experiences, and accomplishments.

Experience
• Just like your résumé, list your professional work experiences.

Education
• Remember to list your degrees in reverse chronological order.

Additional Sections
• Complete any of the following sections (Skills/Honors/Volunteer) that highlight your interests and abilities.

Groups
• Join any industry/interest groups that are of interest to you.
Any interactions you have with an employer are significant, so be sure to handle all communications professionally. Once invited to an interview, be sure to ask questions about the length of the interview, the location, number of interviewers and style of interview, where to park, with whom to meet, any identification required, how expenses are to be handled, etc. This shows you are astute and will help alleviate any anxiety about being uninformed.

Preparation and practice before each interview are critical. You need to know yourself and your skills, accomplishments, and career objectives. You also need a strong awareness of the company and position for which you are applying.

Once you are notified about an interview, keep your cool and think through the steps ahead.

Interviewers use questions to measure your knowledge, skills, and abilities. Questions are used to determine how well you “fit” with the employer. In order to best prepare, use the following steps:

Reflect on your skills and abilities that qualify you for the position.

Practice describing your knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Write out your answers to common questions (see “Questions You Might Be Asked”).

Practice answering questions with someone or out loud in front of a mirror.

Prepare to address any potentially negative aspects of your background (such as a low grade point average, little participation in outside activities, or no related work experience). It is up to you to turn the negative factors in your background into positive attributes. For example, perhaps your low GPA stems from having to fully support yourself through college; or though you have no related work experience, you have plenty of experience that shows you to be a loyal and valued employee.

Complete a mock interview, and incorporate the feedback you receive.

**Your Background**

Tell me about yourself.

What motivates you?

If you could create the perfect job for yourself, what would it be?

What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?

How would you describe yourself?

How would a friend or professor describe you?

Tell me about _________ (usually something on your résumé).

**Your Skills**

Tell me about your communication skills.

Give me an example of your problem-solving skills.

What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

In what areas are you looking to improve?

How would others describe your weaknesses?

How do you organize your time?

Do you prefer teamwork or working alone?

What part-time or summer jobs have interested you the most?

Have you ever done this kind of work before?

What are your qualifications?

What experience do you have?

How do you determine or evaluate success?

Why should we hire you?

What do you think it takes to be successful in our company?

In what ways do you see yourself contributing to our company?

What type of work environment do you enjoy most?

Are you willing to spend six months as a trainee?

What do you know about our company?

Why did you decide to seek a position with our company?

What criteria are important to you in evaluating a potential employer?

Are you willing to relocate?

Do you have a geographical preference? Why?

Are you willing to travel?
A Star Example

Practice Question

“Tell me about a time you had difficulty with a teammate not contributing.”

Before organizing your STAR responses, determine what behavior is being assessed. In this case, the behavior is teamwork.

Step 1

Choose an applicable situation. When have you worked in a team?

Situation: “I was on a group project in a class developing a marketing plan for new technology in automatic steering.”

Step 2

Spell out the task.

Task: “My role was to analyze potential markets in Brazil and study the applicable patent laws and identify opportunities for entry. A teammate was supposed to do the same analysis for Argentina, but she came to the meetings with nothing.”

Step 3

Describe the actions you took.

Actions: “After a team discussion, I decided to first talk to my teammate and express my interest in helping her. I learned that our meetings were being held when she was scheduled to work, making it difficult for her to participate. That was easy to address—I found a more convenient meeting time. She also admitted challenges with where to start on the project. I offered to share my data sources and the spreadsheets with her so we could discuss a good starting point together.”

Step 4

Describe the results of your actions, relating them to how you exhibit the behavior you identified (teamwork) and indicating how they contribute to the resolutions of the problem.

Results: “My teammate was able to attend more meetings, and she soon began bringing in some data and analysis. She became a functioning part of the team. Her contributions allowed me to give a broader perspective on the product launch.”
INTERVIEWING FROM START TO FINISH

Interviewing can take many forms and shapes. Familiarize yourself with the different types so that you are prepared. To reduce nervousness about interviewing, keep the following tips in mind.

TELEPHONE AND VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews may be part of the screening process before or in lieu of an in-person interview. In a face-to-face interview, you may be able to gauge your performance by noticing facial expressions and the body language of the interviewer. You lose that advantage over the phone except perhaps for the interviewer’s tone of voice.

These tips can help you “ace” your phone interview:

✓ Smile while you talk; speak as if the person could see you.
✓ Provide detailed answers and specific examples.
✓ If it is a video interview, make sure your surroundings are neat and that there are no distractions, like a moving object.

INTERVIEWING

It’s a good idea to arrive 10 to 15 minutes early for an interview. Be aware that you may be evaluated from the time you enter the premises until the time you leave, so remain “on” the entire time. Once introduced to the recruiter(s) or others, it is customary to shake hands. Your grip should be firm but not crushing.

What to Expect

There are many ways to conduct interviews. The strategy an employer chooses depends on the organization and the position to be filled. Typically, on-campus interviews are conducted with one or two interviewers; however, some companies may have several or even a panel of interviewers. Interviews may include aptitude testing, candidate receptions, and formal meals.

Many recruiters will begin the interview with some small talk on topics ranging from the weather to sports—rarely anything that relates to your skills. Nonetheless, you are still being evaluated. Recruiters judge candidates on many different points, such as how well they communicate informally. This means you must do more than smile and nod during informal conversation.

In the formal portion of the interview, you will be asked about your qualifications. Most interviews conducted on campus are “behavioral interviews.” Based on the premise that past behaviors are the best predictors of future performance, behavioral interview questions focus on your past experiences to assess specific skills and competencies. The interviewer is looking for detailed answers regarding a situation (Situation), the task you were to complete (Task), your behaviors (Actions), and the outcomes (Results) of your actions—in other words, the S-T-A-R format. You must be able to communicate your abilities clearly and concisely. Listen attentively, and be aware of your body language. Ensure you are answering the question you are asked. Pausing is ok, as is asking (once) for the question to be repeated. Do not overdo the times you ask someone to repeat a question.

At the end of an interview, it is customary for a recruiter to ask, “Do you have any questions for us?” The questions you ask are as important as the ones you answer. Be sure to prepare questions that are meaningful and reflect your criteria.

Here are a few sample questions:

✓ What aspects of working for [company XYZ] do you value the most?
✓ How would you describe a typical day in this position?
✓ If I were to get this job, what would success look like?

The Close Counts

It is important to remain enthusiastic and courteous throughout the process. Near the end of the interview, ask about the hiring process and the employer’s approximate timeline for making a selection. Be sure to ask how you should follow up with the employer. As you stand to leave, shake the recruiter’s hand, thank him or her for considering you, and get a business card so that you can follow up with a thank you note or email.

