

CAREER GUIDE

OFFICE OF CAREER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT



FISK
UNIVERSITY



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CAREER GUIDE

presented by the

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Planning and
Development**

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and Development**

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Missions and Values

Our office helps you to build on your academic experience by providing timely, practical and customized career information. We strive to motivate you and ensure that you possess career skill sets.

Our services are the bridge between academic achievement and lifelong success. The Office of Career Planning and Development provides counseling for students and alumni to assist each person to acquire self-awareness regarding goals and preferences, and to use that knowledge in decision-making related to career planning and professional development.



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205 1/2 W. State Street, Geneva, Illinois 60134
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Office of Career Planning and Development

MANY STUDENTS GO through all four years of college without ever setting foot in their school's career services office. Outside of the academic realm, job seekers will pay hundreds, even thousands, of dollars for the very same services that are included free with the cost of tuition.

The mission of career center practitioners is to teach skills and provide services that will facilitate the career development and job search process, ranging from assessing your abilities to negotiating employment offers. Don't overlook this opportunity; it could mean passing up the job of a lifetime.

Develop Relationships

Find a career center counselor/advisor and get to know him or her. Try to meet with your counselor at least several times throughout your career development process. Appointments are a great way to stay motivated and to accomplish career-related tasks.

A counselor will listen to your concerns and provide objective advice. You can bounce ideas off him or her, which will help you think through your options. Furthermore, when unique job opportunities come in, counselors often alert students who they know well and think might be a good fit with the position. Remember, the more you share about your skills and your goals with the staff, the better they will be able to assist you.

Attend Programs

Many career center practitioners spend the bulk of their time planning events for students. From mock interview days and networking nights to resume workshops and career fairs, at any given time there may be a number of programs going on that can assist you. Make sure you are aware of what's taking place. Find the event calendar, whether it is online, in the paper, or through an email. As you attend programs, ask thoughtful questions to make the most of what you are learning.

Don't Be a Stranger

Your relationship with the career center doesn't have to end the day you don't wear your cap and gown. Many centers offer services for alumni similar to those for students. If you haven't found a job or even formed a plan by graduation, you still might be able to meet with counselors/advisors, use job listings and/or computers and attend programs. Check with the career center to see what is available and what time limits apply.

Programs and Services

In addition to these tips, it's helpful to understand more about a career center's numerous services. These programs and offerings may include:

Job Listings and Recruiting Programs

Virtually all career centers have job listings maintained in-house or by professional online services. Employers can post positions specifically for your individual college. Furthermore, many students will be able to take advantage of on-campus

recruiting programs, where employers collect student resumes and conduct on-campus interviews for various job openings.

Career Fairs

The beauty of career fairs is that they bring employers to you. Often held in a large venue, you can browse their available positions, talk with them informally, and drop off resumes. Fairs may be held up to several times a year, focusing on different types of positions, such as internships or nonprofit jobs.

Internship Programs

Internships are the most valuable way to try out different career fields and gain hands-on experience while you are still a student. You can build your resume, learn the ropes, and maybe even get academic credit. You might also pave the way to a full-time position after graduation.

Remember, the more you share about your skills and your goals with the staff, the better they will be able to assist you.

Workshops

Career center workshops cover skills ranging from writing an effective cover letter to honing your interview performance. Not only can you get pertinent advice from career center staff and other workshop presenters, but you will also benefit greatly from being in a group environment with your peers.

Alumni Networks

Many schools offer students access to alumni contacts in various career fields. These graduates have volunteered to serve as a resource for information and advice. This can be one of the most helpful ways to learn about different industries, and can help you get your foot in the door.

Mock Interviews

When it comes to interviewing, practice makes perfect. The experience of having a simulated interview with a staff member can calm nerves, enhance performance, teach you how to answer tough questions, and prevent you from making big mistakes.

Resume and Cover Letter Critiques

In addition to the assistance offered during individual appointments, many offices hold specific drop-in hours where a staff member can provide a quick resume or cover letter critique.

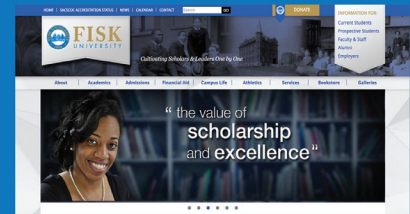
Written by Jennifer Bobrow Burns, MBA Recruiter/Business School Relationship Manager at MetLife, Global Leadership Development Program.

GET THE 1,2,3's ON BCC



**STEP
1**

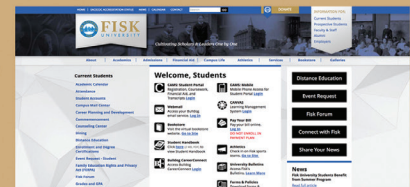
**GO TO THE FISK
WEBSITE**



**STEP
2**

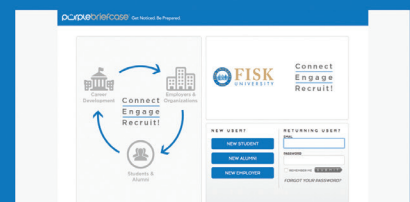
**CLICK ON
CURRENT STUDENTS**

**CLICK ON
BULLDOG CAREERCONNECT**



**STEP
3**

**SELECT NEW USER
AND ENTER
REQUIRED INFO**



How to Plan for Career Success

Freshmen—Question

- ☐ Visit Career Development Office.
- ☐ Attend sessions during New Student Orientation Week.
- ☐ Receive Bulldog CareerConnect username & password.
- ☐ Explore your interests and abilities through academic courses.
- ☐ Utilize self-assessment tools through the Office of Career Planning and Development (OCPD).
- ☐ Identify potential majors that relate to your interests and abilities; discuss them with a OCPD staff member.
- ☐ Participate in campus and community activities to build your resume and broaden your experience.
- ☐ Visit the Office of Career Planning and Development's website; create a first draft of your resume.
- ☐ Schedule a resume review appointment.
- ☐ Establish framework for global studies by working with the Office of Global Initiatives.
- ☐ Create a Bulldog CareerConnect account (www.fisk.edu/bulldogcareerconnect) to browse available internships, cooperative education and other career-related opportunities.
- ☐ Schedule a mock interview.
- ☐ Join university organizations that may offer you leadership roles.
- ☐ Attend the Industry & Grad School Expo(s)—fall/spring.
- ☐ Job shadow in your field of interest.
- ☐ Interview with at least three different companies.
- ☐ Find a volunteer site.
- ☐ Volunteer for the MLK Day of Service.
- ☐ Obtain a summer internship.
- ☐ Visit each social media profile you have, and either edit your content or your privacy settings. Put your professional foot forward.
- ☐ Formulate your four-year plan! Set goals! (www.fisk.edu/bulldogcareerconnect)

