

Penn State Graduate Student Career Guide 2011-2012

*Planning
for* **Life** *after*
Graduation



PENNSTATE
Career 
Services
CAREER PLANNING FOR LIFE



2011 Penn State Grad Student Career Guide 2012

Career Services
Bank of America Career Services Center
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 865-2377
<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/>

Hours: 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. Weekdays
Until 7:00 p.m. Tuesdays during
Fall and Spring semesters

Contents

Message from the Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate School	2
Message from the Director	3
Career Services	4
What Are My Career Options?	6
Informational Interviewing: Increase Your Career Knowledge	9
Finishing Your Master's Degree and Planning Your Next Step	11
Finding a Teaching Position in Academe	14
Finding a Post-Doc	18
The Job Search Outside the Academy	20
On-Campus Interviewing	25
Using Your Penn State Connections for Networking	27
Employment Options for International Students	28
Resumes and Curriculum Vitae	30
Cover Letters	37
Interviewing	40
The Site Interview	44
Job Offers and Acceptances	46

The publication is available in
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FSC TK

Letter from the Dean of the Graduate School



Dear Graduate Students,

I would like to congratulate you upon reaching this stage of your careers. You are on the threshold of the future and have a multitude of career choices before you. By gaining a graduate degree you will have prepared yourself well for this moment. You have developed expertise in your discipline and, at the same time, developed a multitude of additional skills.

In the process of completing your degree requirements, you have become skilled at time management, multitasking, information gathering, people management, writing, communication, diplomacy and perhaps even conflict resolution. All of these are valuable assets to potential employers. You are well equipped to consider positions in academia, business, industry and other areas.

I urge you to take advantage of the vast array of services available through Career Services as you embark on your quest for employment. You have reached a major milestone in your life. I wish you continued success as you step into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Henry C. Foley". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Henry C. Foley
Vice President for Research
Dean of the Graduate School

Message from the Director

Dear Graduate Student,

We have an outstanding, nationally recognized Career Services office at Penn State and all of us encourage you to use our services. We offer services to graduate students in all academic programs and it is important for you to start the career planning process early. Whether that means exploring career options, or conducting a full-time job search within academia, business, industry, or government, we have the resources to meet your needs.

In our state-of-the-art facility, you have access to career counseling; skill-building workshops and programs; career-related classes; interviews with employers; and occupational and employment information. Online at <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career>, you can access our job posting service, Nittany Lion Career Network; a listing of upcoming events and career fairs; and career-related news and resources.

This *Career Guide* walks you through all of our services, as well as provides information to help you navigate the career planning process. If you have not yet determined the ways in which you hope to apply your graduate education, I encourage you to speak with one of our Career Counselors. The staff of Career Services is committed to helping you find the best path for you, based on your personal interests, abilities, and values.

We look forward to working with you along every step of your career journey! I wish you a successful year and a rewarding future.

Sincerely,



Jeff W. Garis



2011 Penn State Grad Student Career Guide 2012

CAREER SERVICES

Career Services

Career Services provides counseling and job search services to assist graduate students across all departments and programs in their career development. This involves formulating and implementing career plans for pursuing meaningful and appropriate careers in both academic and non-academic sectors of the employment market. Some specific services and programs offered by Career Services follow.

Objectives of Career Services

1. Assist enrolled students in crystallizing and specifying life/career goals.
2. Assist enrolled students in implementing career goals.
3. Assist other professionals or paraprofessionals in developing knowledge and skill in the delivery of life/career services.
4. Develop a cooperative relationship with other university staff and faculty to gain their active support in the delivery of life/career services.

Drop-in Counseling

A Drop-In Counselor is available on a first-come, first-served basis weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays during fall and spring semesters, to offer career planning assistance. You may have quick questions on career planning or the job search answered, may schedule one-hour individual counseling appointments, and/or be referred to other University offices as appropriate. If other students have come in immediately ahead of you, you may need to wait from 15-30 minutes or more.

Career Counseling

Career/life planning is often a difficult process that can be complicated by many factors. Career Counselors are available to assist you in:

- Developing a greater level of confidence in job search and career decision making strategies
- Learning how skills, interests, and values may be applied in the world of work
- Locating sources of career information
- Identifying positions in or outside of academia
- Identifying back up plans to your primary career goal
- Learning, evaluating, and refining interview skills
- Re-evaluating previous educational decisions
- Coping with current life events affecting career decision-making or the job search
- and more...

To determine the appropriateness of career counseling, you should speak with the Drop-In Counselor, who is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays and until 7:00 p.m. Tuesdays during fall and spring semesters in the Bank of America Career Services Center. Whether you are targeting academic or non-academic employment, our staff is ready to assist you in reaching your specific career goals.

Career Information Center

The Career Information Center contains hundreds of publications and videos with information on occupations, employer directories, and job-hunting resources to assist you in pursuing a career within or outside of academia.

The CIC also features free online access to extensive career resources. Please visit our website at <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/cic> for more information. The CIC is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday and until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays. A career information assistant is available to help you find information and perform targeted searches.

LionLink: A Professional Networking Program

LionLink is a database of alumni who have volunteered their time to serve as a networking resource for students and other alumni. The alumni career coaches are there to help you explore various career fields, answer questions about what they do and where they work, and serve as a career resource. Through informational interviews, student and alumni career explorers can gain valuable inside information on careers, industries, companies, and geographic areas from a trusted resource.

LionLink is one of the many programs and services offered through Alumni Career Services, a partnership between Career Services and the Penn State Alumni Association. For more information on LionLink, please visit studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/alumni/LionLink.shtml, contact Alumni

Career Services at (814) 865-LINK (5465) or email lionlink@sa.psu.edu. LionLink can help you gain the information you need that you can't get in a classroom as you build your own professional network.

Workshops & Seminars

Several hundred seminars and outreach programs are offered each year on a wide range of topics such as resume or curriculum vitae writing, interview skills, job-search strategies. The locations of these programs are announced via the *Daily Collegian*, the web, and fliers. Career Services also collaborates with departments or graduate student organizations on programming efforts. To schedule a program for your class or student organization, contact Career Services at (814) 865-5131 or careerworkshops@sa.psu.edu.

Mock Interview Studio

An in-house studio offers videotaped mock interview training to students who want to practice their skills and receive feedback on their performance. Mock interviews are available by appointment; speak to the staff assistant in the Bank of America Career Services Center to schedule a mock interview. The training center is open weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Nittany Lion Career Network

Nittany Lion Career Network (NLCN) offers students the opportunity to review job postings, register for On-Campus Interviewing, and search employers attending our career fairs.

• Job Postings

Our online job posting service is available for you to look at full-time, internships, and part-time positions with employers who are specifically seeking Penn State candidates. Much like other online systems, Nittany Lion Career Network allows you to maintain multiple versions of your resume, apply for positions online, and to keep a history of applications you have submitted through the system. Use of Nittany Lion Career Network is free to all enrolled students.

• On-Campus Interviewing

The On-campus Interviewing system offers students the opportunity to interview with employers right on campus!

This service is most advantageous for students who are graduating and looking for full-time employment after graduation. Many positions are offered in business, industry, and government and are for students with an interest and background in business and technical fields. Please note: there is a \$15.00 fee for participation in the On-Campus Interviewing portion of Nittany Lion Career Network. You must have the OCI option in order to request/schedule interviews with employers participating in on-campus interviews.

• Career Fairs

Career Fairs are held both in the fall and spring, giving graduate students an opportunity to connect with potential employers. Company representatives are available to talk to you about career options, specific job opportunities, as well as help you network with other recruiters within their organization who are seeking candidates with higher levels of academic preparation and experience.

Education Credentials Services (ECS)

Graduate students seeking teaching or administrative positions in higher education can establish a credentials file (dossier) online at <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/credentials/>. Graduate students seeking teaching or administrative positions in higher education can establish a credentials file (dossier) online at studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/credentials/. You may manage your credentials file or have

ECS send your credentials to schools at your request. A fee of \$8.00 is required for each copy sent via regular mail/email. You may set up an appointment to discuss planning a career in education through the Drop-In Counseling service.

ECS also posts education/faculty vacancies through institutions throughout the United States on the web through Nittany Lion Career Network. The system allows you to maintain online versions of your resume and other documents and allows you to create job search agents. The job postings are for Penn State students and alumni only.

K-12 employers visit the campus each spring semester during the annual Education Career Day to recruit teachers.

For additional information, please call (814) 865-5131 or or email alumniadvice@sa.psu.edu.

Services Available to Alumni

Most of the services described above are also available to Penn State alumni. Alumni who visit the University Park campus may utilize the Drop-In Counseling service or Career Information Center. The on-campus interviewing system is available to those alumni who can utilize the system as it is designed for current students. Alumni are also welcome to attend the various career days sponsored throughout the academic year. For additional information, please call (814) 865-5465 or email alumniadvice@sa.psu.edu.

2011-2012 CAREER DAYS

Fall Career Days

SEPTEMBER 19-23, 2011

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

Nontechnical Full-time Recruiting
(Business, Management,
Communications, and Health &
Human Services)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

Co-op and Internship Recruiting (All colleges/majors)

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

Technical Full-time Recruiting
(Engineering, Computer Technology,
Physical & Life Sciences, and Research)

Spring Career Days

FEBRUARY 2012

People-to-People Fair

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2012

Education Career Day

MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2012

2011 Penn State Grad Student Career Guide 2012

WHAT ARE MY CAREER OPTIONS?

When you decided to go to graduate school, you may well have had a specific career goal in mind. You may have thought you wanted to become a professor. You may have thought you would test out a career after your masters and then consider going on for the doctorate at a later date. Perhaps you've just begun your graduate program, wonder what you've gotten yourself into, and want to know what may be out there for you if you stick to your plan of study. Perhaps you're midway in your path to the doctorate and wonder if academia is really for you. You may have spent the past few years of graduate school concentrating on your academic work and thought very little of careers.

The first, and often most difficult step, in the process of looking for work is to envision the full range of possibilities available for someone with your

background and training. Your question should not be "What else can I do?" Rather, you should rephrase your question to, "What do I want to do?" Implicit in the first question is the fear that your graduate education has been little more than narrow training for a career as a professor. The most important single thing for you to realize—no matter what your field of study—is that you have many options. It is a matter of figuring out your interests and skills and learning about the world of work beyond the ivory tower so that you can make a match between what you like to do and are good at doing and appropriate opportunities and employers.

Consider your perception of your graduate training:

You face a fundamental choice in how you view your own graduate training and

in how you represent it to others. You can view your time in graduate school as either: a progressively specializing process for a singular career path; or a program of research, teaching, and scholarship in which you develop a broad skill set that can qualify you for any number of career paths. You may very well vacillate between these options throughout your time in graduate school—perhaps even over the course of a single day. But, how you see your graduate study shapes how you use your graduate training and what it can do for you when you finish. Remember, too, that adopting a broader understanding of what your graduate training is potentially qualifying you for need not come at the expense of first-rate scholarship and/or research.

How you see your graduate study shapes how you use your graduate training and what it can do for you when you finish.

Skills Identification

So what are the skills you may have developed during the course of your program here at Penn State? As stated earlier, not only have you developed specific skills in your area of study, by completing all the requirements of the degree, you have

developed a broad skill set that is transferable to many types of careers and that many employers will value.

Outside the Ivory Tower: A Guide for Academics Considering

Alternative Careers offers a list of skills (below) that can highlight your different capabilities. They suggest looking through the list and circling any skills that you feel apply to you.

SKILLS DEVELOPED IN GRADUATE SCHOOL

- Administering
- Analyzing and Classifying
- Anticipating
- Auditing/Accounting
- Calculating
- Collaborating/Teamwork
- Conceptualizing/Abstracting
- Coordinating
- Creating
- Dealing with Pressure
- Dealing with Unknowns
- Decision Making
- Delegating
- Designing and/or Drawing
- Developing Mathematical Models
- Displaying
- Editing
- Enduring/Persisting
- Evaluating/Appraising
- Fundraising/Soliciting
- Handling Complaints
- Handling Detail Work
- Interpreting/Translating
- Interviewing/Questioning
- Investigating/Finding
- Listening
- Managing
- Meeting the Public
- Motivating or Leading
- Moving with Dexterity
- Negotiating/Mediating
- Observing and Inspecting
- Organizing
- Performing and/or Entertaining
- Planning
- Politicking
- Programming
- Reading
- Record Keeping/Collating
- Rehabilitating
- Remembering
- Researching and Compiling
- Selling/Persuading/Influencing
- Speaking
- Supervising
- Synthesizing
- Teaching and/or Coaching
- Toleration
- Trouble Shooting
- Using Instruments
- Writing

You can also look at these skills and identify examples of more specific skills:

Research/Analytical Skills

- Ability to locate and assimilate new information rapidly
- Ability to break-down and understand complex content
- Ability to think on one's feet
- Ability to reach and defend independent conclusions
- Problem-solving tools and experience
- Intellectual maturity

Communication Skills

- Ability to convey complex information to non-expert audiences

- Ability to write at all levels: brief abstracts to book-length manuscripts
- Editing and proofreading
- Ability to speak before large groups

Interactive Personal Skills

- Persuasion
- Leadership
- Ability to cope with and manage complicated personalities
- Ability to thrive in a competitive environment
- Ability to navigate complex bureaucratic environments

Entrepreneurial Skills

- Ability to work independently and in a self-directed manner
- Ability to acquire funding and write successful grant proposals

Advancement to Candidacy

- Exceptional intellectual horsepower
- Track record of achievement
- Ability to perform under pressure
- Ability to learn and adapt at a high level
- Ability to meet high expectations

What It Takes to Finish

- Focus, tenacity, stamina, discipline
- The ability to close the deal

Career Exploration

Knowing your skills is only part of the answer. Knowing what is out there is another part. Learning about careers and deciding which jobs sound good to you and which make you shudder is essential to getting started on the job search.

Research career options through online and print materials available in the Career Information Center. You may also want to research careers on the web, through such resources as:

- **Occupational Outlook Handbook** (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/>): Printed by the U.S. Department of Labor and revised every two years, the Handbook describes what workers do on the job, working conditions, training and education needed, earnings, and
- **WetFeet.com** (<http://crs.wetfeet.com/schools/psuugdp/default.aspx>): Research careers and industries including real people profiles.
- **Career Zone** (<http://www.nycareerzone.org>): Job descriptions, skills and knowledge used, and similar jobs.
- **America's Career InfoNet** (<http://www.acinet.org>): Career descriptions including work activities/tasks, skills and knowledge used, and wages and employers searchable by state and cities.
- **Job Profiles** (<http://www.jobprofiles.org>): Professionals share rewards, stressors, skills and challenges of their occupation.

expected job prospects in a wide range of occupations.

Along with print and web research, networking is an essential part of your career exploration—talking to people about what they do, and giving them an idea of who you are, what you have to offer, and what you want. Start asking everyone you know—parents, relatives, friends now, friends from college, people you meet—for names of people to talk to in areas that interest you. LionLink, Penn State's online career network, will give you access to many more names. Pay attention to where others who finished your program went. Don't hesitate to talk to colleagues who are making choices that intrigue you, even if those choices appear to be divergent from your own career goals.