After the Interview

The end of the first interview does not indicate the end of your evaluation. The next steps you take can make the difference in getting the job.

Always take the time to write a thank-you to your interviewer. If you were interviewed by more than one person, you may write to the main contact and ask that your appreciation be shared with the others, or better yet, send a personalized note to each individual.

Typically, employers will give an approximate timeline when you should expect to hear from them regarding their hiring decision. If that date comes and goes, contact the interviewer to get an updated timeline. This is a great way to reiterate your enthusiasm for the job.

Tip

Online job search portals can help with a job search as well as provide interview tips and company reviews.

These websites are all good options:

✓ agcareers.com
✓ glassdoor.com
✓ indeed.com
The second interview is often an on-site visit. These follow-up interviews allow the employer to make a more in-depth assessment of your qualifications and personal characteristics and to ensure a good match between your goals and the opportunity available. They also let you meet additional employees and learn more about the position, career advancement, and the local community.

An on-site interview can help you decide whether to accept a job offer if one is extended.

Employers vary greatly in how they arrange these visits. Be sure you know the itinerary so that you know what to expect, what to pack if an overnight stay is involved, and how to prepare. Formats might include any of these:

- A series of one-to-one interviews with a variety of staff
- Panel interviews with departmental managers and first-line supervisors
- Group interviews with several candidates at one time
- A facility tour and a meeting with potential co-workers
- Meals with company representatives
- Aptitude testing and group activities
- Receptions with all the final candidates attending
- A social outing to a cultural or sporting event

You may have a dining experience as part of an interview, which allows you to interact with a company representative in a more casual setting. But remember that you are still being evaluated during the meal, so be sure to exercise good dining etiquette!

Since arrangements for an on-site office visit are coordinated between you and the employer, you will want to verify the interview location. Ask for directions and an agenda. If the office visit is out of the area, consider the following advice:

- Well in advance, schedule your flights and hotel reservation and get directions—to and from the airport, hotel, and interview site. Some organizations will make your transportation reservations for you.
- If possible, plan to arrive the night before to avoid airline delays and cancellations.
- At the hotel, collect your interview packet from the reception desk and review your notes about the employer and the questions you will ask.
- Be sure to have contact information for someone within the organization in the event of transportation delays.
- Practice answering potential questions.
- Get a good night’s sleep. (This is not the time to check out the social scene.)

While visiting an employer, remember that anyone you meet, even for a minute, is a potential evaluator, so be polite and professional in every situation. You may also find yourself being asked the same question by different people. Tailor your answer to your audience and answer enthusiastically every time, continuing to sell yourself and your qualifications.
Your academic knowledge and skills may be spectacular, but do you have the social skills needed to be successful in the workplace? Practicing professional etiquette indicates to potential employers that you are a mature, responsible adult who can aptly represent their company.

Failing to demonstrate proper etiquette could damage your image, prevent you from getting a job, and jeopardize personal and business relationships.

**MEETING AND GREETING**

Etiquette begins with meeting and greeting. Be sure to use a firm handshake, not too weak and not too strong, and look the person you are meeting in the eye.

The following basic rules will help you get ahead in the workplace:

- **Always stand when introducing or being introduced to someone.**
- **When making an introduction, provide information about both parties: “Mr. Jones, may I present Ms. Kate Smith, a senior majoring in Technical Systems Management at the University of Illinois. Kate, this is Mr. Tom Jones. Tom is a Technology Systems Engineer with CEW Informatics.”**
- **Until given permission to do differently, always address someone by his or her title and last name.**

**CONTEMPORARY DINING SKILLS**

Savvy dining skills play a major role in today’s business arena. Top management at many Fortune 500 companies take potential front-line employees to lunch or dinner to observe their comfort level with executives, spouses, wait staff, and, yes, even myriad pieces of silverware. Like it or not, management equates good manners with competence in business and poor manners with incompetence. Knowing how to act in a dining situation adds to your 9-to-5 abilities.

**Before the Meal**

- **Arrive on time, or call ahead if you know you will be late.**

**Sitting Down**

- **Do not place any items on the table (such as a bag, purse, sunglasses, cell phone, or briefcase).**

**The Place Setting**

- **Think BMW—bread on the left, meal in the middle, water on the right.**
- **For multiple courses and duplicate utensils (for example, a salad fork and a dining fork), start at the outside and work toward the plate.**
- **Dessert utensils may be above the place setting or served with dessert.**

**Do’s and Don’ts**

**General Etiquette**

- **Turn off cell phones and any other electronic devices.**
- **Maintain proper posture.**
- **Keep elbows off the table.**
- **Do not apply makeup, comb your hair, or attend to any other self-care need at the table.**

**Utensils**

- **Never hold a utensil in a fist.**
- **Do not talk with your utensils.**
- **Set the utensils on your plate, not the table, when you are not using them.**
- **Do not use both hands simultaneously to hold utensils and cups.**

**Napkins**

- **Use your napkin frequently.**
- **Do not use your napkin as a tissue.**
- **If you have to sneeze, turn your head away from the table and catch the sneeze in a tissue, handkerchief, or napkin.**

**Other Tips While Eating**

- **Wait for everyone to get their meal before starting yours; follow the host.**
- **Don’t talk or drink with food in your mouth.**
- **Don’t chomp ice.**
- **Take small bites.**
- **For food that needs to be cut, cut 1 to 3 bite-sized pieces at a time, then place your knife on your plate.**
- **If you leave the table, excuse yourself and place your napkin on your seat.**
- **When finished eating, place your napkin neatly to the left of your plate.**
- **Break your bread or roll into bite-size pieces and butter each piece individually.**
- **Gently stir your soup to cool it rather than blow on it.**
- **Spoon your soup away from you.**
- **Remove any bones discreetly with thumb and index finger and place on the edge of your plate.**
- **If you have any problem with the meal, quietly bring it to the server’s attention.**

**Paying the Bill**

- **Generally the host pays.**
- **If you are called upon to tip, be aware of tip expectations—15% for moderate service and 20% for excellent service.**
Emails are a quick and efficient way to contact your prospective employers during the recruitment process, but be aware unsolicited emails may have a negative effect. Always maintain a professional tone, and remember to proofread your messages for errors. Following these guidelines will ensure a positive impression.

Remember to tell the reader how you learned of the opportunity.

+ **Name**
  It is critical that you spell the employer’s and recruiter’s names correctly; doublecheck them against a website or business card. If you have never met the recruiter in person, and are unsure of gender, open with “Dear [full name]” rather than “Dear [Mr. or Ms.].”

+ **Subject**
  Choose an appropriate subject line that summarizes the purpose of your email.