Sophomores—Research

- ☐ Meet with a OCPD staff member to discuss your skills, values, and interests, and relate this to your major and future career options.
- ☐ Schedule a resume review appointment to update resume.
- ☐ Master your elevator pitch.
- ☐ Schedule a mock interview.
- ☐ Research internships on Bulldog CareerConnect.
- ☐ Obtain a fall, spring, and/or summer internship.
- ☐ Prepare for study abroad experience by gathering information, securing funds, etc. Studying abroad ranges from one week to one semester. The Office of Global Initiatives will assist with this process.
- ☐ Officially declare your major and plan your curriculum with the assistance of an academic advisor.
- ☐ Complete at least five informational interviews.
- ☐ Explore the academic and practical requirements for at least three careers related to your major.
- ☐ Narrow your career interest areas.
- ☐ Network with professionals in your field of interest; attend job fairs, employer information sessions, conferences, etc.
- ☐ Attend the Industry & Grad School Expo(s)—fall/spring.
- ☐ Identify organizations and associations related to your major and interest areas.
- ☐ Establish relationships with faculty, administrators, and advisors.
- ☐ Obtain/maintain a leadership position.

Juniors—Making Decisions

- ☐ Job shadow several professionals in your field of interest.
- ☐ Schedule a resume review appointment to update resume.
- ☐ Master your elevator pitch.
- ☐ Schedule a mock interview.
- ☐ Attend job fairs and employer information sessions.
- ☐ Participate in seminars or workshops to learn more about job search strategies such as networking and interviewing skills.
- ☐ Develop/enhance your leadership and teamwork skills through involvement with campus and community organizations.
- ☐ Research potential organizations, industries, corporations, and businesses related to your desired field.
- ☐ Talk to recent graduates in your major about the job market and potential employers.
- ☐ Continue to increase your abilities through internships, practical career experiences, research opportunities and/or study abroad.
- ☐ Interview with at least three different companies and/or intern at previous company.
- ☐ Obtain a fall, spring, and/or summer internship.
- ☐ Prepare for study abroad experience by gathering information, securing funds, etc. Studying abroad ranges from one week to one semester. The Office of Global Initiatives will assist with this process.
- ☐ Begin to research programs and entrance requirements for graduate/professional schools.
- ☐ Update your resume; capture skills gained from courses, experiential activities, leadership and teamwork skills, and key skills related to desired field.
- ☐ Review academic record to ensure you're on track for graduation.
- ☐ Create a functional LinkedIn account.
- ☐ Obtain/maintain a leadership position.

Seniors—Action

- ☐ Begin your job search early! (Search may take 6-9 months.)
- ☐ Develop a list of employers, with contact names and addresses, that you will research and submit resumes for employment.
- ☐ Schedule a resume review appointment to update resume.
- ☐ Become proficient in writing targeted resumes and cover letters.
- ☐ Register for on-campus interviewing through Bulldog CareerConnect (www.fisk.edu/bulldogcareerconnect).
- ☐ Review job postings on Bulldog CareerConnect or on the internet.
- ☐ Interview with at least three different companies and/or intern at previous company.
- ☐ Determine your career-related strengths and skills; practice and perfect your elevator speech.
- ☐ Network with professionals and alumni in your field about your job search techniques and career-related opportunities.
- ☐ Obtain/maintain a leadership position.
- ☐ Create a LinkedIn account if you have not done so already.
- ☐ Ask for letters of recommendation (at least three).
- ☐ Continue to meet with a OCPD staff member on a regular basis.
- ☐ Talk with a OCPD staff member and learn techniques for negotiating a salary.
- ☐ Go on interviews, get several JOB OFFERS, and evaluate offers.
- ☐ GRADUATE with your DREAM JOB lined up or ACCEPTANCE to the graduate program of your dreams!

Adapted with permission from Career Services at Virginia Tech.

Choosing Your Major

CHOOSING YOUR MAJOR is a very important decision for all college students. Meet with the staff from the Office of Career Planning and Development to discuss your options and take an in-depth self-assessment to gain a better perspective of your knowledge, values, interests, skills and personality. Upon the start of your first year, it is mandatory to complete the SuperStrong Interest Inventory® assessment. The SuperStrong Interest Inventory® assessment is one of the world's most widely respected and frequently used career planning tools. It has helped both academic and business organizations develop the talent and has guided thousands of people—from high school and college students to midcareer workers seeking a change—in their search for a rich and fulfilling career. Finally, keep in mind that one major can lead to many different careers, and one career can be reached through many different majors.

Art

A general program that focuses on the introductory study and appreciation of the visual arts. Includes instruction in art, photography, and other visual communications media.

Biology

A general program of biology at the introductory, basic level or a program in biology or the biological sciences that is undifferentiated as to title or content. Includes instruction in general biology and programs covering a variety of biological specializations.

Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

A program of study that combines the biological sub-disciplines of biochemistry and molecular biology. Includes instruction in general biology, general and organic chemistry, physics, biochemistry, molecular biology, immunology, microbiology, genetics, and cellular biology.

Business Administration

A program that generally prepares individuals to plan, organize, direct, and control the functions and processes of a firm or organization. Includes instruction in management theory, human resources management and behavior, accounting and other quantitative methods, purchasing and logistics, organization and production, marketing, and business decision-making.

Chemistry

A general program that focuses on the scientific study of the composition and behavior of matter, including its micro- and macro-structure, the processes of chemical change, and the theoretical description and laboratory simulation of these phenomena.

Computer Science

A program that focuses on computer theory, computing problems and solutions, and the design of computer systems and user interfaces from a scientific perspective. Includes instruction in the principles of computational science, computer development and programming, and applications to a variety of end-use situations.

English

A general program that focuses on the English language, including its history, structure and related communications skills; and the literature and culture of English-speaking peoples.

History

A program that focuses on the general study and interpretation of the past, including the gathering, recording, synthesizing and criticizing of evidence and theories about past events. Includes instruction in historiography; historical research methods; studies of specific periods, issues and cultures; and applications to areas such as historic preservation, public policy, and records administration.