Come to Career Services Early and Often

Career Counselors are available to work with graduate students and can help you develop a better understanding of your specific and transferable skills, research careers, as well as create a plan of action for translating your graduate training into other viable options. We can also help you pursue part-time

work or internship opportunities so you can test the waters of areas of potential interest to you.

To schedule an appointment with a Career Counselor, speak with the Drop-In Counselor, who is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays and

until 7:00 p.m. Tuesdays in the Bank of America Career Services Center. Whether you are targeting academic or non-academic employment or aren't quite sure yet, our staff is ready to assist you in reaching your specific career goals.

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INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING: INCREASE YOUR CAREER KNOWLEDGE

One of the best ways to obtain information about an occupation is to talk with somebody doing the job. The information is generally more up-to-date and detailed than one can find in a book or pamphlet. Plus, the personal interaction adds a positive dimension to the career planning process.

Most individuals really enjoy being interviewed about what they do at work, especially if you are genuinely interested. An informational interview also gives you the opportunity to ask questions about specific areas of interest to you and obtain the amount of detail not found in print or Internet resources.

What Is an Informational Interview?

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

Why Not Just Read Occupational Information?

Written information must be general, in order to give a representative description of the type of work, whereas each individual's job is unique. No written material is 100% up-to-date. Through an informational interview, you can get answers to specific questions, see the workplace, and look at examples of projects and paperwork there, obtaining a great deal of insight and information

What Are Some of the Benefits?

You will gain a more in-depth understanding of a career field which may help you decide what type of work and setting you prefer.

You will begin to feel more confident about your career goals and have an easier time tailoring your resume to your career objective, since you will have more information. You will be better prepared for future job interviews.

You will have made at least one contact that may help you within your current or future job search.

Who Is the Best Type of Person to Interview?

Someone who is actually doing or has recently done the type of job you want to know about can generally give you the most information, as well as the most accurate, detailed impression of what you might expect to be doing the first few years.

Don't overlook individuals, such as professors, who are not presently employed in the field but who may have had such a position in the past or learned about the work from contact with others.

Locating a Person to Interview

1. Develop a List of Contacts

Ask family, friends, neighbors, professors, employers, and anyone else you can think of: "Do you know a (computer programmer, journalist, accountant...) I could talk to about his/her job?" OR "Do you know anyone who works at (specific place) whom I could contact to discuss the (computer programming, journalism,

accounting...) field?" Use the resources at Career Services for assistance in developing your contact list. Talk to a Career Counselor about using the LionLink resource which provides names of Penn State Alumni who have volunteered to talk with students.

Go where a company representative is speaking and ask if that person can give you a lead. Plan to attend information sessions held on campus by various organizations, come to an Industry Spotlight Panel at Career Services, watch for events featuring guest speakers within certain fields through your academic department or student organizations, etc. Take advantage of as many opportunities as you can to interact with professionals in your field of interest.

2. Direct Contact

This involves calling, emailing or visiting the company in order to find someone whose job is of interest to you. If calling, you can get the number of the department where the job is located and ask the receptionist for a referral. If you are unsure of the department or job title, you can ask someone in personnel where an individual doing the kind of work you are interested in is located.

Setting Up the Interview

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

It is best to plan what you are going to say in advance and practice saying what you want before you make the call.

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

Tips on How to Conduct a Successful Interview

Prepare ahead of time. Write out questions and don't be afraid to refer to them. Remember, you are the interviewer. Keep the yes/no questions to a minimum. You want to stimulate discussion rather than a series of short answers.

It's a good idea to start the interview off with questions centered on the person you're interviewing. Questions such as "How did you become interested in this line of work?" and "What has been your career path in getting to where you are today?" show that you're interested in them and is a pleasant way to begin.

Never start with "Tell me about your job." That is such a broad question that the person usually doesn't know where to begin. A more focused question, such as "What do you do during a typical workday?" helps focus the answer.

Follow up general responses, such as "I handle personnel disputes," with requests for examples so you get more specific information and aren't later left guessing what the person meant.

Take notes. You'll be surprised how much you will forget!

Ask for a tour of the building and examples of the person's work. Take note of the work environment—the dress, ways people communicate, etc.

If you have a resume, take it with you as it can be an effective method of showing the person your background. You can get advice on how to improve your resume and what you need to enhance your skills and experiences. Don't bring it with the intention of getting a job with it.

Be yourself—conversational and amiable—to make this an enjoyable experience.

Some Suggested Questions

About the person:

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

About the job itself:

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

About the career field:

- Can you name a relevant trade journal or magazine you would recommend I review to learn more about the field?
- What is the typical work environment like for a person in this career area? What does the step or position above the one you hold now involve?
- How long does it usually take to move from one step to the next in this career path?
- Are there other areas of this field to which people in it may be transferred? What are they?
- What are the basic prerequisites for jobs in the field?
- Are there any specific courses a student might take that would be particularly beneficial in this field?
- What entry-level jobs qualify one for this field?
- What is the demand for people in this field? Do you view this field as a growing one?
- What is the best way to obtain a position that will start me on a career in this field?

- May I read job descriptions and specifications for some of the positions in this field?
- How much flexibility does one typically have regarding:
 - innovation
 - lifestyle
 - self-expression
 - working with colleagues (co-workers)
 - hours of work
 - decision-making (authority)

About your career planning and/or job search:

- Would you recommend any further courses or extracurricular activities to help prepare me for this field or make me more marketable?
- How suited is my background for this field (education, interests, experiences, personality)?
- How could I find out about openings in the field—in the newspaper, journals, and websites (which ones), by word-of-mouth (who spreads the word), by the personnel office (how and where)?
- Do you have any suggestions of other people doing this kind of work with whom I could talk? May I please mention that you referred me?
- Do you have any other advice or suggestions?

After the Interview

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

Remember to send or email a thank-you note. The person will appreciate hearing from you, and you will leave a much better impression of yourself and Penn State. You may want to call them again for more information, so keep the lines of communication open!

FINISHING YOUR MASTER'S DEGREE AND PLANNING YOUR NEXT STEP

When to Consider Going on for a Doctorate

As any graduate student understands, completing an advanced degree takes a strong commitment of time, energy, and financial resources. Many students on the verge of completing their master's degrees ask the question, "Should I continue on with a Ph.D. or other doctoral-level program?" For many, pursuing a doctorate immediately following master's degree conferral serves as a natural next step based upon the professional goals of those students. However, individuals with other professional aspirations may prefer to postpone the doctoral degree until after they have gained a substantial amount of work experience in their chosen field—or they may choose not to pursue the doctoral-level degree at all. Entering an advanced degree program is an important decision that should be both carefully weighed and well-informed.

Understanding Master's vs. Doctoral Degrees

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

The Master's Degree: A Closer Look

The master's degree typically requires the completion of approximately two years of full-time graduate study. However, there are many students who work full-time while attending master's level classes on a part-time basis. The intended purpose of the master's degree is to provide the individual with an increased level of understanding, depth of knowledge, and applicable skills to be used within his or her chosen field. Master's study introduces the student to research and gives them the opportunity to learn research techniques, collect and analyze data, and write a thesis based on this research. In terms of progression, master's degree programs can usually be split into halves.

During the first year, master's level students' schedules are comprised of a heavier course load which (unlike undergraduate general education) consists of material that is field-specific rather than broad-based in nature. Students complete coursework in order to continue toward the completion of degree requirements set by the program and ultimately approved by the greater institution. Students will begin working with an advisor during the first year in order to narrow their desired concentration within the field. Research on a

master's thesis or master's paper topic may begin in the latter portion of the first year.

The second year master's degree experience consists of additional coursework that will serve to complete the degree requirements set for the program. The level of emphasis on research also increases as students progress toward the completion of the thesis or paper required for degree conferral. The thesis requirement is intended to serve as a demonstration of the level of field-specific knowledge and research skill a student has gained within his or her academic focus. Students will also participate in internship or practical learning experiences to a more significant degree during the second year. These hands-on experiences serve to further enhance the in-depth information and direct exposure that candidates receive with regard to their selected area of concentration. A critical point of career decision making often occurs as the end of the master's program nears. This is the period of time when students may be most strongly encouraged to consider applying for doctoral programs based upon their demonstrated research, skill, and professionalism in completing the master's degree.

The Doctoral Degree: What to Expect

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

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

The final half of the doctoral program is usually defined by a shift in focus from coursework to intensive research and development of the dissertation, depending upon the degree sought. The purpose of the dissertation is to showcase new and innovative research in one's area of concentration or demonstrate the application of scientific principles to practical problems. Candidates experience a much greater sense of

professional autonomy within this final stage of the program as compared with the more structured nature of the first half. Candidates may also be likely to teach a heavier course load and interact more closely with professors and other colleagues in the field. Finally, the candidate will defend his or her dissertation in front of a panel of faculty members.

Determine Your Readiness

You may begin determining the pros and cons of seeking a doctoral degree by asking yourself the following questions:

- Why should I pursue a doctorate?
- When should I pursue a doctorate?
- What current commitments are influencing my decision?
- What specific program(s) would I consider?
- How long will it take to complete the program?
- Am I able to pay for this, and what resources are available?
- What institution(s) would I want to attend?
- Can I find a mentor to help me as I navigate through a doctoral program?

A great deal of information gathering and thoughtfulness should go into each of the aforementioned questions that will aid you in determining your readiness for the doctoral-level experience. However, the following section addresses a few of these "readiness factors" in greater depth.

Current Commitments

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

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

Your decision to enter the challenging and time-consuming process of attaining a doctorate does not typically involve you alone.

being and understanding of all involved parties.

Emphasis of the Program

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

Funding Resources

Funding is an extremely important factor to take into account when deciding whether or not to pursue further education. The availability status of loans and other financial aid can serve as a green light—or as a barrier—to realistically seeking an additional graduate degree. In addition, it would be wise to determine, in advance, if funding is available for your doctoral research. Such funding

may be available via internal resources (through your academic department or institution) or externally provided through various grants, fellowships, etc.

Community and Support

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

In addition to establishing a peer community, it will be of great importance to find a mentor within your field or program who can help you to navigate the challenges that may arise as you enter into or progress through your chosen degree program. Finding an individual whose research interests and personality are compatible with yours may take time, but it is certainly possible. You may begin by reviewing faculty biographies on the department’s website,

or you may choose to meet with a few individuals on a campus visit to help determine who may be willing to work with you in this capacity.

Where Else Can I Get Help With Deciding if a Doctoral Program Is for Me?

You can gather information that will be useful in your decision making process in several ways, ranging from informally gathering opinions of students already in a doctoral program to conducting more formal occupational interviews of individuals working on a daily basis in your specific area of interest. You may also want to speak with professors and any others who have a good sense for your potential as a graduate student and as a worker.

You can also schedule an appointment to meet with a Career Counselor to discuss the pros and cons of seeking doctoral-level education as they relate to your own individualized career goals. Career Counselors will work with you to devise an action plan for exploring—or applying to—doctoral programs. To schedule an appointment with a Career Counselor, speak with the Drop-In Counselor, who is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays and until 7:00 p.m. Tuesdays during the fall and spring semesters in the Bank of America Career Services Center.

Funding is an extremely important factor to take into account when deciding whether or not to pursue further education.

FINDING A TEACHING POSITION IN ACADEME

As you may know, having a master's or doctoral degree does not guarantee employment in a competitive academic job market. You may have felt pressure from the discouraging placement reports for those attempting to enter teaching positions in higher education. That is why it is so critical for you to be prepared for what you are about to begin... the academic job search.

The purpose of this section is to assist you in managing the process. The following information will be discussed:

- Assessing your abilities and interests
- Researching your discipline
- Preparing the necessary materials for applications
- Identifying opportunities
- Preparing for the interview

Know Yourself

It may seem obvious, but before you begin the actual job search, it is important to think about your interests, professional goals, skills, and values. What are your areas of strength? At what level do you want to teach—undergraduate or graduate, a community college or a 4-year college, research or teaching focus? Where do you want to teach—large or small, urban or more rural, public or private? Is tenure a goal? And so on. These are just a few of the questions

you should be able to answer before you send out your first application. Not only will you be able to conduct a more directed, successful job search, you will be in a better position to answer these questions in an interview situation and use the answers to these questions as criteria for evaluating job offers.

If you have not taken a serious look at these areas, or are unsure of your answers to some of these questions, you may find it useful to work with one of our Career Counselors to assist you in this first step in your job search. It is critical to go through your job search with the right attitude, the necessary materials, and realistic goals and expectations—a Career Counselor can help you with these. To schedule an appointment with a Career Counselor, speak with the Drop-In Counselor who is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays and until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays during the fall and spring semesters in the Bank of America Career Services Center.

Know Your Field

Once you have determined what you want, and where you want to be, but before you begin applying for positions, it is best to research your discipline: recent and past hiring trends, starting salaries, application procedures and the interviewing process. How can you

acquire so much information? There are several ways:

1. **Faculty:** Try to establish a mentor relationship with a faculty member. Advisers and dissertation chairs are two that immediately come to mind. Not only can faculty provide support throughout the process; but they can also provide valuable insights.
2. **Peers/Alumni:** Find out what your fellow classmates and students ahead of you in the program are doing. Try to talk with alumni who are currently employed, and have recently completed a job search. They may be able to provide advice to assist you in your efforts.
3. **Professional Publications:** *The Chronicle of Higher Education* is not only the primary source for listings of academic positions, both faculty and administrative, it also includes articles highlighting trends, updates, current research topics, etc. Professional journals and newsletters are also a good resource for this type of information as well.
4. **Professional Associations:** Many organizations publish periodicals specific to your discipline. They may include job listings and/or articles related to your career interests.

5. **Conferences/Conventions:** This is an opportunity to not only meet future colleagues; but it is also a forum for you to keep abreast of current issues as they relate to your discipline. Many conferences have job interviewing services available as well.
6. **Professional Activity:** An excellent way to learn more about

your discipline is to become actively involved in professional activities. Through this involvement, you not only enhance your knowledge, but you will also be viewed by others as an active, committed professional. Publish and/or present research at professional meetings. If finances permit, attend summer symposia and special train-

ing sponsored by organizations related to your discipline.

7. **Campus Committees:** If given the opportunity get involved in on-campus graduate student committees (departmental or university curriculum, administrative and/or advisory committees).

Application Materials

Even in this electronic age, there is still a need for “paper”—providing the individuals involved in searching for candidates with the materials they will need to understand who you are in a professional context. Your application may consist of your curriculum vita, a cover letter, and reference letters. Candidates under serious consideration may also be asked for writing samples, lesson plans, student evaluations, or even teaching videos. You do not send these materials initially, unless your discipline has specific expectations for you to do so.

Curriculum Vita

One of the most critical components of your application packet is your curriculum vita (CV). It is often the piece most readers read first when assessing applications. Your training and experience must favorably impress readers. Therefore it is imperative that your CV be an accurate, clear, and concise, yet, comprehensive representation of your qualifications and interests. Give serious consideration to the format as well as the content, as you want to enable the reader to find this critical information quickly and easily.