+ **Acronyms**
  Abbreviations and acronyms are best avoided as they may mean nothing to the recipient. Some acronyms such as ACES are very familiar to us on campus but mean nothing to an employer off-campus. Other acronyms, such as “OMG,” simply do not belong in a business email. Be conscious of the language you use, and ensure that you are being clear at all times.

+ **Font**
  Select standard fonts and avoid wallpapers or backgrounds.

+ **Signature**
  It can look professional to add an automated signature that appears at the end of your message with your name, position(s), and contact information.

**Emailing Your Résumé**

- Save your résumé as a PDF file to ensure that your formatting remains consistent when the file is opened.
- Employers receive many résumés, so ensure your file name is professional and informative; including your full name is a good choice (e.g. Joe. SmithRésumé.pdf).
- Put your name and the job code in the subject line to ensure your email is easy to find for the employer.

**Emailing a Thank You**

- Be sure to send a thank-you email within one business day after your interview is complete. (Emails are such a quick method of communication that you risk seeming disorganized if it takes you longer.)
- You can be brief, but ensure that you thank the recruiter for his or her time, and reemphasize your interest in the position.

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Dear Ms. Jones:

I just wanted to send a quick note to thank you for today’s interview. Your team made me feel very welcome and your company’s commitment to the Animal Welfare Association’s standards for animal treatment is consistent with my values. I feel with my animal science background that I will be able to make a positive contribution to your organization. I appreciate the opportunity to be considered for employment at XYZ Corporation.

I look forward to hearing from you within a few weeks regarding my status. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you need more information.

Sincerely,

John Doe

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Remember to tell the reader how you learned of the opportunity.
Two great ways to explore careers are through job shadows and informational interviews.

Remember, your intent is to better understand your career goals—not to secure a job.

**Job Shadowing**

Job shadows are an excellent way to discover potential career interests. Job shadowing varies with the host site, but generally it allows a student to accompany a professional in the workplace for one day, observing the environment and the type of work done in that profession. Many job shadow participants are exposed to additional aspects of the host company and get a broad overview of the workings of the organization without the time commitment of an internship.

The College of ACES hosts a formal job shadow program. Descriptions are posted on I-Link in the fall; students submit applications, and matching is determined in early December. Job shadows generally take place over winter break, but they can also be coordinated between the host and student at other times (during spring break, after finals, etc.). If there is a company in which you are particularly interested, utilize your networking skills to seek a job shadow opportunity on your own.

**Informational Interviewing**

A good way to learn about a potential career is to seek out an informational interview, which can be useful to find out the work that a given profession encompasses and also how one can enter that field. Some professions do not have a direct route into the profession; others are more defined on what is required to be a part of that profession.

To get started, think about a profession about which you are curious. For example, how would you go about learning about a career in farmland appraisal? You could do an Internet search for “how to become a farm appraiser in Illinois” and review the list of criteria, but you could also go a step further to seek the advice of an active appraiser. For example, you could ask a working appraiser’s recommendation for how someone new to the field should approach acquiring appraisal hours and the timing of the accreditation exam.

After identifying the job title you want to investigate, make a list of people you know doing the work in which you are interested. Contact them to ask whether they would be willing to meet with you for 20 to 30 minutes to give their advice. Explain what you have done thus far in terms of career exploration, academics, etc. and what you think you are interested in. Ask if they have any advice about where you should go from here. Be prepared for some rejection, as many professionals are busy. However, if you have a long enough list, you are certain to find someone with the time and inclination to help guide you.
Internships are two-fold. They help the employer determine if you would make a good employee, and they help you better understand your career goals and the organization.

Searching for an internship requires the same steps as searching for a job.

**TIMELINE**

Companies begin advertising their summer internships early in the fall semester. Large companies and those with long-standing internship programs prefer to have their interns committed before Thanksgiving break. Additional opportunities will likely arise during spring semester, but don’t wait until then to begin your search if you want to work for a big corporation. Smaller organizations, non-profit organizations, and those that hire summer interns on an as-needed basis tend to recruit in the spring semester. By networking with employers’ representatives at career fairs and company presentations, you help place yourself in the front of mind when recruiters are ready to hire interns.

You can also seek internship experience as an underclassman. Not all companies require junior standing for internship candidates, and an actively engaged freshman or sophomore who lands an internship will likely rise above the competition when seeking a junior-level internship. The additional real-world experience also should prove very valuable when you are seeking full-time employment. Any type of professional experience related to your chosen field is worthwhile.

**PAID VS. UNPAID**

Most internships in the for-profit sector are paid, but unpaid internships still offer opportunities to gain valuable work experience and can have a payoff when you are looking for full-time work. In addition to making connections, you get training and an understanding of the industry.

**CREDIT VS. NOT-FOR-CREDIT**

Depending on your major, you may be required to earn academic credit for an internship to meet graduation requirements. If not, you may still be able to earn credit for your internship. Talk with your department or academic advisor for details.

Be sure to consider, though, whether you will need the academic hours to graduate. There is no need to pay for the credit if you do not need it. Most companies are only interested in the experience you gain and do not care whether you pursue academic credit. Also, you may be surprised that your transcript lists your internship as independent study. Even if it is called internship on your transcript, it does not speak to the real-world value or the experience you gained.

**SUMMER VS. SCHOOL TERM**

Though most internships are available in the summer, do not overlook six-month or semester-long internships. There are many reasons why these are great opportunities. You have a longer period to gain experience, prove yourself, and learn about your chosen field. Also, summer is not the “busy” time for some industries. An accounting major, for example, may benefit from a spring internship during tax season. There is also typically less competition for internships that occur during or overlap with the traditional academic year.

Longer-term experiences can be extremely rewarding and provide a break from the academic setting. If you feel pressured to complete your undergraduate degree in four years, realize that if you plan early and accurately, you may be able to have a semester-long internship and still finish “on time.” Or you may decide to make being a “super senior” part of your plan.

Finally, some employers are willing to extend internships over the academic year on a part-time basis. Part-time work may not provide as clear a picture of the daily demands in a given profession, but you’ll learn enough to assess whether you enjoy a particular job or industry.

**MAKE THE MOST OUT OF YOUR INTERNSHIP**

✦ Be responsible, show up on time, and work hard.

✦ Take initiative: volunteer to help on projects. Be responsible for the projects you work on by gathering the information you need to complete them and by asking for guidance when it’s needed.

✦ Learn the business: get to know the employer’s culture, the market, goals, clients, trends, and competitors.

✦ Network: When it is feasible, interact with your coworkers. Schedule informational interviews to learn how they got their jobs, what they do, and about the pros and cons of the industry and company.