Mathematics

A general program that focuses on the analysis of quantities, magnitudes, forms, and their relationships, using symbolic logic and language. Includes instruction in algebra, calculus, functional analysis, geometry, number theory, logic, topology and other mathematical specializations.

Music

A general program that focuses on the introductory study and appreciation of music and the performing arts. Includes instruction in music, dance, and other performing arts media.

Music Education

A program that prepares individuals to teach music and music appreciation programs at various educational levels.

Physics

A general program that focuses on the scientific study of matter and energy, and the formulation and testing of the laws governing the behavior of the matter-energy continuum. Includes instruction in classical and modern physics, electricity and magnetism, thermodynamics, mechanics, wave properties, nuclear processes, relativity and quantum theory, quantitative methods, and laboratory methods.

Political Science

A general program that focuses on the systematic study of political institutions and behavior. Includes instruction in political philosophy, political theory, comparative government and politics, political parties and interest groups, public opinion, political research methods, studies of the government and politics of specific countries, and studies of specific political institutions and processes.

Choosing Your Major *continued*

Psychology

A general program that focuses on the scientific study of individual and collective behavior, the physical and environmental bases of behavior, and the analysis and treatment of behavior problems and disorders. Includes instruction in the principles of the various subfields of psychology, research methods, and psychological assessment and testing methods.

Sociology

A program that focuses on the systematic study of human social institutions and social relationships. Includes instruction in social theory, sociological research methods, social organization and structure, social stratification and hierarchies, dynamics of social change, family structures, social deviance and control, and applications to the study of specific social groups, social institutions, and social problems.

Spanish

A program that focuses on the Spanish language and related dialects. Includes instruction in philology; Modern Castilian; Latin American and regional Spanish dialects; and applications in business, science/technology, and other settings.

Special Education

A general program that focuses on the design and provision of teaching and other educational services to children or adults with special learning needs or disabilities, and that may prepare individuals to function as special education teachers. Includes instruction in diagnosing learning disabilities, developing individual education plans, teaching and supervising special education students, special education counseling, and applicable laws and policies.

Information provided by: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/> National Center for Education Statistics – Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

- Do you know your major or career interests?
- How much do you know about yourself?
- What motivates you?
- Are you detail-oriented?
- Are you a problem solver?
- Do you like to work with numbers, animals or people?
- Do you like to influence, persuade, assist, or help people?
- Do you like to be outdoors and active in your work, or do you prefer working in a business setting?

Determine
Your
Interests

- What are your special skills or talents?
- Do you have any hobbies?
- What do you learn easily?
- What do you find difficult to learn?
- Are you better at activities or tasks that focus on ideas, data, people, or objects?
- What do you value most? Service? Income? Leadership? Independence? Etc.

Identify
Your Skills
& Values

MAJOR DECISION

Research &
Imagine

- What academic majors are offered at Fisk? Minors? Certificates?
- Describe your dream job.
- Research multiple careers associated with Fisk majors.
- Talk with professionals in careers that interest you. The Office of Career Planning and Development can help you connect with successful Fiskites in many different professions.

Analyze
Job Trends
& Outlook

- What are job market projections?
- Will your skills be in demand when you graduate?
- What skills can you pursue that are in demand?

Adapted with permission from Texas A&M's Career Guide.

Resume Tips

A **RESUME** IS your opportunity to explain to an organization why you are the **ideal** candidate for a position. The following tips will assist you in putting your best foot forward!

Grammar

- Be consistent with your punctuation.
- Do not switch verb tenses within a job. Write in the present tense for duties you are currently performing.
- Spell-out numbers between one and nine. Use numerals for numbers 10 and above unless it appears at the beginning of a sentence.
- Capitalize all proper nouns.
- Perform spell check on your finished document to avoid misspellings.

Word Choice

- Limit technical terms to ensure a general audience will understand your achievements.
- Use a variety of action verbs to start descriptions of jobs and/or tasks (e.g., designed, increased, developed).

Verify

- Dates of all prior employment.
- Your address, phone number, and email addresses (use a professional email address).

Design

- Use appropriate margins (0.5 - 1 inch).
- Place name, address, phone, and email at the top.
- Use one, easy-to-read, and professional font (no less than 10 point).
- Apply highlighting techniques (bold, italics, underline) consistently throughout.
- Do not over-use capitalization, italics, underlines, or other emphasizing features.
- Use one bullet style throughout your resume.
- Ensure consistent alignment of bullet points and headings (same indentation for each category throughout).
- List experiences in reverse chronological order within each section.
- Save as PDF for consistency across applications.
- Do not use an electronic template as they are difficult to edit.

What to Include

- Educational information including degree, graduation date, and GPA if over a 3.0 (see detail below).
- Technical skills.
- Previous work experiences.
- Engineering course projects.
- Student organizations or other activities.

GPA

Most employers are going to want to know your GPA eventually. If your GPA is above a 3.0 on a 4.0 GPA scale, you

should list it on your resume. Please contact the OCPD to speak with a career advisor about your personal GPA to receive the best advice for your situation.

Omit

- Personal information such as a photo, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, religion, political affiliation, marital status, number of children (see “potentially sensitive information” below).
- “References Available Upon Request”—The employer will assume they are available.

Carefully Consider

- Your subheadings—How do you want to classify your experiences to be most effective?
- Potentially sensitive information—Not all employers will share the same opinion as you about specific groups, organizations, and/or lifestyles in which you are a member or in which you participate. If you are involved in a group and have gained applicable skills through the group, it is appropriate to identify it on your resume. However, you should carefully consider whether it is worth listing.
- Medical/Health information—Although it could justify specific things in your resume (time gap, GPA), an employer may become concerned that your health problems will affect your job performance.

Reprinted with permission from the University of Michigan, College of Engineering's 2017-18 Career Guide.

FORMAT AND CONTENT DESCRIPTION

NAME	
<u>Campus</u>	<u>Permanent</u>
Street Address	Street Address
City, State ZIP	City, State ZIP
Phone (include area code)	Phone (include area code)
Email Address	Email Address

EDUCATION

List most recent degree first, major, institution and date of graduation or expected graduation. Point out areas of specialization in academic work, honors, etc.

If applicable, include:

Thesis Title
Faculty Research Advisor
Publications

You may wish to add an addendum that identifies the courses you have taken, grouped into two or three meaningful categories.