In *Job Search in Academe: Strategic Rhetoric for Faculty Job Candidates*, Formo and Reed offer the questions that search committee members most often report having in mind as they peruse vitae:

- Does the candidate have the Ph.D. in hand? If not, how close is she/he?
- What is his/her area of specialization?
- How will this candidate’s research interests enrich my own research, or

lessen the teaching load of faculty in this institution?

- Does this candidate have a fair chance of producing tenurable work, so we don’t have to go through the search process again, soon?
- Has this person taught students like ours before, either under supervision or, better yet, as the sole instructor/creator of the course?
- How can this candidate lessen my own workload?
- Do I know of anyone she/he has worked with? Has she/he had good mentoring? What kinds of people are willing to support this applicant’s work record?

These questions may present themselves in a different order depending on the institution or department as well as the job itself. As such, your choice of order for the various categories in your vitae may change depending on what you see in the job description or through your research into the institution.

Please refer to the section in this *Guide* (pp. 31) to learn about the contents and formatting of Curriculum Vitae. You may want to have your curriculum vita reviewed by a Drop-In Counselor who is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays, and until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays during the fall and spring semesters.

Credentials/Dossier

Another supporting component of your search is the credential file, also known as a dossier. The dossier generally includes letters of recommendation, and transcript(s), but it may also include a

writing sample, certificates of achievement, or any other relevant, supporting materials.

Please refer to the Education Credentials Services (ECS) section of this *Guide* on page 5 to learn more.

Whom Should You Get to Write Letters of Recommendation?

Consider those who are most familiar with your academic background, work experiences and career interests as the best choices for writers of letters of recommendation. They may be faculty and/or administrators at your current institution or other employers from past positions. Be sure to extend your pool of letter writers beyond your committee members. Select those who can write about you in the most specific terms. For example, it would be better to have a junior faculty member write specifics as opposed to a senior faculty member who doesn’t know you well and would write more generally. Letters that are most informative and helpful are those who know different aspects of your work and who are willing to support your candidacy enthusiastically and knowledgeably.

It is to your advantage to spend some time discussing your specific career interests and goals with these individuals prior to their writing your letters. This will enable them to address your qualifications more specifically as they relate to the types of positions for which you will be applying.

Cover Letters

The letter to accompany your curriculum vita should not merely summarize your vita; it should synthesize it, expand

upon it, and explain connections, as well as talk about the skills and insights you gained from your experiences. Essentially search committees are looking to see why you are interested in that opportunity, and what you can bring to the opportunity beyond all the other applicants with similar experiences. A word of caution, though: a letter that is longer than two pages tends to be

considered long-winded and is frowned upon. Most committees prefer one-page letters.

Please refer to the section in this *Guide* (pp. 37 - 39) to learn about the contents and formatting of cover letters.

The key to letters is to use your own voice—do not fall into the trap of writing letters that sound the same as all

the others or as if they were copied from a book. You may want to have your cover letter(s) reviewed by a Drop-In Counselor, who is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays, and until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays during the fall and spring semesters.

Reviewing Job Opportunities

While you have prepared the bodies of your vitae and cover letters, they may not clearly indicate how your specialization and experience fit the job description in specific advertisements. Careful review of these announcements is in order. Because many of the ways you researched your field are methods for identifying opportunities as well, your job should be easy. Advertisements in professional associations' publications, journals, periodicals, or websites (see list on this page) or on departmental bulletin boards, at conferences, etc.; Career Services; faculty; or peers/ alumni are all options for identifying potential job openings.

Reviewing Job Listings

First remember that the job announcements are simply that—a way for the specific institution to make candidates aware of a particular opening. They do not generally reflect the full scope of specific interests of the search committee or department, nor do they tell you all you need to know about the department or institution.

You may need to dig a bit deeper before you begin applying (this is where your research skills come into play). If the announcements are not clear in their terminology (e.g., fixed-term vs. adjunct, indefinite tenure vs. tenure track), clarify the language by reviewing their web pages or contacting the institution. What does it say about the specialization sought? Are they strictly looking for one specialization or does the ad

indicate that a variety of combinations of specialties and subspecialties will be considered? What you find in the job announcement and in your investigation into the opportunity will not only help you decide if it is an appropriate job for you, it will direct the content and focus of your application materials.

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

SELECTED ONLINE JOB POSTING SERVICES

Academic Careers Online:
<http://www.academiccareers.com/>

Academic 360: www.academic360.com

Academic Employment Network:
<http://www.academploy.com/>

Academic Position Network (APN):
<http://www.apnjobs.com/>

ACPA - Student Affairs Jobs:
<http://www.acpa.nche.edu/>

AdjunctNation.com (adjunct faculty positions): <http://www.adjunctnation.com/jobs>

AERA Job Bulletin Board:
<http://careers.aera.net>

Affirmative Action Register:
<http://aar-eeo.com/>

AIR - Institutional Research Jobs:
<http://airweb.org/1?page=2>

American Association of Community Colleges - Career Line:
<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/Careers/Pages/default.aspx>

American Association of University Women:
<http://www.aauw.org>

CCollegejobs.com - Community College Jobs: <http://www.ccollegejobs.com/>

Chronicle of Higher Education Career Network: <http://chronicle.com/section/jobs/61>

Education Jobs:
<http://www.educationjobs.com>

H-Net Job Guide:
<http://www.h-net.org/jobs/>

HigherEdJobs.com:
<http://www.higheredjobs.com/>

Insight Into Diversity:
www.insightintodiversity.com

NASPA JobsLink:
<http://www.theplacementexchange.org/>

NationJob's Education Listings: <http://www.nationjob.com/education>

StudentAffairs.com:
<http://studentaffairs.com>

University Job Bank:
<http://www.universityjobs.com/>

Women In Higher Education:
www.wihe.com/positionOpenings.jsp

Unadvertised Openings

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

tence, patience, and adequate follow-through, these strategies will undoubtedly bring positive results.

Faculty

As in your graduate career, faculty may be able to give you some direction in your post-graduate studies career. Through their own professional networks of colleagues, they often become aware of opportunities before they are published.

Conferences

Attending professional association conferences is a great way to begin to network effectively. Depending on the size and scope of the association, you will have the chance to talk with profession-

als from all over the country and perhaps abroad. As the opportunity arises, don't be afraid to initiate conversations in which you could discuss your career and research interests, your career goals, along with their careers and current work. Gather as much information as you can about their institutions, positions, and departments.

Alumni

Another method for building your network is to identify recent alumni from Penn State or your undergraduate college or university within your discipline. Set up informational interviews with them. More often than not, alumni are willing and eager to share with you their experiences and expertise.

Follow-Through

The importance of adequate follow-through cannot be overstated. Some schools have a system where they will send you a checklist of the materials

received so you can check on the status of what is missing. If they do not, it is appropriate and recommended that you call the institution to check on the

receipt of your application materials. It is also appropriate to ask about the time frame, if not already provided.

The Interview

One of the most rewarding results of an effective job search is an invitation for an interview. It can also be one of the most frightening. Hardest for most candidates is the transition from student or thesis defender to potential colleague or peer. However, as with everything already discussed, adequate preparation is the key to success. By knowing what to expect, and preparing for what will occur, you will increase the likelihood of performing successfully. Please refer to the section in this *Guide* (pp. 40 - 43) to learn about what you can expect during the interview.

Follow-Up

At the conclusion of the interview, be sure to thank the selection committee members for their time and consideration. Reaffirm your interest in the position. It is also appropriate to ask about the next step in the hiring process (e.g., when they anticipate making a final decision). If by the end of the day you are absolutely certain that you are no longer interested in the position, polite protocol would suggest that you wait until at least the next day to inform them of your decision to be removed

from the candidate pool, either in writing or over the phone.

Another helpful hint is to follow up with a thank you note to the head of the selection committee, expressing your thanks to each of the individuals with whom you met, and again reaffirming your interest. As mentioned previously, if you no longer wish to be considered for the position this, too, would be an appropriate time to let them know of your decision.

Summary

The job search is a time-consuming, complex process, requiring knowledge of yourself, your field, and the mechanics of job searching, including preparing curriculum vitae and cover letters, locating and researching job opportunities, and developing interviewing skills.

The process can be overwhelming; if you need assistance, you are encouraged to see a Career Counselor. A Drop-In Counselor is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays, and until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays during the fall and spring semesters in the Bank of America Career Services Center. Individual counseling appointments may be scheduled following your meeting with the Drop-In Counselor. These appointments are one-hour long and are available throughout the year.

Services

Additional resources found at Career Services to assist you in your job search efforts include:

- Education Credentials Service (ECS): 105 Bank of America Career Services Center: A file established for your letters of recommendation, undergraduate and/or graduate transcripts and other appropriate, supporting documents. This is a fee-based service; see description on page 5.

- Full-time Job Listings (Existing opportunities received by our office on a daily basis): Nittany Lion Career Network (<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/students/NLCN.shtml>).

REFERENCES/SUGGESTED READING

Formo, Dawn M., & Reed, Cheryl (1999). *Job Search in Academe: Strategic Rhetorics for Faculty Job Candidates*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Heilberger, Mary M. & Vick, Julia M. (2001). *The Academic Job Search Handbook* (3rd Edition). Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Reis, Richard M. (1997). *Tomorrow's Professor: Preparing for Careers in Science and Engineering*. Indianapolis, IN: Wiley-IEEE Press.

FINDING A POST-DOC

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

Post-docs are generally sponsored by an academic institution, research center,

government agency, or private industry. The post-doc has been a long-standing feature of academic careers in the hard sciences, and in many cases is considered a must. Although less common, post-doctoral positions do exist in the humanities and social sciences.

Finding a post-doc is similar to the job search for other academic positions. A history of quality research experience is critical in getting a research-oriented postdoctoral position. However, don't underestimate the roles of planning and effort. You will need a curriculum vita, cover letters, letters of recommendation,

and interviewing skills. You will also need to identify and research opportunities. Refer to the section on job search in the academe (pp. 14 - 18) for more details. The key for post-docs is to start early as some post-doc positions in top locations can be filled 1½ -2 years in advance. Once you have any sense of when you might be completing your degree, you should be on the lookout. If you have the qualifications that a preceptor is looking for, he/she may be willing to hold a spot for you until you finish your degree.

Questions to Ask When Deciding and Evaluating Options

What is it that you ultimately want to do?

- Do you want to teach at a major research university or work in industry, and what kind of post-doc will best prepare you for that career goal?
- Do you want to dig deeper into your current area of research or would you like to become familiar with a slightly different area of research?

What will be the Principle Investigator's involvement with the lab?

- It is possible you will have very little interaction as high profile advisors are not necessarily very accessible.

What is the quality of the lab?

- What is the reputation of the lab or research organization where the position is available, and where does the funding for the position come from? Will you be responsible for securing the funding for the position?
- Do not focus on the number of publications only; consider the ratio of number of papers/number of lab members.

How much freedom will the position give you to pursue your research interests?

What is the feasibility of finishing the research, and finishing the research with publishable results, within the terms of the post-doc appointment?

Some Other Things to Consider

Junior vs. Senior Faculty

Consider the pros and cons of working with junior faculty as they're frequently working at the bench and tend to be very knowledgeable, up to date, and more excitable than senior faculty. While this relationship, which is more like colleague than mentor-student, is great for grad students, it may not be the best for post-docs. If the junior faculty member has a super high profile in the field, you may want to work with him/her.

Where to Do a Post-Doc

2nd-tier Institutions

Bottom line, bigger, top-tier locations will assist in your visibility. At second-tier locations, it will come down to the quality/quantity of your work. You may need to work harder to make a name for yourself out of a "lower tiered" institution in the event that your post-doc advisor is not as well known.

Industry Post-Doc

The money in industry is good and it is certainly possible to conduct top research and get a good education. But, these positions tend to be training exercises for future employees and can limit you.

Overseas Post-Docs

As is the case here in the U.S., there are very good places in Europe to do post-docs and very bad ones. Select the locations where the advisors have internationally recognized names. Keep on top of the issues and developments in the U.S. and maintain all your U.S. contacts.

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

For additional assistance, speak with the Drop-In Counselor who is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays and until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays during the fall and spring semesters in the Bank of America Career Services Center.

POST-DOC WEBSITES

General Post-Doc Websites

Post-Docs.com:
<http://www.post-docs.com>

The Chronicle of Higher Education's Career Network: <http://chronicle.com/jobs>

Higher Education Jobs:
<http://www.higheredjobs.com>

Science-Specific Post-Doc Web Resources and Job Sites

PhDs.org: <http://www.phds.org>

Science Magazine:
<http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org>

The Scientist:
<http://www.the-scientist.com>

ScienceJobs.com:
<http://www.newscientistjobs.com/jobs/default.aspx>

ScienceCareers.org:
<http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org>

Humanities & Social Sciences Post-Doc Web Resources and Job Sites

Woodrow Wilson Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Humanities:
<http://www.woodrow.org>

H-Net's Job Guide:
<http://www.h-net.org/jobs/>

2011 Penn State Grad Student Career Guide 2012

THE JOB SEARCH OUTSIDE THE ACADEMY

How do you want to use your specialized academic background? This can be a difficult question, and for every soon-to-be graduate, this is where the job search begins. Searching for satisfying employment starts with a thorough examination of you. Key questions to consider include:

- What skills do you want to offer to an employer?
- What occupations are of interest to you?
- What work environments do you most prefer?
- What are your priorities for your work?
- What short- and long-term goals have you established for yourself and for your work life?
- What experiences have you had which may serve as evidence of future potential to succeed?

If you feel that you would benefit from talking about these areas, speak with the Drop-In Counselor who is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays and until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays during the fall and spring semesters in the Bank of America Career Services Center. Career Counselors are eager to discuss with you your unique path to the completion of your degree, and to offer assistance as you gather information about yourself and about your work alternatives.

Job Search Tool Kit

Once you have organized information about yourself, you will want to prepare to present this information to employers. With emphasis upon promoting your skills, accomplishments, and experiences to employers, exercise care to express why you are interested in that specific employer and position, and also why you are qualified for this opportunity.

The tool kit contains your resumes, curricular vitae, cover letters, academic transcripts, references, informational interviews, employer research, networking, and persistence.

Resume

The resume is typically a one- or two-page document. Resumes highlight educational and experiential accom-

plishments of particular relevance to the opportunity you are pursuing. For samples and further information on writing a resume, review pages 30 - 36 of this *Guide*. Also, you can find resources and a schedule of resume writing workshops online at studentaffairs.psu.edu/career.

Curriculum Vita (CV)

The CV is more expansive than the resume in that it includes all of your publications, presentations, affiliations, and references. A CV is a useful tool to develop, even if you are not seeking academic related employment. Many employers may ask for a detailed description of your graduate academic work, and the CV is designed to serve

that purpose. For samples and further information on writing a curriculum vita, review pages 30 - 36 of this *Guide*. Also, you can visit the resume/CV section of the Career Information Center in the Bank of America Career Services Center for additional examples of curriculum vitae.