✦ If you’d like to work at the company after graduation, stay in touch with your contacts. Email them occasionally with updates on relevant courses or your future plans. Even if you decide on a different career direction, you will have an excellent source of references and skills.
Job Search Methods

Many job search methods are available to students, and an effective search will likely involve several of the strategies outlined here. ACES Career Services can assist as you implement any of these strategies.

There is no one right way to find a job. Below are three methods that are proven.

Make the Most of a Career Fair

The College of ACES co-hosts the ACES and Sciences Career Fair in the fall semester and co-sponsors the All Campus Career Fair and the Research Park Career Fair in the spring semester. More than 100 companies and organizations attend the ACES and Sciences Career Fair in search of new talent to fill both intern and full-time positions. For many recruiters, career fairs are an opportunity to meet students, initially screen candidates, and talk about career opportunities in their organizations.

Preparing Beforehand

A good career fair strategy involves being prepared—knowing what to expect and what’s expected of you. A well-prepared student who makes a positive impression has a good chance of being contacted for available openings. Here are some tips to help guarantee your success.

Research Companies and Industries

Investigate which employers are expected to attend the career fair and target specific ones relevant to you. Create a list of the companies you want to see and gather information about them, such as products, competitors, location(s), ownership (public vs. private), and industry growth rate. Recruiters are more likely to follow up with job seekers who know key information about their companies and the positions being offered.

Practice Your Approach

Before the event, rehearse a 30- to 45-second commercial about yourself that summarizes who you are, demonstrates that you know something about the company, and tells why you’re interested and qualified for an open position. Practice your script enough that you can present it clearly and confidently.

Dress Professionally and Bring Extra Résumés

Bring copies of your résumé and be prepared to share an electronic version via I-Link. Due to federal regulations, some employers have chosen not to accept any printed résumés.

Prepare Questions

Do have questions ready to ask recruiters (see more in next section), but avoid questions regarding job openings, salary, and benefits—those details often can be gleaned from information that is publicly available.

At the Career Fair: Put Your Best Foot Forward

+ Dress professionally and bring extra résumés
+ Prepare questions
+ Pick up literature from companies that interest you
+ Allow yourself plenty of time to network
+ Many students will want to talk with recruiters
+ Be yourself
+ Your top goals for a career fair are to hand your résumé directly to the recruiter and to say a few words to be remembered. If you are unable to do that with someone, jot a note on your résumé to the effect of “You were so busy that we didn’t get a chance to meet. I’m very interested in talking to you.” Look around the display for the recruiter’s business card (or at the very least, write down his or her name and get some literature with the company’s address), and send a follow-up note and another copy of your résumé.

After the Career Fair

Recruiters typically talk to hundreds of students at a career fair, so be sure to follow up by attending company presentations and sending a brief thank-you email to the recruiters who interest you the most.

Career Fair Etiquette

+ Practice your approach beforehand with friends
+ Once you make your personal introduction, you will have 3 to 5 minutes to ask pertinent questions. Do you have any advice on how to begin a career within your industry? What are the qualities and skills necessary for this position? This is the time to ask about the interview process—and if and when the company will be on campus interviewing and when they will be hosting a company presentation so you can learn more about their opportunities.
+ Before you leave an employer’s booth, ask about the best way to followup and whom to contact. The easiest way to do this is to ask for a business card; if none is available, write down the contact’s name, company name, and email address. Be sure to get the correct spelling. As always, remember to be polite and thank the recruiter for his or her time and consideration.

Careerservices.aces.illinois.edu
Statistics consistently show that networking is the number one way to find a job. Most students understand this but may not know how to start. If that describes you, we suggest this approach: First, think of two people who know you. The two people do not have to be professionals themselves. They can be your roommate or your best friend. Next, describe to each of them the type of role you are seeking and ask for their advice about whom they would suggest you contact. Roommates and best friends have contacts, too, so you never know where their suggestions can lead you. The key is to ask for people to contact, not to ask if they know of specific jobs. Once you have mastered your script, move on to professionals that you know, such as professors, advisors, employers, vendors of employers, recruiters, people from places you frequent or volunteer, former coaches—the list of possibilities goes on! If you got two names from each person you contacted, by the tenth level you would have over 1,000 contacts. From 1,000 contacts, at least one job referral is very likely.

Networking Tutorial

+ Once you are given a name, contact the individual.
+ Start the conversation by giving your name and the name of the person who referred you.
+ Ask if the person has time to talk now. (If not, request an alternate time. An in-person or over-the-telephone conversation is preferable to email.)
+ Using a version of your short introduction to recruiters, let the person know your career interests and ask for advice: Is there someone that they recommend you talk to? Do they know of any opportunities that would fit your interests? Can they suggest areas that you should consider given your background and interests?

Another way to grow your professional network is through requesting informational interviews to deepen your perspective on a particular career. If you find someone working in a capacity that you consider interesting, it is appropriate to ask for an informational interview to learn how they landed in that role. People are often happy to tell their career stories. Another type of informational interview covers questions related to working in a particular industry or for a certain organization. These realistic previews will help you select a career path that is right for you.

If someone refuses a request for an informational interview, do not take it personally. Graciously thank the person for considering the request and leave the conversation on a positive note.

A Sample Request

“Hi, my name is Hector Izquierda. I am seeking information about a career in public service. My roommate, David Gomez, gave me your name. I was wondering if I could meet with you sometime to get your advice on how to initiate a career in this field.”

It is important to stay organized during your networking efforts. As your list grows and time passes, it will quickly become overwhelming to manage, so at the beginning, create a spreadsheet with the names, contact information, dates, and next steps for each name you are given. If you are given a business card, write on the back where you met that person. Office supply stores sell business card holders, and software systems provide options for managing contact information. Select the options that work best for you.

Remember that networking is not a one-way street. Be generous in helping others in their quests and refer them to people you know to help them achieve their goals.

Even before scheduling your first informational interview, prepare the questions you will use. These are a few possibilities:

+ What do you like most (or least) about your work?
+ How would you describe a typical workday or week?
+ What type of education and experience does someone need to remain successful in this field?
+ What are the future career opportunities in this field?

+ What are the challenges in balancing work and personal life?
+ Why do people enter (or leave) this field or company?
+ What advice would you give to someone trying to break into this field?
+ With whom would you recommend I speak? When I call, may I use your name?

Social Networking

Professional networking includes smart social networking. Though face-to-face networking still trumps all other avenues for job searches, wise use of social networking can expand your possibilities. The advantage to social networking is that you can connect to a wide range of people and see their connections. The risk is that a misstep online lasts forever. So use social media with care!