EXPERIENCE

Your job title, name of organization and description of your duties, including the variety of assignments, amount of responsibility, number of people supervised, special accomplishments and dates. Include military service if applicable.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES/LEADERSHIP

Title, name of organization, brief (optional) description of what you did and dates.

SKILLS

List any language and/or computer skills.

How to Write Skills Statements

Process

1. Think of an **action verb**
(Use correct tense)
2. Think of a skill or benefit that you:
 - a. Have used
 - b. Have gained or acquired
 - c. Can offer
3. Now ask yourself: task/results
 - a. How did I gain or use this skill?
 - b. Why or for what reason?
 - c. To what extent/any results I can show?

Example Skill Statements

Verb enhanced + **Skill** communication skills + **Task** by working one-on-one with students to develop better study skills.

Verb developed + **Skill** time management + **Task** by prioritizing tasks in order to increase productivity

Skill Statements:

Basic:

Demonstrated excellent communication skills by waiting on tables.

Advanced:

Greeted customers and placed orders while continually communicating with patrons, kitchen staff and managers.

Advanced with results:

Served customers by accurately communicating food orders and employing sales techniques to increase by 10%.

Top 10 Skills Employers Seek

According to National Association of Colleges and Employers

1. Ability to **verbally communicate** with persons inside and outside the organization
2. Ability to work in a **team structure**
3. Ability to **make decisions** and **solve problems**
4. Ability to **plan, organize** and **prioritize** work
5. Ability to **obtain** and **process** information
6. Ability to **analyze** quantitative data
7. **Technical knowledge** related to the job
8. Proficiency with **computer software** programs
9. Ability to **create and/or edit** written reports
10. Ability to **sell or influence others**

Resume Action Verbs

Adapted	Computed	Encouraged	Handled	Lectured	Processed	Scheduled
Addressed	Conserved	Engineered	Honed	Managed	Produced	Screened
Administered	Constructed	Enlisted	Identified	Maintained	Programmed	Separated
Advised	Conversed	Enhanced	Illustrated	Mediated	Projected	Showed
Analyzed	Coordinated	Established	Imagined	Moderated	Promoted	Solved
Arbitrated	Counseled	Evaluated	Implemented	Monitored	Publicized	Specified
Arranged	Created	Examined	Improved	Motivated	Purchased	Spoke
Assembled	Critiqued	Executed	Increased	Negotiated	Recognized	Succeeded
Assigned	Designed	Expedited	Influenced	Operated	Recommended	Supervised
Attained	Delegated	Extracted	Inspected	Organized	Reconciled	Systemized
Authored	Developed	Fabricated	Inspired	Originated	Recorded	Taught
Calculated	Devised	Facilitated	Instructed	Performed	Recruited	Trained
Clarified	Diagnosed	Fashioned	Integrated	Persuaded	Referred	Transcribed
Classified	Directed	Formulated	Interpreted	Prepared	Rehabilitated	Translated
Coached	Drafted	Founded	Interfaced	Planned	Remodeled	Upgraded
Collected	Edited	Gathered	Introduced	Prescribed	Represented	Wrote
Completed	Enabled	Guided	Invented	Prioritized	Reviewed	

Reprinted with permission from University of Wisconsin-Stout's 2017-18 Employment Guide.

BARBARA BULLDOG
(615) 555-7890 • bulldog@fisk.edu
1500 That Road • Nashville, TN 37208

OBJECTIVE

To obtain an internship Finance position in the international business sector

EDUCATION

Fisk University, Nashville, TN
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Concentration in Financial Economics
Major GPA: 3.5/4.0
May 2019

STUDY ABROAD

University of Dubai, School of Management, Dubai, UAE
• Analyzed companies' financial decisions in case studies to lead a consultation session
• Consulted with global clients to provide insight on decisions resulting in cost reduction
Summer 2017

RELATED INTERNSHIPS

Exelon Corporation, Chicago, IL
Finance Intern
June 2018-August 2018
• Developed new ideas for Exelon's eFin website which increased traffic flow by 20% to the website
• Increased the efficiency of file organization using SharePoint and reported progress using Hyperion Reporting
• Organized and calculated the facilities' budget for 2019-2023 long-range planning

General Motors Corporation, Pontiac, MI

Finance Intern
May 2016-August 2016
• Proposed potential improvements and innovative solutions to GM's current alternate propulsion strategy on hybrids and other green technologies in a case competition
• Streamlined the overtime process resulting in improved efficiency
• Audited Business Plan Deployment (BPD) boards and provided results in three days to ensure goals were met
• Joined forces with colleagues to complete various tasks within the financial realm

MetLife Insurance Company, Nashville, TN

Accounting Intern
May 2015-August 2015
• Implemented a change in underwriting sign-off form system and as a result improved quality of system
• Performed internal audits on 159 underwriting cases in 3 weeks improving efficiency based on the Audit Board

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Society of Minority Managers (SMM)

Vice President of Professional Development
August 2017-Present
• Coordinated annual SMM Corporate Networking Reception including recruiting employers for the event
• Executed marketing strategies to increase participation in professional development events
Vice President of Finance
August 2016-May 2017
• Raised \$3000 for the club for 3 successful, summer events
• Collaborated with E-board to produce 1st annual networking reception, which resulted in a repeat event
• Managed the account balance by reconciling each month, organizing, and filing critical financial documents

ACHIEVEMENTS

• US Steel Business Opportunity Program Scholarship
• EverBan Citation of Academic Excellence and Leadership Excellence Recipient
• Black Caucus Academic Award
• Mortar Board Leadership Conference
2015-Present
Fall 2017
2016-2017
2016

Frank Fiskite

806 Any Street
Nashville, TN 37208
ffiskite@fisk.edu
(615) 555-1234

Objective

To secure full-time position in sales with a pharmaceutical company

Areas of Effectiveness

Sales Experience

- Surpassed sales goals by 15% as a Promotional Sales Representative by gaining intrinsic knowledge of products.
- Demonstrated commitment to meeting customers' needs practiced suggestive selling techniques.
- Provided quality services at an upscale establishment that attracted a diverse adult clientele.
- Learned strategy and advance sales technique at monthly training meetings.
- Selected to host campus-wide event based on track record of raising over \$100,000.

Pharmacy Experience

- Successfully managed pharmacy with pharmacists who represented diverse work styles and expectations.
- Researched, ordered and managed pharmacy inventory.