Cover Letters

With the delivery of each resume, a cover letter should be included to introduce you and describe your interest in the opportunity you are seeking. Cover letters are best written if they are individualized to the specific organization and opportunity—highlighting your skills and relevant accomplishments. For samples and further information on writing

a cover letter, review pages 37 - 39 of this *Guide*. Also, you can visit the cover letter section of the Career Information Center in the Bank of America Career Services Center for additional examples.

Academic Transcripts

Employers may request that you submit a copy of your academic transcripts with your resume/CV and cover letter. You would be wise to prepare in advance of this request. In most cases, an unofficial copy of your transcript (accessible via eLion) will be acceptable. However, become familiar with how to request an official copy of your transcripts, should this be required by the employer. Contact the registrar at Penn State and also at your undergraduate institution to secure copies of your transcripts.

References

The references which you provide will offer the employer additional insight into your skills, capacity to work with diverse people, attitude, work ethic, and ability to overcome obstacles, among other work-specific traits. Review page 15 of this *Guide* in advance of securing references. Should you have further questions about gathering references, speak with the Drop-In Counselor in the Bank of America Career Services Center.

Informational Interviews

One of the best ways to learn about an organization or a position is to ask questions of someone who is currently or who has recently worked with that organization. Define what you hope to learn about the organization, and then focus on identifying a person or people within the organization who could provide the information you need. This form of networking can start within your academic program—with faculty members and recent graduates. It can also begin at a career fair or employer information session. If you want to learn more about how to initiate contact with a professional in a specific organization or field of work, review pages 9-10 of this *Guide* or speak with the Drop-In Counselor in the Bank of America Career Services Center.

Employer Research

The ability to demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of an organization is one of the criteria that employers

will use to select whether to interview you, and then whether or not to hire you. When conducting employer research, pay close attention to the history of the organization—when and why was it created? Identify customers: Who or what does it serve?

Organizational values: What are the key components of its mission statement?

Geographic range: Where is the organization located?

Recent events: Awards? News items?

Future Direction: Expanding or contracting?

Current Leadership: Who is in charge and what is that person's experiential and academic background?

The more you know about the organization and are able to communicate comfortably via cover letters or during interviews, the more employers will be impressed with you as an applicant. If you require assistance beginning your employer research, speak with the Drop-In Counselor or visit the Career Information Center in the Bank of America Career Services Center.

Networking

Networking provides access to the invisible job market—the range of opportunities that exist but are not actively promoted. Communicating with people who may already be established in fields of interest to you can serve as a source of information about the field, about specific opportunities within it, and about ways to market yourself effectively to others.

Networking and directly contacting employers are two of the most frequently cited ways that job seekers find employment. Contacts include anyone (faculty, staff, alumni, human resource representatives, friends, neighbors, etc) who may be able to give you assistance in obtaining information on career opportunities. Remember, contacts may not have specific openings, but they may be able to refer you to others who do have such information.

Networking lists begin with you creating a list of all of the people you know who are or may be associated with your goal. You can add to your networking contacts by participating in opportunities within your targeted area—professional

associations and conferences, employment fairs, chambers of commerce, and alumni events.

It is important to determine what type of information you are seeking from your network:

- Referrals to specific job openings
- Information about a career or field of work
- Advice on the best strategies to enter a career
- A further contact who may be closer to your intended target

When contacting your network, prepare to share the following:

- A brief biography of yourself
- Your career goal at this time
- Your specific skill set
- Your anticipated graduation date
- Questions you have prepared to ask this contact

Typical requests extended to contacts:

- Advice/information for someone seeking to enter this field
- Suggestions of others to talk to in the industry
- To keep you in mind if they hear of opportunities
- To use the networking contact as a reference with future contacts
- Request a business card/means to follow up in the future

For more information on networking, review pages 17 and 27 of this *Guide*.

Interviewing Strategies

The interview is not a one-way question-and-answer session. It is a conversation. Interviews are opportunities for you to elaborate upon your resume/CV items—adding examples, details, and further evidence of your potential for future success. Interviews are also opportunities for you to display your positive attitude and outlook through your non-verbal communication, tone of voice, listening skills, and general enthusiasm for the opportunity. For information on preparing for interviews, review pages 40 - 43 of this *Guide*. Interviews may create feelings of nervousness and

anxiety, and you can best prepare for an interview by visiting the Bank of America Career Services Center. A mock (practice) interview can be scheduled for you and you can also attend interviewing workshops, watch videos discussing interview strategies, and discuss your interview preparation and performance with a Career Counselor.

Persistence

For even the most highly qualified people, rejection and disappointment are a part of the job search process. If you

are experiencing disappointment in your search, consider the amount of time you are spending on the job search—how are you spending it?

- Are you allowing people to get to know you and are you introducing yourself to new opportunities and people?
- Are the materials in your job search toolkit the best they can be?
- Are your goals focused and clear?

- Are you able to connect your accomplishments with your targets in a persuasive manner?
- How are your interviewing skills and strategies?

If you feel you would benefit from talking further about these areas, you may speak with the Drop-In Counselor, who is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays and until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays during the fall and spring semesters in the Bank of America Career Services Center.

Job Search in Business and Industry

When considering applying your specialized graduate degree to work in business or industry, focus upon the specific and also the transferable skills you could apply to this new opportunity. Have you learned information within your program that is directly related to your career goal? Have you acquired general skills such as the ability to present ideas clearly and persuasively, the capacity to conduct research into a specific topic, or the skill of adapting to unforeseen circumstances and obstacles? While you may feel like you might be the only person pursuing a non-academic career, the reality is that you want to pursue the option that you identify as being the most satisfying to you.

Several resources exist here at Penn State for you to begin your job search in business and industry—career fairs and on-campus interviewing. Plan to prepare for and attend the career fairs, which are held each fall and spring. Information regarding other career fairs may be available through individual academic departments. On-campus

interviewing is available to graduating students who are seeking full-time employment. On-campus interviewing is convenient as employers come to campus to conduct screening interviews for pre-selected candidates. Information regarding career fairs and on-campus recruiting activities is available online at studentaffairs.psu.edu/career.

Resources for Job Searching on the Web

Nittany Lion Career Network: <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/students/NLCN.shtml>

CareerBuilder: <http://www.career-builder.com>

Hoover's Guide: <http://premium.hoovers.com/subscribe/>

College Grad: <http://www.collegegrad.com>

Tips for Improving Your NET Results “Click Here to Apply” is not an effective replacement for networking, intro-

ducing yourself, and personalizing the job search. Wherever possible, attempt to introduce yourself via a phone conversation or in-person meeting. If this is not possible, send a well-crafted cover letter which will elaborate upon your resume/CV.

Keep your searches broad! The more limiting functions you select (i.e., geographic preference, field of work preference, etc), the fewer results you will view.

If an opportunity appears beyond your experience level, inquire about opportunities which may be more appropriate for someone of your academic/experiential qualifications.

Give yourself the benefit of the doubt. If you meet 80% of the required criteria for a position you are pursuing, apply! The employer may see something in your application that may outweigh the missing characteristic. Also, be prepared to address this missing characteristic in your future interview.

Job Search in Non-Profit

The tools of the non-profit job search will be quite similar to those outlined in the general job search. However, a non-profit job will be different in that many non-profit organizations select not to actively recruit. Most job listings are advertised and circulated via organization websites, professional association web pages, or via word of mouth communication within existing staff and

volunteer networks. The non-profit job search can be a lengthy process—as there is generally not one staff person dedicated to hiring, but rather a staff person who may also serve as a volunteer coordinator, manager, direct service provider, etc., who may not have time or resources to respond immediately to your employment request. Volunteering or doing an internship is one of the best

ways to demonstrate your commitment to the organization, its cause(s), and to allow the employer to see your work ethic and abilities.

Review the information related to conducting and organizing a job search; the same questions about purpose, abilities, and skills, will apply to how you focus and direct your non-profit employment search. What do you want to do? What

difference do you want to make? Where do you want to make this difference?

Non-profits typically generate revenue from government grants, membership dues, fees for services provided, or private donations/support. Generally, non-profit employees care deeply about the work they are doing, and value the

opportunity to create and enact change in lives, policies, and attitudes.

The Career Information Center in the Bank of America Career Services Center has information related to non-profit career areas and opportunities.

These websites may offer additional starting points for learning about non-profit employment:

Idealist—Action without Borders: <http://www.idealists.org>

Human Service Careers: <http://www.hscareers.com/jobseekers/home.asp>

Social Service Careers: <http://www.socialservice.com/>

Job Search in Federal Government

Government is broad and diverse enough to contain opportunities for individuals with a wide array of academic backgrounds and skill sets. While you may not necessarily be able to find a government position directly related to your thesis or dissertation topic, government employers will be eager to learn about your transferable skills, career goals and interests, and ability to manage projects and people effectively. The federal government organizes employment based upon the following categories:

- Accounting and Budget
- Biological Sciences
- Business and Industry
- Copyright, Patent and Trademark
- Education
- Engineering and Architecture
- Equipment, Facilities and Services
- General Administration, Clerical and Office Services
- Human Resources Management
- Information and Arts
- Information Technology
- Investigation
- Legal and Kindred
- Library and Archives
- Mathematics and Statistics
- Medical, Dental, Hospital and Public Health
- Miscellaneous Occupations (Not Elsewhere Classified)
- Physical Sciences

- Quality Assurance, Inspection and Grading
- Social Science, Psychology and Welfare
- Supply
- Transportation
- Veterinary Medical Science

Regardless of your targeted area, the tools of the government job search will be quite similar to those outlined in the general job search.

Jobs exist in the following areas of government:

- Federal Government
 - Civil Service
 - Legislative Branch
 - Judicial Branch
 - Public International Organizations
- State Government
- Local Government
- Interest Groups
- Think Tanks
- Policy and Research Centers
- Trade/Professional Associations
- Media
- Communications, Public Relations, and Journalism

Internships often provide an entry into government employment. Speak with a Drop-In Counselor if you are interested in learning more about federal internship and job opportunities.

Source of Federal Government Information

<http://www.usa.gov>

Enables information seekers to learn about various branches of government, governmental committees, organizations, and affiliated groups.

Federal Government Employment Search Engine

www.usajobs.gov

In addition to this search engine, you will also want to visit the website of the specific unit or department for which you would like to work. This two-pronged search approach will result in a greater number of visibly advertised opportunities, and also an opportunity for you to contact the unit directly to conduct networking, occupational interviewing, and have your specific questions about the work answered.

Government Applications

Applications for federal and state employment are often standardized, and have unique requirements which may not be found in advertisements for other forms of employment. Pay close attention to these forms, and be sure to provide all required information. Applications usually list a closing date, specific duties of the position, educational requirements, location of the employment, how to apply, and a telephone number to ask questions related to any of the application materials requested. Samples of additional information might be details of military service, citizenship, a complete employment history, and/or application essays, typically known as KSAs. A KSA is a statement of Knowledge, Skill, and Ability. Most job descriptions will

specify what aspects of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities to comment upon.

For Example:

KSA #1: Demonstrated ability to organize and coordinate work within schedule and budget restraints.

When responding to a KSA, consider the following:

- Education
- Training
- Experience
- Volunteer Work
- Activities
- Awards, Licenses, etc.

Example KSA and Response:

KSA #1: Demonstrated ability to organize and coordinate work within schedule and budget restraints.

I performed the following tasks during my current position at ABC organization:

Experience:

- Managed the office scheduling system for all external vendors and suppliers.
- Recorded requests for additional materials from three procurement managers.
- Compared costs from 7 different vendors and selected the vendor who demonstrated an ability to deliver needed materials in a timely manner within budget constraints.

Award: Received “Cost Savings Award” 2007 in recognition of \$10,000 cost savings during fiscal year 2006-2007

Training: Budget Management Seminar, 2011 Penn State University Small Business Institute.

Government Employment Classifications

Candidates are often confused by the Governmental Employment Classification system. This system of organizing work responsibilities cor-

relates to educational and experiential requirements as well as pay scale and advancement possibilities. Here is a description of classifications associated most commonly with individuals possessing graduate training:

Most students with a graduate degree would apply for federal positions ranging from GS-9 through GS-13 and above.

GS-9: One or more years responsible and independent experience related to the job or a Master’s or Higher Degree (GS-9 through GS-12).

GS-13 and Higher: One or more years of highly responsible and independent experience directly related to the opportunity you are seeking.

If you would like additional information on completing government applications, visit the Drop-In Counselor or the Career Information Center at Bank of America Career Services Center.

State Government Employment

Again, the broad nature of government will enable job seekers to find ways to connect their skills, work related values, interests, and goals to positions and opportunities to contribute to state government. You can find a web directory of state and local government offices at http://www.usa.gov/Agencies/State_and_Territories.shtml

Civil Service Exams

- Many state employment opportunities will require candidates to complete a Civil Service Exam prior to being

interviewed for a position. Four types of tests include written, oral, performance (subject mastery), and a rating of experience and training. Details as to where the test will be administered are included in the position description. Testing typically is scheduled four-six weeks after delivering your application.

To improve your search results for state government employment:

- Apply for all job titles for which you meet the minimum experience and training requirements

- Take the same test more than once to improve original test score
- Consider working in counties with greatest number of opportunities.
- Be flexible and persistent
- Consider a variety of employment options including temporary, part-time, seasonal, etc.
- Apply for local government and state government

Local Government Employment

The most visible local government opportunities exist within:

- Large urban county governments
- Municipalities over 100,000
- Large school districts

When organizing your employment search, research and networking are key

when considering local governmental opportunities. An in-person visit which is scheduled can be a tremendous way to demonstrate your interest in a specific form of work or organization. Treat every conversation with a contact or local government employee as if it were a job interview and always ask for additional people to connect with to

further your search for local government openings.

Directory of Local Government Organizations

<http://www.usa.gov/Agencies/Local.shtml>

ON-CAMPUS INTERVIEWING

On-Campus Interviewing

Career Services' On-Campus Interviewing (OCI) program is part of Nittany Lion Career Network. OCI offers students the opportunity to interview for entry-level full-time positions with a variety of employers from business, industry and government. On-campus interviewing is a pre-select system. Employers select candidates from among the students who request interviews with them by submitting a resume through an online system. In order to participate in on-campus interviewing, you **MUST** request access through the Career Services website at studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/students/NLCN.shtml.

PLEASE NOTE: While a Nittany Lion Career Network account is automatically provided and free of charge as a registered Penn State student, there is a \$15 registration fee for the on-campus interviewing portion of the system. This fee is billed through the Bursar's office. Only after you have registered with Career Services' on-campus interviewing service can you request and/or schedule interviews.

Please read the following sections to learn more about the on-campus interviewing opportunities and how they may fit into your job search plans.

Is On-Campus Interviewing for Me?

To determine if OCI will meet your needs, look at the opportunities through the Guest Account at studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/students/NLCN.shtml. Most positions offered are in business, industry or government and are for students with technical or business backgrounds and interests. Students with backgrounds and interests in other areas should not rule out on-campus interviewing, but should be advised that OCI may need to be combined with other job search strategies.

If you are seeking a career in the arts, social services, education, politics, communications, health care, or a similar field, a self-directed job search is a must. Even if you are seeking employment in business and technical fields you should consider on-campus interviewing as only one method of seeking employment. Students in all fields should learn to conduct a full-scale job

search (see pages 20-24 in this *Guide* for more information on the job search).