Social media users may not consider how information shared in cyberspace today might affect them in the future. On many sites, information that you post, including photographs, becomes the site’s property. Even items that you remove still exist on one of the site’s servers. A digital footprint is much like an ink tattoo…. Once it’s out there it can be difficult and painful to remove!

On the positive side, social media can also be used to your advantage. Sites like LinkedIn let you post your résumé for many potential employers to see and let you build and maintain a professional network with ease. On Facebook, you can “Like” companies to show your interest in them. Following companies on Facebook and Twitter is an easy way to stay current with their news. Following a company CEO’s Twitter feed or watching him speak in a video posted to YouTube is another great way to get a feel for company culture. All of these social media tools not only help sell you, but also help employers sell themselves. Used correctly, social media can be a great recruitment tool.
Finding Your Niche

Understanding your preferences in the size of an organization or company can help you in your job search. You will learn about your preferences through job shadows, informational interviews, and internships. Your preferences may change as you grow, too.

It depends on your personal preferences and the time in your life whether a small or large company is right for you.

Compare Large and Small Companies

There are pros and cons to working for both large and small organizations. One positive to working for a large employer is that you will have name recognition on your résumé. In future job searches, the company’s reputation—good or not so good—may be associated with you. Larger companies may offer more advancement opportunities and options to try different positions, allowing you to grow in your career while remaining with the same employer. They also may provide a formal leadership development program to help jump-start your career. Some cons may include feeling disconnected from the decision-makers, having to relocate more often, feeling lost among the many other employees, and difficulty distinguishing oneself from the crowd.

Smaller companies, by contrast, tend not to be as well recognized beyond their region. Your options for professional growth, however, may be greater because there are more “stretch” opportunities—working outside of your field to fill a need within the organization. Smaller organizations typically have less rigid structure, and many smaller companies are family-owned and have a unique dynamic. Interpersonal relationships may be more important in a smaller organization. Small companies may offer you direct access to the CEO or president, so you may have more exposure and be allowed creative input earlier in your career. In terms of job security, smaller organizations may have more vulnerability, as they may have fewer financial resources, less diversification in product lines, or no succession plan.

Finding a Job in a Small Company

Because small employers have to be more nimble, they tend to hire more just-in-time candidates. Additionally, many small companies may not have a full-time recruiter, so the hiring process may be less structured than in large companies. That means you want to be on the employer’s radar before a hiring opportunity exists. The best way to achieve that is to network. If you are interested in a specific company, contact anyone you know who works there to share your interests. Local chambers of commerce can be an important resource; review their membership directory to search for growing companies and to find local vendors for feedback on the reputation of companies with whom they do business.

Find a Job in a Large Company

Large companies generally have resources dedicated to recruiting and therefore can plan in advance for their hiring needs. Since they hire more employees, they generally have more standardized hiring and “onboarding” procedures. Large employers tend to recruit directly on campus, so be sure to attend the organization’s information sessions and visit the organization’s booth at career fairs. Large employers often use sophisticated talent tracking systems, so even if you are not initially hired by a large employer, you may have other opportunities later in your career, so be sure to maintain your poise and accept any initial rejection with grace.

Once you know the career path for you, you need to consider the work environment that best fits you now. Options include size of employers; for-profit, not-for-profit, and government work; and domestic vs. international locations. Similar to deciding on a major and a career, you will need to reflect on the career aspects that are important to you.

Questions to guide your reflection:

- Will you want to travel?
- Do you prefer variety or staying focused on one aspect?
- Are you good with office politics?
- Are you willing to drive to work, or do you want to use public transportation?
- Do you prefer an urban setting or wide-open spaces?
- Is living in a new culture important or off-putting to you?
- Do you like to know everyone else in the office?
According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics, from 2000 to 2010 jobs in the nonprofit sector grew by 2.1%, while the annual job rate for for-profit jobs declined by .6%.

Nonprofit organizations offer opportunities for all majors and contrary to popular myth, the opportunities may pay well.

Most employees in the nonprofit sector are not motivated primarily by money or a prestigious title. Instead, they find fulfillment in a career that contributes to the welfare of others or advances a particular cause. Depending on your interests and beliefs, working for a particular nonprofit can be both challenging and fulfilling. You are likely to work with people who share your altruism and passion about an issue or cause and get paid to do it! Unlike private sector or government employment, the nonprofit sector usually offers numerous opportunities in entry-level positions where related experience is not required.

But working for a nonprofit is not a cakewalk. Nonprofit employees may not have to meet sales goals or make money for owners or shareholders, but they are still accountable to funding sources and constituents for their decisions. Some organizations are highly politicized. Resources for staff development, bonuses, or the latest equipment tend to be limited. Nonprofit workers must learn to work effectively with a broad range of people, including their clients, elected officials, volunteers, donors, and local civic leaders.

Top management in a nonprofit is usually accountable to a board of directors that has broad governing powers, including the power to terminate top management. Funding is often a frustrating factor for most nonprofits (especially smaller ones), as it must be sought each year from a variety of sources. Securing grant funding is becoming more difficult as grantors demand increased accountability and results in exchange for their financial support.

The nonprofit sector offers a broad range of employment opportunities. Positions with arts organizations can include curators, writers, performing artists, and event planners. Health agencies often hire counselors, researchers, and lobbyists. Some organizations—trade associations, research centers, recreational clubs—have positions that mirror for-profit positions. Nonprofits seek grant writers, fundraisers (also known as development officers), accountants, information technology workers, office managers, chief executive officers (CEOs), and certification experts. While idealism and passion may be the fuel energizing nonprofits, stability and longevity require employees with solid administrative skills (including writing), strong interpersonal skills, multiple business and political contacts, and good business acumen.

Hiring practices for nonprofit organizations resemble those for employers of similar size in the private sector. Research the nonprofits for whom you are interested in working, and align your job-seeking strategy appropriately.

Volunteer positions at nonprofits sometimes become paid positions or provide you with solid leads and the inside track to paid positions.
WORKING FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The CIA, FDA, FBI, and USDA are all agencies of the federal government. They hire full-time employees and interns in all majors. Navigating the system may take a little bit of research.

Contrary to popular beliefs, government jobs include office and outdoor opportunities.

HAVE YOU CONSIDERED WORKING FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?

The government offers many opportunities, and some people find many advantages to working in the public sector. The federal government offers competitive starting salaries and benefits packages, along with guaranteed salary increases throughout your career. Federal employees are eligible for longevity or seniority pay via the General Schedule (GS), which classifies federal government jobs into 15 classifications based on factors such as skill, education, and experience.

If you have a degree but no specialized experience in a career field, you are eligible for a federal appointment at the GS-5 level. Some new graduates may qualify to start at the GS-7 level if they have relevant internship experience or have been a strong student (at least a 3.0 GPA, or graduating with academic honors). The federal government also offers a salary differential to candidates with advanced degrees. Applicants with a master’s degree are eligible for GS-9 positions, and those with a doctorate qualify for GS-11 positions.