Interpersonal Skills

- Effectively communicated with doctors and insurance companies on a daily basis as a pharmacy technician.
- Mentored freshmen participating in Fisk University's orientation program.
- Achieved an effective teamwork model as an officer and executive council member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity through group decision-making and problem-solving.
- Translated theory into practice from coursework that included Organizational Leadership and Supervision and Human Relations in Organizations.

Business and Organizational Skills

- Managed fraternity house budget for events and monthly expenses.
- Organized an Alumni Appreciation Dinner and homecoming event.
- Implemented "Alumni of the Week" program as Alumni Relations Chair at Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity.
- Coordinated and planned a variety of mentoring events on behalf of Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

Experience

Pharmacy Technician, Flynn Pharmacy, Frederick, MD – Summer 2017
Promotional Sales Representative, Bynum Builders, LLC, Delphi, IN – Summer 2016
Barista, Server, Starbuck's, Nashville, TN – May 2015-May 2016

Education

Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee - May 2018
Bachelor of Science in Biology GPA 3.3/4.0

Cover Letter Outline

THE EMPLOYER WILL evaluate you as a prospective employee based upon the appearance, content, grammar and punctuation in your cover letter. When emailing a cover letter and resume, make the cover letter the text within your email and attach your resume. It is appropriate to provide a cover letter only when requested by an employer.

Your present address
City, State Zip Code

Date

Mr./Ms. (first name last name), title
Name of Company
Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr./Ms. (last name):

1st paragraph - Explain why you are submitting your resume. State the position for which you are applying. Mention how you heard about the opening: newspaper, name of person who referred you, etc. (basically, who you are, what you want and why).

2nd paragraph - State why you would be qualified for the position; mention specific qualifications or experiences you have that may be pertinent to the position. State any particular interest you have in the company, location, or position. Point out relevant information that may not appear in your resume.

3rd paragraph - Express interest in an interview; indicate interest in discussing their needs further and suggest you will call to schedule an interview time. Your closing should encourage a specific action by the reader.

The 2nd paragraph should focus on match points. Match points are the overlaps between the experiences you offer (your resume), what the company is looking for (job description) and why you should be considered.

Sincerely,

5 lines

(Handwritten Signature)

Typed Signature

3 Cs

cordial ✓
correct
customized

Cover Letter Sample

1234 University Way
Nashville, TN 37208

August 12, 20XX

Ms. Jane Davis, Vice President
XYZ Corporation
1234 Business Plaza
Nashville, TN 37208

Each letter should be prepared individually; using form letters is not advised. Address letters to the individual directly involved in interviewing candidates; make every effort to discover the name of the person who will make the hiring decision.

Dear Ms. Davis:

I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about XYZ Corporation and your Analyst Internship position during your campus visit this semester. As a junior Sociology major at Fisk University with a passion for service and for leadership, I was impressed by XYZ's commitment to community partnerships and your reputation as a leader in your field. I also enjoyed the opportunity to speak with several former students currently working at XYZ, including John Smith. Mr. Smith enthusiastically described the variety of projects he has completed over the past four years. Because of your industry success, your dedication to service, and your innovative projects, I am very interested in obtaining an internship opportunity within your organization.

Currently, I am participating in a consulting project with the City of Nashville focused on staffing issues. The project includes conducting research on large, urban centers throughout the United States and comparing recruiting and retention programs. Through this project, I have gained a greater knowledge of workforce issues as well as innovative and creative human resources initiatives. In addition to this project, I have served as the Vice President for Membership for a student organizations on campus, Alpha Phi Alpha service fraternity. This group participates in a number of recruiting activities to maintain and continually increase membership, including several new programs that I initiated over the past two years. As a result of these new programs, active membership in this organization has increased this year by more than 15%. Additionally, I am also fluent in Spanish, both orally and in writing, and I hope to incorporate these language skills into my future employment.

In closing, I am genuinely interested in the Analyst Internship position with XYZ Corporation. My knowledge, experience and skills will allow me to successfully fulfill the duties of this position. I look forward to having the opportunity to meet with you and to discuss my qualifications further. Please contact me at 123-456-7890 or yourname@fisk.edu if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Signature

Your Name

Network Your Way to a Job

MANY PEOPLE USE job search engines as their sole job search technique. Unfortunately, statistics show that only 10% to 20% of jobs are ever published—which means that 80% to 90% of jobs remain hidden in the job market. For this reason, networking remains the number one job search strategy.

Networking Defined

A network is an interconnected group of supporters who serve as resources for your job search and ultimately for your career. Some great network contacts might include people you meet at business and social meetings who provide you with career information and advice. Students often hesitate to network because they feel awkward asking for help, but it should be an integral part of any job search. Though you might feel nervous when approaching a potential contact, networking is a skill that develops with practice, so don't give up. Most people love to talk about themselves and their jobs and are willing to give realistic—and free—advice.

Eight Keys to Networking

1. **Be Prepared** First, define what information you need and what you are trying to accomplish by networking. Remember, your purpose in networking is to get to know people who can provide information regarding careers and leads. Some of the many benefits of networking include increased visibility within your field, propelling your professional development, finding suitable mentors, increasing your chances of promotion and perhaps finding your next job.

Second, know yourself—your education, experience and skills. Practice a concise, one-minute presentation of yourself so that people will know the kinds of areas in which you are interested. Your networking meeting should include the following elements: introduction, self-overview, Q&A, obtaining referrals and closing.

2. **Be Targeted** Identify your network. For some, “I don’t have a professional network. I don’t know anyone,” may be your first reaction. You can start by listing everyone you know who are potential prospects: family members, friends, faculty, neighbors, classmates, alumni, bosses, co-workers and community associates. Attend meetings of organizations in your field of interest and get involved. You

never know where you are going to meet someone who could lead you to your next job.