When Do I Register for Job Interviews?

Because employers prefer to interview candidates who are within a few months of graduation, the following times are suggested to register for interviews with the on-campus interviewing system.

- **December Grads:** participate in the on-campus interviewing system the spring and fall semester before graduation.
- **May and August Grads:** participate in the on-campus interviewing system the fall and spring semester before graduation.

PLEASE NOTE: Some employers will participate in OCI only once a year. Others will visit during both fall and spring semesters, but they may be interviewing for different positions during each visit. We suggest that you register early and review the employer campus interview notices weekly to determine if they are applicable to your situation.

Students requesting special assistance or accommodations while participating in on-campus interviewing should notify the Associate Director for Recruiting and Employer Relations.

Policies for Participation

1. Registration

Registration with the on-campus interviewing portion of Nittany Lion Career Network is required for all students who want to participate in the OCI service. While a Nittany Lion Career Network account is automatically provided and free of charge as a registered Penn State student, there is a \$15 registration fee for the on-campus interviewing portion of the system. This registration fee is billed through the Bursar's office. Your on-campus interviewing registration is for the 2011-12 academic year only. You also become part of the OCI listserv and grant permission to Career Services to send announcements about jobs, upcoming events and other important information and updates.

2. Use of the System

When an account is established in your name, it is for your use only. Sharing your account or submitting resumes for other candidates is strictly forbidden and will result in dismissal from the system.

3. Personal and Academic Profile

You **MUST** complete your personal and academic profile. Without this information, you will not be notified of interview invitations or information sessions, nor be included in resume searches conducted by employers.

4. Deadlines

Deadlines are strictly adhered to—no resumes will be accepted after the posted deadline. Application deadlines are listed on the job postings and are generally 20 days prior to the interview date.

5. Cancellations

When you submit a request for an interview, you are committed to schedule an interview if the employer selects you. If extenuating circumstances force you to cancel your commitment, **you MUST decline your interview through Nittany Lion Career Network by the deadline listed on the job posting. Do NOT cancel your inter-**

view directly with the employer as the message often does not get to the recruiter arriving on campus.

6. No-Shows

Students cancelling interviews after the online deadline and/or those students who do not show up for scheduled interviews are considered **no-shows**. No shows will immediately be blocked from requesting or signing up for interviews. The first time you miss or cancel an interview late, your on-campus interviewing privileges within Nittany Lion Career Network will be withheld until a letter of explanation and apology is written to the employer. This letter and a stamped envelope must be provided to Career Services. We will mail it with our cover letter and reactivate your interviewing privileges. Please check with Career Services for the contact information of the recruiter with whom you were scheduled to meet. A second missed interview or late cancellation will result in your on-campus interviewing privileges within Nittany Lion Career Network being withdrawn permanently.

7. Information Sessions

Many employers schedule sessions, usually the night before their interviews, to present information about their company and opportunities. Attendance at the company information sessions for all students invited to interviews is expected—employers consider these events to be a part of the interview process. Students who want to learn more about opportunities may also attend information sessions, when allowed by employers. Check the Nittany Lion Career Network Events Menu for upcoming information sessions. Students attending information sessions should wear business casual attire.

8. The Day of the OCI Interview

- Arrive 10 or 15 minutes ahead of your scheduled interview time.

- Report to the Interview Center located on the second floor of the Bank of America Career Services Center. Use your student ID card at the cardswipe kiosk at the top of the stairs to identify your interviewer's room number.
- Have a seat in the waiting area nearest your interview room to wait for the employer to call you.
- If you have any questions or problems after you arrive, please see the staff member at the Interview Center reception desk.

9. Missing a Site Interview

When you accept an invitation for a site interview you are making a commitment to that company. If you are no longer interested in an opportunity or cannot make an interview, it is professional courtesy to contact the employer and let them know of your situation. Simply not attending a scheduled interview will ensure that you will not be considered for a position with that company in the future. Your actions can also jeopardize Penn State's relationship with the company, making interviews difficult for future students.

Career Services expects that students using our Nittany Lion Career Network services maintain professional behavior.

10. Job Offers

You are expected to notify employers who offer you a position of an acceptance or non-acceptance of an offer in a timely manner. Accept an offer of employment in good faith, withdraw from the recruiting process after accepting an offer, and discontinue pursuit of a position with other employers. Candidates who accept a full-time position and then renege will result in the immediate removal of your interview privileges within Career Services' Nittany Lion Career Network system. PLEASE NOTE: Situations involving candidates who accept an internship position and then renege will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

2011 Penn State Grad Student Career Guide 2012

USING YOUR PENN STATE CONNECTIONS FOR NETWORKING

Networking is an important part of any job search process.

Networking is not asking someone for a job. It is about establishing connections and relationships with people that will provide you with access to information that is crucial to a successful job or career search.

A well-established network will provide you with many things including: access to the hidden job market, insights into the culture of an organization and trends in a particular industry or job category so that you are in a better position to sell yourself. With more than 500,000 alumni, your Penn State connections can help you gather information to help you answer any job search question.

Developing Your Network

The Penn State Alumni Association supports many alumni chapters, interest groups and societies that connect alumni to each other.

These groups are based upon a common theme such as college, geographic area or interest. For a list of these groups, visit the Penn State Alumni Association website at alumni.psu.edu.

LionLink is a program offered through Alumni Career Services. It is designed to link current students and alumni with alumni for the purposes of making professional connections. The current database provides connections to over 2,000 alumni representing a wide variety of fields.

Academic departments often have strong connections to their alumni. Many colleges have a director of alumni relations who can provide information on special programs and resources.

Professional associations offer a chance to network with people in your field of expertise. By joining as a student, you are usually entitled to a discounted rate for membership and services.

Using Your Network

It is not just who you know but who knows you. The better a person knows you, the more likely they are to help you to navigate the job search process. Take the time to build relationships with people who share your interests.

Networking takes time. Be respectful of the time of those in your network. Show up on time for meetings, be concise, get to the point quickly, ask specific questions and respect their time commitments. Show your appreciation by sending a thank you note. Be sure to follow through on all leads. Send brief follow-up notes that keep them abreast of your progress as well as the outcomes of your connections with their referrals.

With more than 500,000 alumni, your Penn State connections can help you gather information to help you answer any job search question.

2011 Penn State Grad Student Career Guide 2012

EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Rather than returning home directly after graduation, many international students are interested in exploring work opportunities in the United States. Current U.S. immigration laws permit international students to be employed in the U.S. during and after a course of study. However, these regulations have specific requirements and restrictions.

If you wish to work in the U.S. you must plan ahead and be prepared to be persistent.

First, it is important for you to understand under what circumstances you may apply for work authorization on your student visa. In addition, unfamiliarity and discomfort with the American

job search process may put an international student at a disadvantage when competing for a job. The following information is intended to help you understand and, thereby, overcome some of the obstacles associated with seeking employment in the United States.

Your Employment Status

In general, not being a U.S. citizen or permanent resident adds a level of difficulty to a job search, but there are employers who are willing to hire foreign nationals. It will depend on the industry and the employer. In general as a foreign national you cannot work for the U.S. federal government, for most other U.S. state and local government entities, or for private employers who receive government contracts. Avoid companies dependent upon contracts from the U.S. Department of Defense. Your visa status will be less of an absolute barrier with other types of employers.

Practical Training offers students who have studied in the U.S. on F-1

visas the opportunity to work for up to twelve months in a field related to your studies. You are able to request a seventeen-month extension for a total of twenty-nine months in a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) field. If you hope to remain in the U.S. for longer than the period of your Practical Training, it is especially important to understand the basis on which you may stay long term and be prepared to explain them to an employer. An employer must sponsor you for an H-1 visa, and thus you will impose more paperwork on an employer than will a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. Ask yourself what you offer to

make an employer willing to make this extra effort.

If you have a J-1 Visa, you may only work off campus in the U.S. with written work authorization in advance from your J-1 Responsible Officer. Academic Training is the name used to describe J-1 Student off-campus work authorization for certain types of study-related employment.

Consult the Office of Global Programs (410 Boucke Building) if you are unclear about these options. The more you know, the easier it will be for you to persuade a prospective employer to hire you for a period of practical training.

Approaching the Topic of H1-B Visas With Employers

Many employers are intimidated by the U.S. immigration process and are reluctant to sponsor H1-B visas, or simply have a policy against it. If you attended school in another country and you don't say on your resume or in your cover letter that you are a citizen or permanent resident of the U.S., a savvy employer will probably assume that you have a student visa. On an employer's formal application, if there is a blank for visa status, you need to fill it in with the correct information. On your resume, you may either make no mention of your visa status or make the most positive statement that you can truthfully make. For example, "Visa allows 12 months U.S. work permission" or "Permanent residency to be awarded within the next four months." If you are already a permanent resident, be sure that your resume says "U.S. permanent resident" in a spot where it cannot be overlooked, because it will mean that your employer will not need to worry about work permission. Needless to say, you should only say things that are true, and you should be prepared to document them.

When You Should Bring Up the Issue

Do not begin an employment interview with an inquiry regarding H1-B sponsorship. In general, you may want to raise the issue sometime near the end of a positive first interview, or, perhaps, at the time of being invited in for a second interview. You should definitely talk to a potential employer about your status before you are offered a job. Some employers aren't necessarily aware of work permission issues, and if someone offers you a job and only then learns that they'll have to apply for an H-1 visa in order to keep you, the person may be angry that you didn't provide this information up front.

What Can You Do to Maximize Your Chances?

Begin your job search early, and be prepared to devote extensive time to it. Learn everything you can about the process through which an employer can obtain an H-1 visa for you. In some

cases, you'll need to be the one to explain it to an employer. Don't vaguely tell an employer that it's "no problem." Rather, be prepared to explain exactly what steps are involved. Refer to The Department of Labor's site: <http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov> for instructions for both candidates and employers. There also may be some advantage to having the paperwork handled by a lawyer who is thoroughly familiar with the process. If you'd be willing to pay any associated fees, let the employer know that. You can also tell an employer that they can consult with the staff at the Office of Global Programs (410 Boucke Building) for more information about the process. As an independent third party, Office of Global Programs may have more credibility than you will in explaining the process.

To seek out companies that have a history of H1-B sponsorship consider the following sources.

1. **GoingGlobal.com** provides a database of US H1B Plus visa-sponsoring employers; in-depth information for the international job search; as well as employment information for major U.S. cities and states. Penn State Career Services has a subscription to this service which can be accessed through the Career Information Center online at <http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/career/cic>
2. **ForeignMBA.com** is reportedly the #1 Internet community for M.B.A. students from around the world. The site includes a list of more than 70 employers that have a history of hiring foreign M.B.A.s.
3. **H1VisaJobs.com** is a website housing 10 databases listing companies that have sponsored H1-B visas within the past several years as reported by the federal government. There is an access fee for each database for a six-month period. The databases include the following areas:
 - Administration
 - Business Administration & Management

- Computer Science
- Education & Research
- Engineering
- Languages
- Life & Health Sciences
- Math & Physical Sciences
- Medicine
- Other Professions

Penn State Career Services does NOT have a subscription to this service.

Other Links for International Students

www.internationalstudent.com:

Started by a group of international students living in New York City with the goal of helping other students deal with American immigration authorities and education system.

CareerBuilder.com: Contains job lead banks for Asia, Australia, Canada, France, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and the UK. Helpful for identifying employment resources for specific regions of the world.

Monster.com: Offers the ability to search for jobs around the world by keyword, or country and discipline. Also offers a resume database, company listings, and an e-mail service.

OverseasJobs.com: International jobs database of positions available in companies around the world. Also provides job search resources.

Finally

Career Counselors are familiar with the special situations you face and can help you at all stages of your job search. We also strongly recommend that you work with the Office of Global Programs (410 Boucke Building) to learn more about work permission and immigration regulations. The Office of Global Programs can acquaint you with current requirements and help you avoid being offered a job but having no legal basis upon which to accept it.

RESUMES AND CURRICULUM VITAE

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

What Is the Difference between a Resume and a Curriculum Vita?

Vitae and resumes both have similar purposes—as marketing documents that provide key information about your skills, experiences, education, and personal qualities that show you as the ideal candidate. Where resumes and curriculum vitae differ is their use, format, and length.

A resume tends to be a one- or two-page document outlining your personal, educational and work related experiences that demonstrate why you are qualified

for a particular position. Your strengths and qualifications are the focus of a resume.

A vita is a comprehensive biographical statement, a complete summary of your educational and professional experience as it relates to the positions for which you will be applying. It is a detailed listing that usually includes publications, presentations, professional activities, honors, and additional information. Usually there is no objective statement, but format varies. It is best to also discuss any special formatting your field requires with a mentor or trusted member of your network.

Where resumes tend toward brevity, vitae lean toward completeness. It is generally three or more pages in length, depending on your qualifications and level of experience. But, while vitae do not have the one-page rule of resumes, you need to walk the line between providing a good quality of depth to

showcase your qualifications and attract potential employer interest and providing too much information thus appearing verbose and turning off potential employer interest.

Resumes are used for business, non-profit, or other non-academic positions. A vita is most often used in the field of higher education and concentrates on academic pursuits, omitting material not directly related to educational background and achievement. It is appropriate for those seeking faculty, research, clinical, or scientific positions. If you are uncertain whether to use a vita, ask yourself “Am I sending this document to other Ph.D.s? Is my Ph.D. required for this position? Is my scholarship relevant for this position?” If the answers to those questions are yes, you are probably going to use a vita. As a general rule of thumb, unless a vita is requested, you should send a resume.

Vitae and resumes both have similar purposes—as marketing documents that provide key information about your skills, experiences, education, and personal qualities that show you as the ideal candidate.

Getting Started

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

exclude. Write a draft and experiment with format and relevant information.

Depending on your reader, your resume or vita will change somewhat. It is important to keep up-to-date information on hand so you may adapt your vita to new opportunities. We suggested that you update your information regularly, at least once a year, preferably more often. Once your rough draft has been written, you are ready to create your

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

Best Format or Style?

Ideally your resume or vita should emphasize your strong points while expressing your uniqueness and individuality. There are two basic formats to choose from:

Chronological Format

Present education and work experience in reverse chronological order, describing responsibilities and achievements under each entry. This is the most appropriate format if you have experience directly related to your career goal. And for curriculum vitae, most employers expect this format.

Functional Format

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

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

Tips for Preparing Your Resume or CV

Although there are few set rules or prescribed formats for a vita or resume, below are some simple suggestions to follow when putting together a resume or vita.

Heading/Contact Information:

Your name is your heading (do not put “Resume” or “Curriculum Vita” on your document as a heading). It should be

bold and in larger print than the rest of the resume.

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

Objective:

After identifying your accomplishments and the accompanying skills when you began to draft your resume, you will need to write down some ideas about what you want to do with those skills and accomplishments. This will become your objective on your resume.

The objective, usually seen on a resume and not the vita, consists of one or two concise, easy-to-read statements focusing on the type of position you are seeking, the skills you want to utilize, and/or the tasks in which you want to become involved. Avoid clichés or jargon, such as, “A challenging position offering opportunity for growth and advancement.” Instead, something concise, yet specific is most helpful, for example, “Seeking full-time position in engineering design, research and development.”