Within each GS grade are incremental increases called steps. Movement through steps of a grade recognizes increased skill and knowledge in a job and is usually determined by longevity in a position. The federal government also pays a salary differential or locality adjustment based upon the cost of living in 33 metropolitan areas. Locality adjustments range from 14% to 35% increase over the base pay.

The following chart shows the 2014 base salary information by grade. If you qualify for a position at the GS-7 level, minimum-starting salary is $34,319. For a position located in Chicago, a locality adjustment of about 25% is added, bringing the minimum starting salary to $42,933. Once holidays, vacation time, pension, and other benefits are accounted for, job seekers usually find that total compensation packages offered by the federal government compete with and sometimes beat offers from the private sector.

### 2014 FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SALARY RATES BY GRADE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum Salary within Grade</th>
<th>Maximum Salary within Grade</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>$27,705</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
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APPLICATION AND HIRING PROCESS

Many federal agencies fill their jobs like private industry does—by allowing applicants, both internal and external, to contact the agency directly for job information and application processing. USAJobs.gov is the federal government’s official employment information system, with thousands of jobs listed. Most, but not all, federal agencies post job vacancies on USAJobs.gov, so you will have to determine how the agencies in which you are interested announce their vacancies. Some post their positions only on their own websites. You will find a few posted on I-Link.

Typically, hiring decisions are made by the agency itself, not through a centralized process. All agencies require basic résumé information, but additional information varies by agency and position. You have to submit transcripts, complete specific government employment forms, and provide descriptions of your knowledge, skills, and abilities. Follow all instructions carefully, as incomplete applications are typically removed from the candidate pool.

Most federal position announcements will list two contacts, one in centralized human resources in Washington, DC, and the other “local.” The local contact is usually someone working at the agency or office where the position is located, and that person will be part of the hiring process. It is advisable to connect with the local contact, who often can answer questions specific to the position, application procedures, and hiring timeline.
PATHWAYS PROGRAM

The federal government’s Pathways Program encompasses three internship and development opportunities in Washington, DC, that offer students and recent graduates a chance to experience jobs in the Federal Civil Service: The Internship Program, the Recent Graduates Program, and the Presidential Management Fellows Program. Positions for all three programs are posted at USAJobs.gov.

Internship Program

The Internship Program, which replaces the former STEP and SCEP programs, provides paid opportunities to students who want to explore federal careers while still attending school. Participants will gain insight into federal Civil Service jobs and will be able to experience meaningful development before their career paths are fully established. Interns may work during the summer, fall, spring, or all year round.

Applicants must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment, seeking a degree in a qualifying educational institution on a full-time or part-time basis, and have good academic standing. Interns must be at least 16 and must have U.S. citizenship or U.S permanent resident status.

Each student traineeship may be converted to a permanent job in the Federal Civil Service after 640 hours of work experience, meeting program requirements, and completion of a degree.

Recent Graduates Program

The federal program provides employment opportunities for recent graduates who are placed into a one-year career development program within an agency.

Applicants who are not preference-eligible veterans must apply within two years of completing their education. The program is open to students who have received an associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s, professional, doctoral, or technical/vocational degree or certificate. Participants may be converted to permanent positions if they complete their one year of service at a satisfactory level and meet the qualifications of the position.

Presidential Management Fellows Program

The federal government’s premier leadership development program for advanced degree candidates has been in place for over three decades. Desired applicants are talented graduate students with demonstrated academic excellence, management and leadership potential, and an interest in and commitment to public service. Finalists accept two-year service positions.

A competition determines the finalists from among applicants for the PMF Program. To apply, you must have completed a qualifying advanced degree in the two-year period preceding the PMF announcement or be expecting to complete it by August 31st of the academic year in which the competition is held.

For more information on these federal government programs visit www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-authorities/students-recent-graduates/#url=Overview. To search for possible positions see https://my.usajobs.gov.

UNDERSTAND ALL OF YOUR OPTIONS
In today’s global economy, study abroad experiences can be an enormous asset to your résumé and add depth to your scholastic experience.

Companies are seeking candidates who can take initiative, are flexible and adaptable, and have the ability to communicate and work with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Having studied abroad is a good indication that you have those qualities, so it can be a valuable asset in today’s competitive job market, especially if you can articulate skills and competencies that you gained in a way that resonates with employers. (Simply having an international experience is not enough.)

The University of Illinois offers many opportunities to study abroad, from as short as two weeks to as long as an entire year. ACES students can choose from both programs sponsored by the College of ACES and those sponsored by the campus Study Abroad Office. Many scholarships are available to assist in funding studies abroad.

Learn more about your many choices at these websites:

ACES Study Abroad Office—www.academics.aces.illinois.edu/study-abroad
Campus Study Abroad Office—www.studyabroad.illinois.edu

“As a global company, we look favorably at students who have sought out international experiences, such as study abroad or IBIP. The experience of traveling, living and studying in a foreign country, negotiating another culture, and gaining a broader view of the world certainly sets these students apart from other job applicants.”

JoEllen Beedon
Staffing and Employee Relations Manager, OSI Group
### Myth #1
Studying abroad is too expensive.

**REALITY**
The U of I offers over 400 study abroad programs with a variety of budgets. A few programs are very comparable to studying here at the U of I though some programs are more expensive. Students can use expense as a criterion for choosing a program.

### Myth #2
Financial aid doesn't transfer to study-abroad expenses.

**REALITY**
Because the programs listed by ACES and the U of I Study Abroad Office have been approved by the university, most financial aid does apply. There are also a number of scholarships designated specifically for studying abroad.

### Myth #3
You need to speak a second language to study abroad.

**REALITY**
Students are often pleasantly surprised to find that while some programs do have a language requirement, many offerings are taught exclusively in English. Some of these programs are in countries where English is an official language (including Australia, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Singapore, South Africa, and Great Britain) and others are not (Sweden, Belgium, Czech Republic, Egypt, Italy, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Turkey, and more).

### Myth #4
You cannot complete requirements for your major while abroad.

**REALITY**
While some majors are rather strict in their specific requirements, most offer some flexibility with their coursework. Students are also surprised to find that many study programs fulfill requirements in their major.

### Myth #5
Studying abroad will delay graduation.

**REALITY**
Many students study abroad and still graduate in four years. With careful planning, studying abroad does not necessitate extra semesters to complete your degree. Students earn credit toward graduation requirements for most courses taken abroad. Study tours allow students to travel over winter break or summer without taking time out of the semester.