3. **Be Professional** Ask your networking prospects for advice—not for a job. Your networking meetings should be a source of career information, advice and contacts. Start off the encounter with a firm handshake, eye contact and a warm smile. Focus on asking for one thing at a time. Your contacts expect you to represent yourself with your best foot forward.
4. **Be Patient** Heena Noorani, Research Analyst with New York-based Thomson Financial, recommends avoiding the feeling of discouragement if networking does not provide immediate results or instant answers. She advises, “Be prepared for a slow down after you get started. Stay politely persistent with your leads and build momentum. Networking is like gardening: You do not plant the seed, then quickly harvest. Networking requires cultivation that takes time and effort for the process to pay off.”
5. **Be Focused on Quality—Not Quantity** In a large group setting, circulate and meet people, but don’t try to talk to everyone. It’s better to have a few meaningful conversations than 50 hasty introductions. Don’t cling to people you already know; you’re unlikely to build new contacts that way. If you are at a reception, be sure to wear a nametag and collect or exchange business cards so you can later contact the people you meet.
6. **Be Referral-Centered** The person you are networking with may not have a job opening, but he or she may know someone who is hiring. The key is to exchange information and then expand your network by obtaining additional referrals each time you meet someone new. Be sure to mention the person who referred you.
7. **Be Proactive** Stay organized and track your networking meetings. Keep a list of your contacts and update it frequently with the names of any leads given to you. Send a thank-you note or email if appropriate. Ask if you can follow up the conversation with a phone call, or even better, with a more in-depth meeting in the near future.
8. **Be Dedicated to Networking** Most importantly, networking should be ongoing. You will want to stay in touch with contacts over the long haul—not just when you need something. Make networking part of your long-term career plan.

Questions to Ask During Networking Meetings

- What do you like most (least) about your work?
- Can you describe a typical workday or week?
- What type of education and experience do you need to remain successful in this field?
- What are the future career opportunities in this field?
- What are the challenges in balancing work and personal life?
- Why do people enter/leave this field or company?
- Which companies have the best track record for promoting minorities?
- What advice would you give to someone trying to break into this field?
- With whom would you recommend I speak? When I call, may I use your name?

Do's & Don'ts of Networking

- Do keep one hand free from a briefcase or purse so you can shake hands when necessary.
- Do bring copies of your resume.
- Don't tell them your life story; you are dealing with busy people, so get right to the point.
- Don't be shy or afraid to ask for what you need.
- Don't pass up opportunities to network.

Written by Thomas J. Denham, managing partner and career counselor of Careers in Transition LLC.

Job or Internship Search

AT THIS STAGE, it is assumed that you have made headway through the career development process. This is the point where you are ready to pursue your career goals with the implementation of a well-organized job search. Before starting your search for a job or internship, you should research the job market, explore options by comparing job descriptions and assess current job market trends. Once you have completed this, you will be ready to develop your job search strategies.

You should search for full-time employment opportunities at least three semesters prior to graduation. Start your internship search at least two semesters prior to the time frame in which you want to hold your internship. The longer you wait, the more interviews and opportunities you will miss. Many employers interview in the fall semester for December, May, and August graduates for both full-time positions, co-op and summer internships.

Adapted from Texas A&M's Career Guide.

8 Job Search Strategies

1. Know Yourself

- Identify your interests, skills and values.
- Be prepared to communicate your skills and accomplishments to potential employers verbally and in writing.

2. Create an Action Plan

- Create a list of target companies that match your interests, skills and values.
- Research each organization and the available career opportunities.
- Set, track and meet short-term goals, urgent deadlines and small milestones.

3. Develop a Network

- Contact and conduct informational interviews with various contacts and companies.
- Join professional associations and alumni clubs, and maintain regular contact with those you meet.
- Read blogs or articles in key interest areas and comment intelligently.
- Utilize social media to connect with other professionals in your area of interest.

4. Obtain Experience

- Consider volunteering, part-time work, co-ops, or internships.
- Investigate teaching, unpaid, research and federal positions.
- Think about Teach for America, City Year, AmeriCorps, or other projects.

5. Be Open-Minded

- Be open to possibilities outside of your particular degree field, and focus on developing valuable skills even if it is not your “dream job”.
- Broaden your search to a variety of geographic locations, part-time or contract work and starting salary options.

6. Create a Powerful Presence

- Clearly demonstrate relevant skills in a resume and cover letter.
- Focus on accomplishments rather than duties or responsibilities performed.
- Tailor requested documents to each job posting or organization.
- Have an active and current LinkedIn page

7. Maintain a Presence

- Periodically keep contact with the employer and individuals in your network.
- Contact employers 1½ -2 weeks after submitting your resume to see if they received your application materials, ask any questions about the position and reiterate your interest.
- Send thank-you notes within a day of working with your contacts.

8. Be Patient and Positive

- Expect 6 months or more to obtain a position.
- Adopt 3-4 ways to conduct your job search and rotate them when you reach a roadblock.
- Periodically, focus your energy on other tasks/hobbies.

Adapted from Purdue University's Career Planning Handbook.

The Interview

IN ALL INTERVIEWS, you must make a good first impression. This means arriving on time, being properly dressed and groomed, and exhibiting positive non-verbal behavior (firm handshake, good eye contact, smile and confident presence). It is difficult to recover from a bad beginning, so make your first impression a positive one.

THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

In order to be successful at interviewing, learn and apply these steps:

Know Your Product – YOU!

Your product is your knowledge, skills, energy, accomplishments and personality. You should make your potential employer fully aware of your value.

Know Your Customer's Needs

You must research the employer needs and the industry opportunities. Gather this information through the Career Center, employer presentations, career fairs, business and government publications, the Internet (including the company's website, 10-K reports and LinkedIn), and networking with people.

Show How You Can Fulfill the Needs or Solve the Problems

Convince the interviewer that you can be of great service in solving his/her problems and/or furthering the success or increasing the effectiveness of the organization. There was something in the job description that made you submit your resume to the company. What was it?

Make a Great First Impression

Initial impressions are critical. The interviewer will take note of your appearance, manner, energy level, enthusiasm and confidence, so make the most of those first few minutes.

The STAR Method of Interviewing

The STAR method is a structured manner of responding to a behavioral-based interview question by discussing the specific **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, and **R**esult of the situation you are describing. This is the best way to answer questions in an orderly, concise manner.

Mock Interviews

In preparing for interviews, participating in a mock interview can be most helpful. InterviewStream is an online mock interview tool that you can use to enhance your job interviewing skills. It creates a compelling and realistic "simulated interview" experience where you are asked challenging questions and must respond, just as you would in a real job interview. You can also schedule a mock interview with your Career Advisor by calling the Office of Career Planning and Development.

Traditional Interview Questions

- Tell me a little about yourself.
- Why did you choose Fisk?
- Why did you choose your major?
- Why are you applying for this job at this company?
- What would you like to be doing five years from now?
- What has been your greatest accomplishment?
- Describe your greatest strengths and weaknesses.
- Would you rather be in charge of a project or work as part of a team?
- What have you learned from the jobs you have held?
- What interests you most about this job/this company?
- What is the most difficult situation you have faced?