Education:

List degrees in reverse chronological order—most recent first. List the official name of your degree and/or certification

that you have obtained, or will obtain, the month and year of your graduation, and your major and minor(s). Keep the information easy to scan—a list is preferred over paragraph form. On a resume, you may want to include details relevant to the job you are seeking, such as courses, special projects, a minor or area of emphasis, etc.

Experience:

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

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

Consolidate information when possible; avoid repetition and excessive details in describing experiences. Make the format easy to scan by using bulleted statements, not paragraphs, and put relevant action verbs first.

Use the Action Word List on the next page to formulate the content.

ACTION WORD LIST

Administered	Delegated	Fostered	Organized	Selected
Advised	Delivered	Generated	Participated	Served
Analyzed	Demonstrated	Guided	Performed	Set up
Applied	Designed	Harnessed	Persuaded	Sold
Arranged	Determined	Illustrated	Planned	Solved
Assisted	Developed	Implemented	Prepared	Structured
Balanced	Directed	Innovated	Presented	Streamlined
Billed	Earned	Instructed	Produced	Supervised
Briefed	Edited	Introduced	Programmed	Supported
Carried out	Eliminated	Invented	Provided	Surpassed
Communicated	Enabled	Led	Published	Surveyed
Compiled	Enforced	Maintained	Received	Targeted
Completed	Enhanced	Managed	Recommended	Taught
Computed	Established	Mastered	Reduced	Teamed with
Conducted	Evaluated	Mediated	Reorganized	Tested
Controlled	Expanded	Monitored	Reviewed	Trained
Coordinated	Facilitated	Negotiated	Revised	Tripled
Created	Filed	Observed	Scheduled	Utilized
Defined	Formed	Operated	Screened	Wrote

Activities:

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

Honors/Awards:

You should include this section only if you have several honors. If you have only one or two honors, you can include them in a combined PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT/HONORS section.

Skills:

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

References:

Most organizations will not expect references on your resume. But, you should prepare a list of references on a separate page formatted to match your

resume for use when employers request references. References should be listed as a part of the vita.

Usually, three to five references are appropriate. Consider individuals familiar with your academic achievements, research or teaching skills, and/or your work habits. Include the referee's name, title, organization, mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address. PLEASE NOTE: You should always seek prior approval from individuals you plan to list as references and provide them with a copy of your resume or vita.

Other Things to Include in a Vita:

- Educational Background
- Grants Received
- Professional Service
- Research Experience
- Publications
- Thesis or Dissertation
- Teaching Experience
- Presentations
- Internships
- Professional Experience
- Fellowships
- Certifications/Licensures
- Research Interests

- Honors and Awards
- Programs and Workshops
- Teaching Interests
- Professional Affiliations
- Creative Works
- Scholarly Works
- Languages
- Foreign Study
- Committees
- Administrative Experience
- Works in Progress

Get Feedback from Outside Readers/Critics

Have people proof your vita. Reviewers form impressions quickly. Several suggestions for selecting proofreaders include:

- A professional person who knows you well enough to spot any significant information you may have left out
- A professional person who does not know you well and will read critically
- A hiring personnel officer you know

Choose and arrange categories so that the most relevant information is placed where it will catch the reader's eye.

Appearance of Your Resume

Consistency

If you are inconsistent, the reader may think you are careless or confused. Do not leave this impression—you don't have to. Be consistent in the following ways:

First, don't mix styles in any category. If you put your job title first, followed by the employer name, list all job entries the same way. Likewise, state the name of the senior project author or director for all activities—not just a few. Leave no doubt about any entry.

Second, do not use double entries. This means do not list a citation or activity more than once. Some people think these multiple listings of essentially the same activity strengthen their resume or vita. Actually, they weaken it because they create the appearance of loading up and repeating the same information to impress the reader—it usually does the opposite!

Finally, it may seem basic, but keep all tabs, margins, typestyles and sizes (except your name, which can be larger), and bullets consistent. Visual impact is affected by these minor details

and inconsistency can detract from a positive initial impact.

Type of Paper

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

Proofread

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

Using Keywords

Not as often needed in vitae, keywords are the basis of most electronic resume search and retrieval processes. They provide the content from which to search for a resume in a database, whether the database is specific to an employer, or a web-based search engine that serves the general public.

What are “keywords”? Keywords are nouns and phrases that highlight technical and professional areas of expertise, industry-related jargon, projects,

achievements, special task forces and other distinctive features about a prospect's work history.

Try to identify all possible keywords appropriate to your skills and accomplishments that support the kinds of jobs you are seeking. We suggest that once you have written your resume, you can then identify your strategic keywords based on how you imagine people will search for your resume. It is recommended to integrate the keywords you have identified into the text or bullet points of your resume. If you are unaware of the keywords in your field, we suggest that you visit the Career Information Center in the Bank of America Career Services Center to research your career field.

Resume or Curriculum Vitae Review and Feedback

If you have created a draft of your resume or vita and would like to have it reviewed, you may speak with the Drop-In Counselor who is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays and until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays during the fall and spring semesters in the Bank of America Career Services Center.

WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT RESUMES:

(Comments from recruiters who conducted on-campus interviews at Penn State)

Give details

- Some resumes were vague in terms of specific accomplishments which leads the recruiter to the long process of determining whether anything of substance lies behind statements like, “Improved an inventory process...”. It does not take up too much space to add, “By doing X, which resulted in Y...”. Give specifics and details, but be precise and clear.
- Highlight any applicable experience required for specific job. Ensure resume format is very easy to follow and clear. Resumes are a way to sell yourself to companies; use key words such as partner, facilitated, championed, managed, etc.
- Add quantifiable results to resumes.

Length

- For on-campus interviews and career fairs, keep resume to one page. Lengthy resumes are expected of experienced professionals, not of college students. Many of my

colleagues automatically discount a resume because of its length, therefore, an otherwise good candidate could lose an interview opportunity. Choose the most relevant skill sets for your resume.

- Be succinct; barring unusual levels or types of experiences.

The Basics

- Make your resume results oriented, highlighting achievements and accomplishments. Focus on behaviors such as leadership impact, getting results and intelligent risk taking.
- Be thorough and honest about all of your experiences.
- Accuracy, correct spelling and grammar are all important factors to making your resumes stand out. Put work experience before activities.
- Be clear; sloppiness is usually a companion of a lack of clarity.

Templates

Resume Template

	NAME Address Phone Number Email
OBJECTIVE (Optional) <i>Focus on the type of job sought</i>	
EDUCATION The Pennsylvania State University M.A./M.S. Degree Major, <i>Date</i> Thesis Institution, City, State B.A./B.S. Degree Major, <i>Date</i>	
EXPERIENCE TITLE Place, City, State Description of responsibilities, leadership roles <i>Dates</i>	
HONORS	
ACTIVITIES	
SKILLS Languages Computer	
LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION (if applicable) Type of License or Certification <i>Dates</i>	
REFERENCES	

Vita Template

	NAME Address Phone Number Email
SUMMARY STATEMENT/OBJECTIVE (Optional) Discusses key strengths	
EDUCATION/DEGREES AWARDED The Pennsylvania State University Ph.D. Degree Concentration, <i>Date</i> Dissertation Institution, City, State M.A. Degree Major, <i>Date</i> Thesis Institution, City, State B.A./B.S. Degree Major, <i>Date</i>	
POSTDOCTORAL TRAINING (if applicable)	
FELLOWSHIPS Field of Research, Place, Title <i>Dates</i>	
PROFESSIONAL/TEACHING EXPERIENCE TITLE Place, City, State Description of responsibilities, leadership roles <i>Dates</i>	
PUBLICATIONS Use standard format	
PAPERS PRESENTED Use standard bibliographic format for your field, minus the author portion (if co-authoring, supply your co-author's (s') name(s) in parentheses.	
GRANTS AND AWARDS	
PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS	
SKILLS Languages Computer	
LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION (if applicable) Type of License or Certification <i>Dates</i>	
REFERENCES	

Vita Sample

ALEXANDER B. CANDIDATE

Home Address
1234 5th Street
State College, PA 16801
(814) 555-1212 (mobile)

Business Address
111-C Burrows Bldg
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 555-8635

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature, 20__
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
Dissertation: The portrayal of cities in 18th century French novels

Master of Arts in Comparative Literature, 20__
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA
Thesis: 20th century writers and the industrial revolution

Bachelor of Science in English, 20__
Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA

WORK EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, The Department of Comparative Literature
The Pennsylvania State University 20__ - Present

- Participate in three ongoing research projects. Conduct extensive literature reviews, write analyses, and submit research work for publication.
- Collaborate with History, Women's Studies, and Education Departments.

International Literature Collections Consultant

The Library of Congress, Washington, DC. 20__-20__

- Co-ordinated the acquisition and archival of 16th - 18th century French literary works.
- Guided the Council of Mayors to information on the establishment of Cities.
- Gained experience using Oracle Database System.

Instructor, Comparative Literature 400 - Literary Critique Theory

The Pennsylvania State University Fall 20__

- Taught 25 students to develop, refine, and apply knowledge of literary critiques to a wide array of different forms of writing.

Orientation Leader

Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA Summer 19__

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

Library Student Employee

Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA. 19__ - 19__

- Assisted students, faculty, and community members in accessing library materials. Re-shelved books, and updated new library additions.

ALEXANDER B. CANDIDATE

p. 2

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

American Institute of Comparative Literature (AICL)
Society of Excellence in Comparative Literature
International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA)

COMMUNITY SERVICE

America Reads Program, The Pennsylvania State University (20__-Present)
Mid-State Literacy Council, State College PA (20__ - 20__)
Study Abroad Volunteer, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA 19__ -2001)

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Fluent in French and Spanish
Conversational in Portuguese

PUBLICATIONS

Candidate, Alexander B., "The mission of our education." Journal of Comparative Literature, Vol. 14, no 3. October 20__, 14-19.

Candidate, Alexander B. and Ferguson, Darryl K., "Writing National Constitutions." Journal of Comparative Literature, Vol 12, no 2. April 20__, 32-39.

PRESENTATIONS

"The Mission of Our Education." Paper presented at The University of Pennsylvania Symposium on Comparative Literature, Philadelphia, PA. February 14, 20__.

"Writing National Constitutions." Paper presented at The National Comparative Literature Convention, Salt Lake City, Utah. June 24, 20__.

"The Value of a Major in Comparative Literature." Presentation offered at Spend a Summer Day, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. July 15, 20__.

"Navigating Graduate School Applications". Presentation offered at Career Services, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA. October 20__

AWARDS AND HONORS

Outstanding Scholarship Award, American Institute of Comparative Literature, 20__
Outstanding Graduate Student Award, The Pennsylvania State University, 20__

CERTIFICATIONS

Class A Teaching Certificate for the State of Pennsylvania - 19__

Curriculum Vita References & Sample Resume

References Sample (appropriate for both vita and resume)

ALEXANDER B. CANDIDATE

p. 3

REFERENCES

Dr. Recommending Professor
 Professor of Comparative Literature
 123 4th Floor Burrowes Building
 University Park, PA 16802
 (814) 555-8385
 r14p@cl.psu.edu

Dr. Library Supervisor
 The Library of Congress
 101 Independence Ave, SE
 Washington, DC 20540
 (202) 707-5000
 librarian@loc.gov

Dr. Dissertation Advisor
 789 10th Floor Burrowes Building
 University Park, PA 16802
 (814) 555-2552
 d77a@cl.psu.edu

Sample Resume

ALEXANDER B. CANDIDATE
abc456@psu.edu

5432 1St Ave.
 Philadelphia, PA 19101
 (215) 555-5454
 After August 20th

1234 5th Street
 State College, PA 16801
 (814) 555-1212 (mobile)
 Through August 20th

OBJECTIVE

To earn a position as a management consultant with CS Corporation

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Comparative Literature, August 20__

The Pennsylvania State University
 Dissertation: The Portrayal of Cities in 18th Century French Novels
 Outstanding Scholarship Award, American Institute of Comparative Literature, 20__

M.A., Comparative Literature, 20__

The Pennsylvania State University

B.S., English, 20__

Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA

CONSULTING EXPERIENCE

The Library of Congress Washington, DC

- International Literature Collections Consultant Summers 20__ - 20__
- Co-ordinated the acquisition and archival of 16th-18th Century French literaryworks
 - Assisted the Council of Mayors in their request for literature related to the establishment and purpose of cities throughout history
 - Gained experience using Oracle Relational Database systems

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The Pennsylvania State University University Park, PA

- Instructor, Comparative Literature 400 - Literary Critique Theory Fall 20__
- Taught 25 students to develop, refine, and apply knowledge of literary critiques to a wide array of different forms of writing
 - Created opportunities for students to present their critiques to peers and faculty
 - Student Feedback included "My confidence in my ability to critique and improve existing ideas is growing - I know this will be valuable in the future"

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

- Graduate Assistant, The Department of Comparative Literature 20__ - Present
- Researched and Published: "Writing National Constitutions" - Journal of Comparative Literature, with Darryl Ferguson, Ph.D.
 - Researched and Published: "The Mission of Our Education" - a critical review of the founding documents of Universities in England and the United States

CORRESPONDENCE

Cover Letter

The primary purpose of the cover letter is to acquaint the prospective employer with your unique talents, experiences, and skills, and to request an interview to discuss employment possibilities.

The cover letter should highlight your resume by identifying how you are qualified for the position and the reasons why it will be to the employer's advantage to hire you. It is valuable to state the reasons for your interest in that particular employer and the position.

The cover letter should be as concise and targeted as possible and should usually be limited to one page. If possible, the letter should not be directed to sir, madam, or director of personnel. Find out who is responsible for hiring and direct the letter to that individual. A description of the important elements

to be included in the cover letter follows, along with several examples of cover letters.

Guidelines for Cover Letters

1. Address by name and title of the individual with the power to hire you, if at all possible.
2. Adapt the letter carefully to specific details of the job opportunity.
3. Open with an idea that captures the attention of the prospective employer so that the letter and resume are considered worth reading.
4. Highlight and draw attention to the points in your resume that uniquely qualify you for the position.
5. Close your letter with a request for an interview.
6. Use good quality stationery and a professional format.
7. Special attention should be given to grammar, spelling, and neatness. The cover letter should represent your very best efforts. It may be beneficial to have a friend, relative, or member of the Career Services staff review your letter prior to sending it to an employer.
8. If you are emailing your cover letter and resume, be sure to maintain the same degree of formality and professionalism you would use in a hard copy letter.

The cover letter should be as concise and targeted as possible and should usually be limited to one page.

Cover Letter Template

Your present address
City, State, ZIP
Date

Person's Name
Title
Company
Address

Dear Ms. Jones:

FIRST PARAGRAPH:

Attract the employer's interest by briefly touching on your specific interest in the company and/or position. If you have been referred by someone, here is where you mention it. Avoid such stereotypical, overused first sentences as "This is in answer to your advertisement," or "I am a senior in Social Work at Penn State." You want to convince the reader that you are interested in them by specifically outlining why you want to work for them and how you would contribute to the organization.