### Myth #6
It is better to study abroad after graduation.

**REALITY**
Realistically, it is more difficult to find time after graduation to study or travel in another country. College is a unique time that more easily allows for a summer, semester, or year living in another country. After graduating, most people find the demands of work, family, and other responsibilities prevent them from spending significant time abroad.

### Myth #7
The world is a dangerous place; it is safer to stay in the U.S.

**REALITY**
Most risks faced by students around the world are similar to those in Champaign-Urbana or Chicago, and most result from living in an urban environment. The U of I closely monitors programs and has high confidence in locations that are chosen. All programs and cities are thoroughly researched before students are permitted to apply.

### Myth #8
Studying abroad doesn't really help with a career.

**REALITY**
Employers look to hire well-rounded people who can adapt to new situations and thrive in multicultural environments. Further, businesses are increasingly international. Being able to communicate and use skills gained from a study abroad experience is a competitive advantage.

### Myth #9
Not many U of I students study abroad.

**REALITY**
Nearly 25% of Illinois undergrads study abroad and 30% of ACES students study abroad. Most colleges are very supportive of studying abroad, and some offer programs specific to their academic disciplines.

### Myth #10
It's hard to get accepted to study abroad.

**REALITY**
Most students who meet minimum qualifications and complete the application process are accepted to go abroad. The U of I wants to see more students studying abroad and works closely with them to find programs that best meet their needs and qualifications.

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### Working Internationally

The first step to working abroad is to identify opportunities that match your interests. Opportunities differ in location, assistance offered, hidden costs, and more, so research each opportunity thoroughly before making substantial time or financial commitments.

Like you would in a domestic search, start by talking to people in your network, asking them to identify people they know or organizations that have international opportunities. Supplement your networking with Internet searches about positions and companies that are of interest to you. A good resource is My World Abroad: http://www.myworldabroad.com.
The exciting culmination of any job search is a job offer. Be certain to follow proper etiquette in accepting offers.

A well-handled acceptance or rejection could build your reputation in the future.

**RECEIVING AN OFFER**

An employer offering you a position may present the offer in writing, over the phone, or in person. If you are ready, you may accept immediately, but it is also acceptable to ask for time to consider the offer. Most companies will agree to such time and you may negotiate a decision deadline if you feel you need an extension. Bear in mind that employers need to fill their positions, so be responsible in handling the offer deadline.

You may accept an offer in person or by telephone, but also write and mail a formal acceptance letter. Whether you accept or refuse a job offer, respond graciously. Once you have accepted an offer, withdraw from further interviews with other employers. Students who use I-Link need to notify Career Services staff once they accept a position. (Remember that I-Link requires students to cancel a scheduled interview at least four days in advance.)

If you have not heard from a company by the date that was indicated, you should follow up with the representative. Additionally, if you receive a job offer from one employer, you should contact any others that are considering your application. Alert them to your situation and provide the date you will need to make a decision.

**EVALUATING AN OFFER**

An offer of employment is much more than an opportunity to earn a paycheck, so it is important to consider factors beyond the salary and benefits package. Take time to ask questions and weigh your options so that you make a good decision.

Factors to consider include these:

- Nature of the work
- Organizational culture
- Salary, benefits, and the complete compensation package
- Geographic location

**COMPARING COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS PACKAGES**

Compensation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is an important consideration when choosing the right position for you. Intrinsic compensation, reflecting satisfaction for doing meaningful work, can include having autonomy and variety on the job, constructive feedback, influencing the lives of others, and opportunities to perform different tasks. Extrinsic compensation, both monetary and nonmonetary rewards, includes base pay, performance bonuses, adjustments to base pay, and benefits.

Base pay may be either an hourly wage or annual salary. Some employers offer adjustments to base pay that might include these:

- Cost of living adjustments—periodic increases based on changes in consumer prices or inflation and the cost of living in your geographic location
- Seniority pay—periodic additions based on length of service
- Merit pay—permanent increases based on performance
- Incentive pay—rewards for attaining predetermined work objectives
- Skill-based pay—rewards for range, depth, and types of skills or knowledge employees apply productively to their jobs

How can you know if the base pay in your offer is competitive? To answer that question, you must inform yourself. Gather salary information from various sources; our office keeps salary data from previous graduates, and salary.com is a good resource. Be aware of the value of your education and experience.

Certain legally required benefits provide protection programs to employees and their dependents from catastrophic events such as disability and unemployment. Many employers also offer discretionary benefits, such as vacation and holiday time, health insurance, retirement plan, flexible spending accounts for child care and health care expenses, child care assistance or on-site child care, on-site fitness center, education reimbursement, and others. Discretionary benefits can be of considerable monetary value and impact your work–life balance.

Do not renege after accepting a job offer. Once you make a commitment you are responsible for keeping it. It is both unprofessional and unethical to continue "shopping" for a better job. (Imagine how you would feel if an employer rescinded your accepted offer if a better candidate surfaced.) If you choose to renege, you are compromising your integrity. Your decision may follow you, especially in small industries that often compete for the same candidates. The human resource community is small and well connected; recruiters know each other, and they talk.

Bear in mind, reneging on a job offer after signing a contract has consequences, including losing I-Link access.
IS GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL RIGHT FOR YOU?

At some point in your college career, you must decide what you would like to do after graduation, with one option being to pursue an advanced degree. If you’re trying to decide whether graduate or professional school is right for you, here are some factors to consider.

Don’t go to graduate school just because you can. Go because it is something you want to do.

Making the Decision for Graduate School

Going to graduate or professional school might be a good idea if...

+ You want to be a professor, lawyer, doctor, or veterinarian or work in any profession that requires postsecondary education.
+ You wish to develop additional expertise in a particular subject or field to maximize your earning potential and career opportunities.
+ You want to study a particular subject in-depth and you have the time and financial resources to devote to further education.

Pursuing an advanced degree is not a good idea if...

+ You are clueless about your career goals.
+ You are not prepared to devote the time and hard work needed to succeed.
+ You want to stay in school longer to avoid a poor job market.

Some students know they want to pursue more education but wonder about the timing. Is it better to work first or attend graduate school immediately after completing an undergraduate degree?

Work first if...

+ The graduate/professional school of your choice prefers work experience. (Most MBA and some PhD programs require this.)
+ You need work experience to narrow down your specific interest or find your focus.

Do not go to graduate school just because you can. Go because it is something you want to do.

+ You cannot afford to go to graduate school now, and you haven’t applied for any scholarships, grants, fellowships or assistantships, which could pay for a great deal of your education.
+ If your plan includes having your future employer help pay for your education.

Go to graduate school now if...