Stress Interview Questions

- What kinds of people do you find it difficult to work with?
- What are some of the things you find difficult to do?
- How would you evaluate me as an interviewer?
- What interests you least about this job?
- How do you handle rejection?
- What is the worst thing you have heard about our company?
- See this pen I'm holding? Sell it to me.

Adapted from Texas A&M's Career Guide.

Types of Interviews

One-on-One, Traditional Interview

This is the most common type of interview. The interview consists of a series of questions that may or may not be standardized. The best preparation for this type of interview is to research the employer and the industry prior to the interview.

Serial Interview

This is a variation of the traditional interview technique that involves a series of sequential interviews with several interviewers. Usually, the interviewers have hiring authority, and may become your future manager(s). You should treat each person you meet as if he/she were a key player in the decision-making process.

Group/Panel Interview

Panel interviews are becoming more common as organizations encourage more teamwork and group decision-making. This type of interview typically occurs at the employer's location. The panel may include three to ten people, possibly more. Each person may have been assigned a specific area of questioning. Your strategy should include making eye contact with each person, while paying special attention to the individual who asked the question.

Stress Interview

This interviewing technique is less common, but may be used. The technique tests a candidate's ability to be articulate while under pressure. An example would be an interviewer who speaks quickly and aggressively, perhaps opening with "Why should we hire you?" Should you encounter a stress interview, project self-assurance. It will be easier if you understand that it is a test.

Case Method Interview

This type of interview involves questions in which you will be asked to solve hypothetical industry-related problems. These problems will be similar to the ones the organization may encounter during their regular course of business. The

interviewer is not necessarily seeking a "correct" answer to the problem, but wants to evaluate your problem-solving and analytical reasoning skills. Be prepared to justify your answer and walk the interviewer through your solution step-by-step. You will have to ask questions of the interviewer if you feel you do not have adequate information to arrive at a logical solution.

Behavioral Interview

The behavioral interview is based on the premise that the best way to predict your future performance is to determine and evaluate your past behavior. Review the job description to see what behaviors are evident. First, an employer determines a profile of desired behaviors. Some behaviors and characteristics employers may attempt to measure include:

- customer service
- stress tolerance
- initiative
- communication
- planning
- organization
- problem-solving
- teamwork
- leadership
- flexibility
- motivation

In this type of interview, the recruiter asks an open-ended question designed to stimulate recollection of a situation that would lead to a desired behavior. Some examples of situations that may provoke desired or undesired behaviors are:

- balancing/prioritizing several tasks within a short period of time.
- working with an unproductive or uncooperative colleague.
- finding better ways to perform a task.

The interviewer asks for an overview of the situation, including the candidate's role, other players involved, key events and the outcome. Not every outcome will be positive and, in those situations, it is important to include what you learned and what you would do differently next time.

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Case Interview Questions

- A chain of grocery stores currently receives its stock on a decentralized basis. Each store deals independently with its suppliers. The president of the chain is wondering whether the firm can benefit from a centralized warehouse. What are the key considerations in making this decision?
- A magazine publisher is trying to decide how many magazines she should deliver to each individual distribution outlet in order to maximize profits. She has extensive historical sales volume data for each of the outlets. How should she determine delivery quantities?
- You are visiting a new client who sells golf balls in the United States. Having had no time to do background research, you wonder what is the annual market size for golf balls in the U.S. and what factors drive demand. You have 15 minutes before your meeting. How would you go about answering these questions?

Behavioral Interview Questions

- Describe the best/worst team of which you have been a member.
- Tell me about a time when your course load was heaviest. How did you get all of your work done?
- Give me a specific example of a time when you sold someone on an idea or concept.
- Describe a time when you had to make a decision that was not popular with the group.
- Tell me about a time when you were creative in solving a problem.
- Describe a time when you got co-workers or classmates who disliked each other to work together.
- Tell me about a time when you made a bad decision.
- Describe a situation when you had to request help or assistance with a project.
- Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline.
- Tell me about a situation that required you to be assertive in getting your point across.

Interview Attire



Business Professional

Business professional attire is clothing that is used to reflect the serious nature of business. This attire is most noted by suits and accessories of a conservative manner.

This attire is recommended for:

- Interviews and business meetings
- Information and career fairs
- Conservative networking events and conferences

Business Casual

Business casual attire is similar to business professional attire—but without the tie. This style of clothing is the choice for professionals who seek to impress, but perhaps in a more relaxed environment.

This attire is recommended for:

- Off-site business meetings
- Events hosted “after five”
- Casual or informal networking events and conferences

Casual

Casual attire is the most relaxed form of professional dress, but still has its place as a style of choice for professionals. This attire is noted for its preference for no particular color, garment, or pattern; and is typically chosen for settings where dress is not the focal point.

This attire is recommended for:

- Volunteer and community service
- Business trip travel and leisure
- Company-sponsored events requiring lifting, moving, etc.



Five Quick Business and Casual Dress Tips

1. Select matching suits in navy, black, or dark gray that are conservatively tailored and draw attention to your face.
2. Wear conservative, clean, and polished shoes. Avoid square toes/pointed tips—focus on round toes and pumps.
3. Minimize jewelry, and avoid wearing too many accessories—such as earrings, necklaces, and rings.
4. Colognes or fragrances can cause allergic reactions or offend others—when in doubt, don’t wear it.
5. Socks should be calf-length or above and dark enough to blend with pants and shoes—plain style, non-patterned, neutral color hosiery should be worn at all times.

The Office of Career Planning and Development recommends business professional dress for all interviews, career fairs, and other special events.

Reprinted with permission from North Carolina A&T State University’s Career Development Guide.

Professional Etiquette

YOUR ACADEMIC knowledge and skills may be spectacular, but do you have the social skills needed to be successful in the workplace? Good professional etiquette indicates to potential employers that you are a mature, responsible adult who can aptly represent their company. Not knowing proper etiquette could damage your image, prevent you from getting a job and jeopardize personal and business relationships.

Meeting and Greeting

Etiquette begins with meeting and greeting. Terry Cobb, Owner, HR-Employment Solutions, emphasizes the importance of making a good first impression—beginning with the handshake. A firm shake, he says, indicates to employers that you're confident and assertive. A limp handshake, on the other hand, sends the message that you're not interested or qualified for the job. Dave Owenby, Human Resources Manager for North and South Carolina at Sherwin Williams, believes, "Good social skills include having a firm handshake, smiling, making eye contact and closing the meeting with a handshake."