MIDDLE PARAGRAPH:

Describe your interest in the position, in the field of work, or in the organization. If you have a related class, volunteer, student activity, or work experience, be sure to mention pertinent data or accomplishments to show that you have specific qualifications or skills for this particular type of work. Refer to key aspects of the resume which relate to the job or employer, but don't restate complete sections of the resume.

CLOSING PARAGRAPH:

Mention your interest in discussing the job in person (i.e., ask for an interview). Express appreciation for being considered and include a statement about your desire to have an interview.

Sincerely,

(handwritten signature)

Your typed name

Sample Cover Letters

123 Fourth Street, Apt 1B
State College, PA 16801

date

Ms. Ellen Employer
Senior Human Resource Manager
Booz Allen Hamilton, Inc.
123 East 45th Ave.
New York, NY 10012

Dear Ms. Employer,

I write to you to express my desire to pursue the position of Diversity Program Manager/MBA Recruiting at Booz Allen Hamilton. My commitment to developing multicultural and cross-cultural leadership within large organizations has been apparent throughout my Ph.D. program in Psychology at The Pennsylvania State University, evidenced in my dissertation, "Incorporating Multicultural Competency into Teaching Leadership in the Workplace".

The position description (# 12321) outlines requirements to develop a diversity recruitment plan, as well as work closely with new hires and senior level management to enhance retention of new hires. While constructing my dissertation (outlined in detail in Curriculum Vita), I gathered information from managers of many *Fortune* 500 organizations to formulate recommendations to enhance cross-cultural interactions—specifically managerial relationships and team building within the workplace.

Evidence of my potential to succeed in this role includes my past research, teaching, and leadership experiences. I have conducted quantitative and qualitative research on work satisfaction and identified criteria that lead to successful diversity recruitment and retention efforts. I taught courses ranging from The Psychology of Adulthood to Leadership in the Workplace. My interest in workplace leadership has led to presentations made at the Center for Creative Leadership and publications related to "Multicultural Management and Employment Practices."

I am highly motivated, energetic and eager to contribute to Booz Allen Hamilton's record of success and achievement ("6th in Human Development Capital" according to *Training Magazine's* Top 100 Organizations list, 2003). Personally, I share your commitment to corporate diversity initiatives and providing optimum service to clients as well as employees. I would welcome the chance to further discuss my background, including my leadership positions within several non-profit organizations. I also have several questions related to this position and future opportunities within Booz Allen Hamilton.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions or would like to arrange an interview, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Andrea B. Candidate

123 Fourth Street, Apt 1B
State College, PA

date

Dr. Patricia Smith
Chair, Department of Psychology
The Michigan State University
456 Psychology Building
East Lansing, Michigan 48824

Dear Dr. Smith,

I am excited to write to you requesting an interview for the position of Assistant Professor of Psychology (#45654). My experiences as a graduate student at The Pennsylvania State University have cemented my desire to participate in areas of teaching, research, and service at Michigan State University.

Your position description highlights needs in areas of teaching undergraduate students, providing mentorship regarding psychology-related careers, and conducting research related to multicultural psychology. While at Penn State, I have taught classes ranging from Introductory Psychology to advanced classes in The Psychology of Adulthood and Leadership in the Workplace, informally mentored students making career decisions, and extensively examined cross-cultural and multicultural interactions in the workplace.

While the desire to teach is a primary motivating factor for me, I also bring a strong research background to this opportunity. My dissertation, "Incorporating Multicultural Competency into Teaching Leadership in the Workplace" has been funded in part by the U.S. Department of Labor. This project (outlined in Curriculum Vita) involved gathering data from many *Fortune* 500 organizations, and formulating recommendations to enhance cross-cultural interactions—specifically managerial relationships and team building.

Beyond my experience at Penn State, I have been involved in several nationally recognized non-profit organizations. Working as an Assistant Director at The Second Harvest Food Bank, provided practice and enhanced skills of multicultural management and leadership while providing direct service to others. The relationships I have built within non-profit organizations open possible career connections for graduates who have a desire to help people, make a difference, and develop their leadership skills.

In closing, I am strongly interested in the Assistant Professor position at Michigan State University. I would welcome the chance to discuss this opportunity further through an in-person interview. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea B. Candidate

2011 Penn State Grad Student Career Guide 2012

INTERVIEWING

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

First Impressions

It is always important to make a good impression on the interviewer. Arrive at least 10 minutes early for the interview. Look polished: Dress professionally, avoid perfume or cologne, and wear only simple jewelry. Most importantly, look confident: Give a firm handshake, make good eye contact, and smile!

The Purpose of an Interview

Employers are trying to get enough information about your background, strengths, and level of interest to determine if you meet their needs. As a prospective employee, you need to be learning as much as you can about the position and workplace so you can decide if they are what you want.

Interviewers have three major criteria in mind when interviewing candidates:

- 1) Can you do the job? (skills)
- 2) Will you do the job? (interest/motivation)
- 3) Are you a good fit with the organization? (personal qualities)

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

Traditional Interview Questions

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

Sample Questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
 - Keep your answer to one or two minutes, don't ramble.
 - Give a short version of your resume—general goals, skills and background.
- Why are you interested in our organization? What interests you about this job?
 - Project an informed interest, know products, size, income, reputation, people, history, etc.
 - Talk about their needs, how you can make a contribution to the company goals.

More Questions:

- What areas of your study have excited you the most? How have you explored them beyond your course work?
- How do your academic credentials reflect your potentials for success in this role?
- Describe your most rewarding academic experience.
- What are your three biggest strengths? Your three biggest weaknesses?

- How are the courses (research, internships, teaching, etc.) you have participated in related to this opportunity?
- How do you evaluate success?
- How do you deal with pressure?
- If I asked the people who know you well to describe you, what three words would they use?
- What challenges are you looking for in a position?
- What type of work environment appeals to you most?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work for?
- Why are you the best candidate for this position?

Behavioral Interview Questions

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

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

will be a more structured process that will concentrate on areas identified by the interviewer, rather than on areas that you may feel are important.

Sample Questions:

- Give me an example of a time at work when you had to deal with unreasonable expectations.
- How have you handled a situation in which the information presented to you was conflicting or there was no clear right or wrong answer?
- Tell me about a time when an unexpected event interrupted your work plans. How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome?
- How have you handled the challenge of developing your skills in a situation where feedback and/or coaching was delayed or limited?
- Give me an example of a time when you actively defined and evaluated several alternative solutions to identify a way to resolve a problem you encountered.
- Tell me about how you used realistic schedules and timetables to generate a plan leading to a specific goal.
- Creativity often means stepping back from regimented ways of thinking. When have you been able to break out of a structured mind set and intuitively play with concepts and ideas?
- Tell me about a time when you felt it necessary to compromise your own immediate interests in order to be flexible and tolerant of another person's needs.
- Give me an example of a time when your timing, political awareness, and knowledge of how groups work enhanced your ability to generate a change.
- Tell me about a time when your understanding of issues associated with a problem provided you with a foundation for generating a good solution.
- Give me an example of a success you have had in the use of delegation.
- Describe a complex problem you faced at school or at work that required you to carefully analyze the situation, information, or other details.

Follow-up questions will test for consistency and determine if you exhibited the desired behavior in that situation: Can you give me an example? What did you

do? What did you say? What were you thinking? How did you feel? What was your role? What was the result? You will notice an absence of such inquiries as, Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses.

How to Prepare for Behavioral Interview Questions:

- Think of recent situations that demonstrate some of the most commonly sought after behaviors, especially leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning, and customer service.
- Prepare short descriptions of each situation; remember **STAR**
 - **S**—Describe the Situation.
 - **T**—What Task(s) did you identify that had to be completed?
 - **A**—What Action did you take?
 - **R**—What were the Results of your actions?
- Be honest. Don't exaggerate or omit any part of the story.
- Be specific. Don't generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.

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

Case Interview Questions

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

- Your ability to identify key concepts, process thoughts in an orderly manner, and separate important facts from irrelevant facts.
- Your insight and knowledge of relevant issues in a business problem scenario. Some examples: competitive

threats, barriers to entry, competitive advantages, target marketing, pricing strategies, etc. Your goal is to recognize which type of business analysis is appropriate for the specific case(s) presented.

- Your ability to come up with a new approach to a problem, find a hurdle that nobody else had noticed, offer an insightful remark?

Sample Case Interview Questions

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

Some Helpful Hints:

- Listen carefully to the material presented. Take notes if you want to, and be sure to ask questions if you are unsure about details.
- Take your time. If you need a minute or two to collect your thoughts and work through your answer, say so.
- Offer a general statement or framework up front to serve as an outline for your answer. As you proceed with your answer, draw on the outline of your framework.
- Focus on key, broad issues first.
- Orient your answer toward action. Suggest specific steps that can be taken to solve a problem, not just theory.
- Be conscious of resources. If it relates to the problem, ask your interviewer about the budget, capital, and other resources that the client can allocate to the solution.

How Can I Best Prepare for Interviews?

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

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

1. The company's information session, if they are holding one. You can find a list of information sessions under the "Events" tab in Nittany Lion Career Network.
2. The Employment Resources section of the Career Information Center in the Bank of America Career Services Center.
3. Company home pages on the Internet, many of which can be found from links in Nittany Lion Career Network.
4. The Business Library online at www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/business.html. You can link to Hoover's Online, Factiva, Standard and Poor's Net Advantage, and more.
5. Contacting the local chamber of commerce or the company's public relations or personnel department.
6. Talking with someone in the company or agency in the type of position of interest to you.

Use Career Services. Take advantage of the variety of free services:

1. Interview skills workshops are presented throughout the semester. No sign-up is required. The location and times are printed in this *Guide* on the insert pages.
2. You can also practice, using Career Services Mock Interview Program. Through this program you can participate in a videotaped, simulated interview which is replayed so you can receive feedback from a trained interviewer. To make an appointment, see the staff assistant in the Bank of America Career Services Center anytime between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on weekdays.

3. Meet with a Career Counselor to discuss your fears, experiences, and questions.

What Is the Best Approach to Answering Questions?

Recruiters are surprisingly accurate in sensing "canned" answers. These canned responses don't give interesting or reliable information about you. When you answer, remember these guidelines:

1. There is no single right answer. It's often how you answer that is more important than the exact content.
2. Be honest. Don't pretend, for example, that you were sure about your major from the very start if, in fact, you weren't. The details about how you chose your major may be much more interesting and communicate some very positive things about how you make decisions.
3. Don't look for ulterior motives. Some questions are asked purely out of curiosity or to help you relax. Recruiters are not going to conclude that you lack sufficient interest in the field if your favorite course was not related to your major. A genuine answer is almost always more interesting.
4. Give details and examples. General responses become boring and don't help the recruiter get to know you. You need to be specific. Details illustrate your points and make answers more vivid and memorable. Therefore, when discussing one of your strengths, give an example or two illustrating that strong point. When mentioning the course you liked most, give some details to illustrate what you liked and why. Remember to use the STAR method on page 41.
5. Stay focused and don't ramble. Give details that are relevant but don't start telling long stories that include unnecessary details. Some candidates make the mistake of repeating themselves when they haven't thought of how to wrap up the answer, too. Respond directly and succinctly.
6. Keep the position in mind. What details can you give that are relevant to the type of job you are interested in? When you think of some, try to remember to include them. For example, if you worked at a summer camp and are now looking for a sales

position, you can mention how you were successful at persuading the participants to enjoy your programs.

How Can I Best Respond to a Question About Salary?

Fortunately, it is seldom asked during the initial interview. When asked, you need to answer carefully. It is usually best to give a salary range and to have an idea what the range for your field is. Salary information for some occupations is available in the Career Information Center in the Bank of America Career Services Center.

What Types of Questions Should I Ask?

You make the best impression if you ask questions about what you are seriously interested in concerning the company and job. What do you want to know more about? Don't be afraid to be specific, because specific questions convey genuine interest.

If many of your questions have been answered by good company literature, tell the recruiter, mentioning some of the more important questions and perhaps even a brief summary of what you have learned.

Initially you should stay away from questions about benefits and salary. This is usually discussed during the second or site interview. Above all, do not ask for the same information that is in any company literature you received.

Questions to Ask Employers

- Can you describe a typical first year assignment?
- What are the most challenging aspects of the job?
- How would you describe your organization's culture?
- Why do you enjoy working for your organization?
- What initial training will I receive?
- What opportunities for professional growth does the organization offer?
- How will I be evaluated and promoted?
- What are the characteristics of a successful person at your company?
- What are the organization's plans for future growth?
- What is a typical career path at your organization?

- What are the biggest challenges facing the organization/department?
- What is the management style of the organization? Of the department?
- What are the goals of the department? Of the organization?
- How much decision-making authority is given to new employees?
- In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?

Points to Remember

1. The recruiter saw something in your resume that was impressive. Go into

- your interview remembering that this person already likes what he/she saw.
2. The interview is a two-way conversation. Try to relax and enjoy the opportunity.
 3. Be specific, not vague. You'll be much more interesting.
 4. Think about your answers ahead of time. Don't memorize, but have a focus and don't ramble.
 5. Be prepared to describe why you are interested in that employer and give specific characteristics about the kind of position that you want.

6. Sell yourself. If you don't state what your strengths, skills, and accomplishments are, the recruiter will be unable to see you as a good candidate.
7. Genuine self-confidence and confidence in your ability to perform well at the job are your best assets in any interview. This attitude of confidence is one of the best indicators to the employer that you are the person needed for the position.
8. Don't forget to assess the company to see if you would like to work for them.

WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT INTERVIEWING:

(Comments from recruiters who conducted on-campus interviews at Penn State)

Prepare

- Attending information sessions is an important tool for both recruiter and student. They provide an opportunity for both to meet and for the student to show interest in the company. Come to the interview prepared to talk about past experiences. Remain calm and relaxed.
- Understand your skills and abilities accurately. Know as thoroughly as possible the job you are interviewing for. Be prepared to answer why the position is a match for your skill, abilities and education.
- Practice to become comfortable in an interview setting so your personality comes out. Participate in mock interviews.
- Know why you would be a good fit for the job and sell yourself.

Research the Company

- Take the time to do some research on the company and about the position you are interviewing for. Five minutes of research goes a long way in an interview.
- Be prepared for the interview by researching the company. Be prepared to answer "Why this company?" and "Why this position?"
- Do your homework...research the companies you are interviewing with to have a good dialog during your interview. It is clear to the recruiter if you are not prepared for the interview. Be able to cite specific examples and articulate your answers.
- Not only research the company, but research the position/ career as well before the interview. Give specific experiences rather than general statements.

Communicate

- Be energetic and look to develop a rapport with the interviewer. Sell yourself.
- Be sincere and outgoing; treat the interview like you would any important business interaction.
- Come to the interview prepared to discuss details from your academic or work experience. Articulate specific examples. In addition, develop detailed questions about the company you are interviewing with prepared in advance.
- Ask questions that will engage the recruiter in conversation as well. Develop good conversation skills.
- Try not to be nervous. Slow down, think before you speak, be prepared to talk about your experiences and accentuate your successes, especially in the context of a behavioral interview technique.
- Practice eliminating words such as "like" and "you know" from your communication.