+ You are certain that an advanced degree is required to achieve your career goals.
+ You have been awarded grants, fellowships, scholarships or assistantships to help pay for your education.
+ You’re concerned that once you start earning a salary, you won’t be able to return later to the lifestyle of a “poor” student.
+ Your study habits and mental abilities are at their peak, and you worry whether you’ll have the discipline or motivation to write papers and study for exams in a few years.

TIPS FOR FINANCING GRADUATE SCHOOL

Many graduate programs will offer a tuition waiver and a monthly stipend if you are selected as a research, teaching, or graduate assistant. These are competitive positions, so work to maintain a high GPA, achieve strong test scores on entrance exams, and network for opportunities with faculty, previous grad students, and administrators to learn about opportunities. Depending on your career goals, these options may also assist you in preparing for your future.

Depending on the circumstances, employers may be willing to help finance educational goals. You may need to agree to work for the company for a specific amount of time after completing your degree.

Full-time vs. Part-time

Some people pursue graduate school while still working, while others decide to focus solely on their academics. What are the benefits of both situations?

Benefits of attending graduate school full-time:

+ You can complete your degree sooner.
+ You can commit your full intellectual, physical, and emotional energy to your education.
+ The most prestigious programs are often designed to be full-time.

Benefits of attending graduate school part-time:

+ You can work full- or part-time to help to pay for your education.
+ You can juggle other responsibilities while completing your degree.
+ Your employer may pay for some or all of your graduate degree expenses.
Students Bound for Graduate School

Finding the graduate program that is right for you

- Peterson’s Guide to Graduate School www.petersons.com/GradChannel
- The Princeton Review—Grad School www.princetonreview.com/grad
- GradSchools.com
- All About Grad School www.allaboutgradschool.com

**Freshman and sophomore years**

- Check out career development resources and services available at the University of Illinois.
- Join student organizations that are relevant to your professional interests.
- Begin to gain volunteer and internship experience.
- As soon as you are able, determine specific fields of study and/or research areas that interest you.
- Learn whether you need an advanced degree to achieve your professional goals.
- Attend the University of Illinois Career Center’s Health and Graduate School Fair held in the fall to begin exploring opportunities.

**Junior year**

- Discuss graduate programs with advisors, career counselors, and faculty members.
- Request and review program materials from your schools of interest.
- If possible, visit your top schools of interest.
- Attend the Career Center’s Health and Graduate School Fair (fall semester).
- Research financial aid and assistantship information.
- Take applicable graduate admission tests (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, etc.).

**Summer before senior year**

- Narrow your list of schools and request their application materials.
- Visit the schools (if not already done).
- Request a student copy of your transcript for reference as you complete your application (www.oar.illinois.edu).
- Start your personal statement/essay.

**Fall semester of senior year**

- Finalize your personal statement/essay.
- Complete and mail application materials; request that an official transcript be sent to each school.
- Research possible assistantships and complete financial aid forms.
- Meet with faculty members from whom you will request letters of recommendation.
- Send letters of recommendation. (Consider using interfolio.com.)
- Prepare for potential interviews.
- Send thank-you notes to references and mentors.

**Spring semester of senior year**

- Attend interviews if necessary.
- Discuss your offers with an advisor, career counselor, or faculty member.
- Send updated official transcripts if required.
- Inform advisors, career counselors, and faculty of your future plans.

Students Bound for Veterinary School

**Important online resources**

- Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges www.aavmc.org
- American Veterinary Medicine Association www.avma.org
- The Graduate Record Exam (GRE) www.ets.org/gre

**Freshman and sophomore years**

- Perform well academically in basic science and prerequisite courses.
- Explore career development resources at the University of Illinois.
- Begin and complete your chemistry, biology, physics, and organic chemistry requirements.
- Join a professional student organization—Pre-Vet Club is a good choice.
- Begin to gain volunteer and internship experience with both large and small animals.
- Gain research experience.
- Learn about the application and admission processes for vet school.
- Keep your options open; explore and prepare for additional career opportunities.
WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Integral to most graduate/professional school applications is your personal statement or essay, which could make the difference in whether you are accepted into a program.

Remember that faculty, admissions officers, and committee members read your personal statement to understand who you are.

The personal statement provides you with the opportunity to address the following questions:

✦ Why are you interested in this individual program and/or school?
✦ What motivates you to earn this degree?
✦ How will you apply this degree to your future career goals?
✦ What qualities and experiences would you bring to the program?

CRAFTING A DISTINCT MESSAGE

Most schools will be looking for interesting and unique aspects of your personal and/or career development, things that might set you apart from other applicants. They want to know the strengths and skills that you would bring to the school, the research group, and the field. Graduate schools also want to know whether you can write well. They are looking for some depth in your thinking and processing and whether you are being realistic in your career endeavors.

Some schools will have you provide short answers, and some will require a personal statement. The length of the personal statement varies from school to school. Some are to be less than 250 words, and others can be several pages. Regardless of length, be focused and precise with your words.

STRATEGIES FOR WRITING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Start early in the application process. Start thinking and writing initial drafts of your statement approximately three to six months prior to your application deadline date. It can be daunting to start your essay, so begin by considering some of the pivotal questions that admissions committees want answered, such as “What has piqued your interest in this career path?” Do you have a story or a statement that can draw them in and make them want to read more? The admission board may also have this question: “Why should we admit you over other qualified candidates?” Be sure to market your goals, strengths, unique qualities, and interests to answer this question.

If your graduate application is reviewed by the professor with whom you potentially will be working, he or she is likely looking for indications that you will be a good fit for the lab or research group and vice versa—if the lab or research group is a good fit for you. Certainly, in a laboratory research setting, the success of the whole depends upon the competency and commitment of each individual in the group. High-quality research perpetuates additional research opportunities and funding, both of which are highly important to faculty at prestigious research universities. It is advisable to connect with the faculty with whom you are interested in working before the application process even begins.

Initially ... let it flow! It is important to remember that your statement does not need to be perfect yet. Do some brainstorming, outlining possible angles you will take, and then write freely and unrestricted as you tell your story. The moment you start screening your thoughts, you may lose some great ideas.

Find your passion and interest. When you find an angle you are excited about, it is a good indication that this is the way to go. It will enhance your statement’s readability. Do not make it dull and boring, and be sure you answer the questions being asked. Then, go back through your statement—rewriting, elaborating, and eliminating sentences and paragraphs—to make it readable and interesting.

Don’t go it alone. Be sure to have your preliminary rough draft checked by faculty and career services personnel. Go back to them two, three, or more times if needed. Be sure your final statement included in your application packet is neat, with perfect grammar and no misspelled words.

“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. You’re on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the one who’ll decide where to go...”

Dr. Seuss, Oh, The Places You’ll Go!
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