Bottom Line

- Key elements: Positive attitude, good career direction, thorough company research and attend info sessions.
- Be honest and give good assessment of marketable skills. Be excited about the field and the position for which you are interviewing for. Have enthusiasm for what we are doing.
- Be curious. Ask a lot of questions.
- Be confident of what you have learned, your accomplishments and your skill set
- Ask for the job!

2011 Penn State Grad Student Career Guide 2012

THE SITE INTERVIEW

If the employer considers you a strong candidate for an opportunity, the employer will probably invite you to a site interview—which entails visiting the employer’s location(s) and learning more about the opportunity while sharing more information about yourself. The site visit is also the employer’s way to offer you the chance to convince, in-person, many of the primary decision makers, that you are the most ideal candidate for the opportunity.

As a candidate, the site visit is your opportunity to meet many of the people you will work with and work for. It is your chance to assess the work environment, learn more about the position, discuss long-term career possibilities, and gauge the community where you will work and possibly live.

There is not one standard format for the site interview, and it is common for an employer to share with you a detailed schedule of the site interview. There may be any number of people involved, of varying positions and levels within the organization. It is important for you to remember that the interview begins the moment you arrive at the location of the employer, and that every person you meet probably will have some input into the decision of who will be hired. The schedule should highlight if you will be meeting with individuals, with groups, if you will be asked to conduct a pre-

sentation, and if you will be sharing any meals with interviewers.

Preparing for the Site Interview

Prepare what you will wear well in advance of departing for the interview. Dress professionally for your site interviews, unless specifically directed to do otherwise by the employer.

Prior to the interview, learn as much as you can about the organization. Spend time reading literature, examining the organization’s web page, reviewing any publications related to the organization, and if possible, talk to current employees. Also, prepare yourself for questions you will receive. Review your resume and any additional materials you may have sent to the employer (i.e., academic transcript, writing sample, or application form). Pay particular attention to limitations in your resume—lack of related experience—and be prepared to talk about these areas at length.

As site interviews are usually overnight visits, prepare what you will need to stay overnight. The employer should communicate this in advance to you, and should also communicate to you whether you will be responsible for any/all of the travel and accommodations related expenses, or whether the employer will assist you with payment for these expenses. If the employer offers assistance, there may be additional directions for collecting receipts

and recording expenses. Be certain to follow these instructions. Also, ensure that you have received directions if you are transporting yourself during any portion of the site interview.

Format: What to Expect

The site interview may start with a meal, or may contain a meal as one of the components. Employers may be evaluating your social graces, manner of speech, opinions, ability to converse with others, and maturity during the meal. It is recommended that you eat moderately and select a menu item that is manageable with the utensils provided. It is also recommended that you avoid using alcohol and be prepared to answer as well as ask questions related to the opportunity you are seeking.

Interviews may be with a wide array of groups and/or individuals—including managers, colleagues, future supervisors, organization leaders, administrative assistants, and even clients. The interviews may be 30 minutes to usually not more than 2 hours in length per interview. You may also be asked to lead a presentation related to some aspect of the work you will be doing. Again, not only is your occupational knowledge being assessed, but also your ability to professionally lead a discussion and interact with others. A tour is also usually included in the site interview—your chance to view the entire organization.

Site interviews may also contain discussions of salary and benefits. Candidates would be wise to prepare to discuss these matters, citing research into salary statistics related to field of study, occupational area, and geographic trends as support for one's desired salary range. Again, it is important that you allow the interviewer to bring up the salary question, rather than introducing it yourself.

What Employers Look For

What are employers looking for during site interviews? You may find these interviews during a site visit to be repetitive, but generally, interviewers are trying to assess:

- Contributions you can make to the organization (occupational and interpersonal skills)
- Motivation and Drive
- Communication Skills
- Leadership Potential
- Strengths and Weaknesses
- "Fit" into organization and specific work tasks

Questions to Expect

Questions may be repetitive as you meet with different individuals throughout the day. Remaining consistently positive as you hear similar questions and offer examples and details from your background will be an important component of the site interview. Questions from the employer may follow a pattern similar to preliminary or screening interviews:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Discuss your related work experience.
- Why do you want this opportunity?
- What can you contribute to our organization?
- Describe a successful project you completed which required long hours and commitment. How do you stay focused and motivated in your work?

- Tell me about a difficult decision you made. What steps did you take to evaluate alternatives, and how did you reach your decision? What was the outcome?

Questions You Should Ask

Questions to ask include those that may arise naturally from your tour of the organization, from discussions with the decision makers you meet with, and from your research and interest in the organization and its opportunities.

- Could you describe the day-to-day work setting here within the organization?
- In your opinion, what are some of the strengths of the organization? Challenges?
- What do you hope the person who is hired will achieve within six months? Within one year?

Remember—do not ask questions which may have already been answered, or which you could answer via web or printed material research. Ask questions which convey your interest to the employer.

The Wrap-Up

Site interviews usually conclude with a final/wrap up meeting. This is usually with your contact person or the employment manager, and the meeting is designed as an opportunity to answer any final questions you may have, explain the follow up procedures (i.e., how and when you will be contacted with the employer's decision), and will discuss any remaining items related to reimbursement for your trip. Before concluding this meeting, make sure all of your questions are answered, and be sure to restate positively your continued interest in the organization and opportunity you have pursued (unless you have decided that you are no longer interested).

Offers

Most organizations will not extend an offer to a candidate during a site inter-

view, but if you do receive an offer, do not feel compelled to accept it on the spot—it is acceptable to ask for time to consider the offer. Typically, offers are extended after the site interview, according to the follow up procedures outlined in the wrap up meeting at the site.

Follow-Up

After the interview, be sure to follow employer's instructions regarding managing expenses (i.e., delivering receipts, etc.). Also, complete any additional paperwork that the employer may have requested. It is also appropriate to send another thank you letter, or letters to multiple interviewers. If an administrative assistant was particularly helpful in arranging your visit, it would be appropriate for you to thank that person as well.

If you do not receive a response from the employer within the time frame outlined by the employer, contact the employer and express your continued interest as you question where the process stands. Do not be afraid to decline an offer, as your long-term career satisfaction is the goal of this process.

Other Insights

Do not schedule back-to-back site interviews—allow space to reflect and regroup in between them.

Evaluate the organization and offer you receive—consider the people you met, the reception you received, and information gathered from all of your interactions and observations.

Career Counselors can work with you to prepare for site interviews, practice effective answers to interview questions, and fine-tune follow-up strategies. A Drop-In Counselor is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays, and until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays during the fall and spring semesters in the Bank of America Career Services Center. Individual counseling appointments may be scheduled following your meeting with the Drop-In Counselor.

JOB OFFERS AND ACCEPTANCES

Negotiating Job Offers and Compensation Packages

Students who are entering the job market often find that negotiating job offers is the most difficult and stressful part of the job acquisition process (at least a close second to the job interview). Our experience is that graduates find the process difficult for a few common reasons. First, they may feel tense and nervous about engaging in a competitive interaction with a potential employer. Second, they don't want to offend the employer and potentially have the employer rescind the job offer (this rarely ever happens). Lastly, they don't have the knowledge and information necessary to confidently engage in the negotiation process. To help you with overcoming some of these common perceptions and obstacles, we have provided you with a few useful strategies.

Adopt a Win/Win Mindset

When it comes time to negotiate offers with potential employers, it is important that you develop a win/win orientation. The ultimate goal is to achieve an outcome that is pleasing to both you and your employer. The goal of your potential employer is to gain a valuable new employee who will add value to their organization at a "reasonable" cost. Your goal is to gain employment with a desirable company where you can add value and be fairly compensated for your talents and efforts. Okay, so these goals are not all that different right? It is our belief that if you approach your

negotiation with the attitude that you want both teams to get something out of the interaction, and that it's not an issue of "I win if they lose" (or visa versa), then you are in the right frame of mind for moving forward.

Negotiation Is Not a Bad Word

Life is about compromise and negotiation. You do it unconsciously every time you bargain with your friends about whether to go out for pizza or burgers, go to the pool or to the pool hall. The point is that you need to express yourself in a persuasive way that accurately and informatively communicates your wants/needs without offending the other party. In most cases, employers expect some degree of negotiation. Recruiters are well trained in the art of negotiation and they deal with it on a daily basis. It's not the fact that you decide to negotiate that irritates potential employers, it's the manner in which you negotiate that can make the difference between a satisfied employer and an irritated employer. As with any interaction, be respectful, understand that you may have to give a little to get a little (remember win/win), and always express appreciation that you have received an offer of a job.

Timing Is Key

It may seem like it's common knowledge, but people still make the mistake of talking money and benefits too soon

in the process. The time for negotiation occurs at the point that you have been extended an offer of employment, no sooner. Conversations about money, benefits, and other potential perks should wait until after it's clear that they want you as an employee. Prior to this point, the focus should be on explaining how you can add value to their organization and on obtaining information about the specifics of the actual job and the organization. The company should get the impression that your primary focus is on your investment in their organization...the money will follow.

Do Your Research

You stand a better chance of having a successful salary negotiation if you present a well-reasoned position that is backed up by data and compelling information. The pieces of information that are potentially useful to you are the average salary of employees in your occupational area, the salary adjustments that occur due to geography, typical salaries earned by graduates of your same program, and typical salaries earned by someone with your level of education, background and skill. There are many resources on the Internet and in the Career Information Center that can provide you with useful salary information. A few of the more useful websites for salary information are:

A Comprehensive Site for Researching Salary Information

<http://salary.com/>

NACE Salary Calculator

www.jobsearchintelligence.com/NACE

JobSmart for salary information on every profession ranging from automotive to technology to warehousing:

<http://jobstar.org/tools/salary/sal-prof.cfm>

Wage, Earnings and Benefit Data from the U.S. Department of Labor/Bureau of Labor Statistics

<http://stats.bls.gov/>

It would also be helpful for you to visit the Bank of America Career Services Center to explore salary information specific to college graduates in your degree/major area and within your particular college. This information can be found via the NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers) Salary Survey and the Post-Graduate Survey that is conducted through Career Services.

Once you have compiled information from a couple different sources, you should be able to determine whether your offer is reasonable based on the data or whether you have a strong argument for negotiation. It's crucial to remember that cost of living varies significantly in different parts of the country, so be sure to factor in lifestyle information. For example, according to Salary.com, you would need a salary of \$73,800 to secure the same lifestyle in Washington, D.C. as \$48,000 would get you in Pittsburgh, PA. Needless to say, geographic differences can translate into big dollars.

It's Not Just About Money

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

Most commonly these would be signing bonuses, moving expenses, on site child care facilities, tuition assistance for graduate school or other company specific benefits. For more seasoned professionals, negotiation can extend to more appealing retirement packages, stock options, gym memberships, and other more glamorous perks. For more information, we urge you to read articles such as "Best Companies to Work For" published by *Fortune* magazine to get a sense of the ways companies keep employees happy.

Practice, Practice

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

Job Offers...To Accept or Not Accept?

You may receive several offers from excellent companies. You may also receive one offer and be faced with deciding on this "bird in the hand." Choosing which company to work for can be both exciting and difficult.

First, make sure you are clear about the offer itself, including what type of work will you be doing, what is the salary and all of the benefits, when would you start, where will you be located, will there be a training period (and will you need to relocate for that training), who will your supervisor be, etc. If you have not gotten this information from the employer, you can ask. You cannot make an effective, informed decision without this information. It is preferable that you have the offer in writing, outlining the details, before you make a decision to accept or reject.

Second, in this decision, you will rely on the same principles that have governed your behaviors and decisions to

date, including your own strengths and weaknesses; your interests; and the size, location, and reputation of the company. You should also consider the following short- and long-term factors:

The Type of Work

Your assignment should be challenging, satisfying, and a good match to your skills and interests. You should know what your responsibilities will be as you begin your job. See the section below on "Opportunity for Growth" to integrate information on what you will be doing in the future.

Training/Continuing Education

As you begin, you should be given the type of guidance and instruction that will be needed for you to be successful on the job. But you should also ask if you will be offered continuing education/training to keep you current in your field. Company courses, professional

seminars, and tuition reimbursement for university course work are ways in which the company can contribute to your growth and development. This is especially important if your long-term goals include supervisory or managerial work.

Salary and Benefits

Is the salary offered fair when compared to the "going rate?" Will the salary meet your basic needs? Research the market. If you've researched the career, the job, and the company, you will know the average, low, and top salaries, placing you in a better bargaining position. You will also want to be sure what the benefits package includes, for example: insurance coverage, paid vacation and sick leave, income supplements (such as profit sharing), relocation assistance, etc. While the salary and benefits package is quite tangible, long-term potential for salary growth is harder to pin down.

You should learn about the company's compensation philosophy and how increases are determined. Your earning potential and how it is determined is more important than your starting salary in the long-run.

Company Culture

Your work environment is probably one of the most important factors in your decision, especially in the short term. Whether it is formal or informal, structured or unstructured, the environment should match your personal style. Company culture, or values which underlie the work environment, is also

a key to your decision. The company's culture should match your own values so you feel no conflict of interest.

Supervisor and Colleagues

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

Opportunity for Growth

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

Many factors can affect your satisfaction with your choice both immediately and down the road. You should take your time to determine how well each individual job offer helps you attain your long-term career goals.

Ethics of Offers and Acceptances

You may receive several offers during your job search. You aren't required to accept the first job offer that comes along and can continue to interview and consider all of your job offers until you have accepted a job.

But once you have accepted a job offer, verbally or in writing, you are bound by ethical standards. You should:

- Withdraw from the recruiting process. You have made a commitment when you accept an offer. The employer stops interviewing and holds the position for you. Accepting an offer as a precautionary measure, hoping that something better will come along, is not only misleading to the employer, but also limits the opportunities for other students who are genuinely interested in that employer. Also, you may change your mind and want to work for that company someday. Organizations have long memories for applicants who renege.

- Let all employers who are actively considering you know that you are no longer available and that they should consider other candidates.
- Notify Career Services so that we will not refer your resume to any other employers. Cancel all pending interviews.
- If you face circumstances that force you to renege on an acceptance (e.g., critically ill parent, marriage), you should notify your employer immediately and withdraw the acceptance. If you have accepted a signing bonus, you should return it.

Employers are also bound by ethical standards. They should:

- Provide accurate information about their organization, positions, career advancement opportunities, and benefits, as well as timely information on your status in the hiring process and any hiring decisions.

- Not exert undue pressure. Employers are expected to provide candidates with a reasonable amount of time to make a decision about an offer as well as a reasonable process for making a decision. Also, employers should not pressure you into renegeing on your acceptance of another offer.
- Offer fair and equitable assistance, including (but not limited to) financial assistance and outplacement services, if, because of changing conditions (e.g., downsizing, or withdrawn contracts), an employer must revoke a job offer that you have accepted.

If you have questions about any aspect of the job search process, including evaluating offers and ethical standards, you may speak with the Drop-In Counselor, who is available between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. weekdays and until 7:00 p.m. on Tuesdays during the fall and spring semesters in the Bank of America Career Services Center.

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