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

- Always rise when introducing or being introduced to someone.
- Provide information in making introductions—you are responsible for keeping the conversation going. "Joe, please meet Ms. Crawford, CEO at American Enterprise, Inc., in Cleveland." "Mr. Jones, this is Kate Smith, a senior majoring in computer information systems at Northwestern University."
- Unless given permission, always address someone by his or her title and last name.
- Practice a firm handshake. Make eye contact while shaking hands.

Dining

Shirley Willey, owner of Etiquette & Company, reports that roughly 80% of second interviews involve a business meal. Cobb remembers one candidate who had passed his initial interview with flying colors. Because the second interview was scheduled close to noon, Cobb decided to conduct the interview over lunch. Initially, the candidate was still in the "interview" mode and maintained his professionalism. After a while, however, he became more relaxed—and that's when the candidate's real personality began to show. He had terrible table manners, made several off-color remarks and spoke negatively about previous employers. Needless to say, Cobb was unimpressed, and the candidate did not get the job.

Remember that an interview is always an interview, regardless of how relaxed or informal the setting. Anything that is said or done will be considered by the interviewer, cautions Cobb.

In order to make a good impression during a lunch or dinner interview, make sure you:

- Arrive on time.
- Wait to sit until the host/hostess indicates the seating arrangement.

- Place napkin in lap before eating or drinking anything.
- When ordering, keep in mind that this is a talking business lunch. Order something easy to eat, such as boneless chicken or fish.
- Do not hold the order up because you cannot make a decision. Feel free to ask for suggestions from others at the table.
- Wait to eat until everyone has been served.
- Keep hands in lap unless you are using them to eat.
- Practice proper posture; sit up straight with your arms close to your body.
- Bring food to your mouth—not your head to the plate.
- Try to eat at the same pace as everyone else.
- Take responsibility for keeping up the conversation.
- Place napkin on chair seat if excusing yourself for any reason.
- Place napkin beside plate at the end of the meal.
- Push chair under table when excusing yourself.

Eating

Follow these simple rules for eating and drinking:

- Start eating with the implement that is farthest away from your plate. You may have two spoons and two forks. The spoon farthest away from your plate is a soup spoon. The fork farthest away is a salad fork unless you have three forks, one being much smaller, which would be a seafood fork for an appetizer. The dessert fork/spoon is usually above the plate. Remember to work from the outside in.
- Dip soup away from you; sip from the side of the spoon.
- Season food only after you have tasted it.
- Pass salt and pepper together—even if asked for only one.
- Pass all items to the right. If the item has a handle, such as a pitcher, pass with the handle toward the next person. For bowls with spoons, pass with the spoon ready for the next person. If you are the one to reach to the center of the table for an item, pass it before serving yourself.
- While you are speaking during a meal, utensils should be resting on plate (fork and knife crossed on the plate with tines down).
- Don't chew with your mouth open or blow on your food.

The interviewer will usually take care of the bill and the tip. Be prepared, however, if this doesn't happen and have small bills ready to take care of your part, including the tip. Never make an issue of the check.

Social skills can make or break your career. Employees have to exhibit a certain level of professionalism and etiquette in their regular work day, and particularly in positions where they come in contact with clients. Be one step ahead—practice the social skills necessary to help you make a great first impression and stand out in a competitive job market.

Written by Jennie Hunter, retired professor at Western Carolina University.

Salary Negotiation and Benefits

YOU'VE HAD A successful interview with Company XYZ and just received a job offer. Congratulations! You have now moved to the next stage of the recruitment process, salary negotiation.

First Things First. The Offer!

Whether you've received an internship or full-time job offer, the company should provide a written letter or email with details of the position offered.

- Position title
- Salary/compensation
- Start date
- Supervisor's name
- Deadline to respond

If benefits (health insurance, vacation/sick leave, wellness programs) are not specified, ask your HR liaison for this information. It can be helpful when evaluating the offer.

Things to Keep in Mind:

- Job offers from companies should be extended in writing and job offer acceptances or declines should be provided to the company in writing. All job offers deserve a phone call and a written response back to the company.
- Salary discussions should begin only after you've received a defined job description. This usually happens once the interview process has been completed and a job offer has been extended.
- Don't be the first one to bring up salary. Let the employer establish the first benchmark and initiate the conversation.
- Conduct salary research before beginning negotiations. Leverage the job description in your research as position titles are not the same across companies and industries.
- Always provide a range when discussing salary and be prepared to accept a salary on the lower end of that range.
- Research the cost of living for the marketplace you'll be living in and estimate a budget to determine the minimum salary you'll need to meet your obligations. Take into account expenses, taxes, insurance and savings allotments when building your budget.
- If salary is not negotiable or it is fair based on industry standards, consider negotiating other elements of your benefits package including vacation time, signing bonus (if applicable), relocation stipend (if applicable), start date and performance review timing.

Reprinted with permission from Texas A&M's Career Guide.

Compensation Defined

When referring to **compensation**, we are referring to the total compensation value of an offer. This would include your salary, health insurance, benefits (sick and vacation time) as well as bonuses or performance incentives. When referring to **salary**, we are referring to the cash value of the wages you receive annually.

When evaluating your offer(s), consider the criteria you used when searching for a job. How many of these criteria are present in the job offer? If you need more time to consider an offer, do not be afraid to contact the employer to ask for an extension in your deadline.

Once you've decided to accept the offer, provide your acceptance to the company in writing. Also let any other companies you were interviewing with know that you've accepted an offer and would like to withdraw from their recruitment process.

BENEFITS

What kinds of benefits can you expect at your first job out of college? That depends, because they vary from employer to employer.

the **BIG 3**

MEDICAL INSURANCE

401(k)

VACATION/SICK TIME

Some employers still provide complete coverage with no out-of-pocket expense to workers, but most company plans now require the employee to pay part of the benefits, often in the form of payroll deductions.

Stock Options

Dental Insurance

Tuition Reimbursement

Life Insurance

Prescription Drug Plan

Flexible Spending Accounts

Vision Insurance

SOFT BENEFITS

These are usually very popular with employees and cost the company little or nothing. They may be included in the company's culture, or they may be negotiated with an employer.

TELECOMMUTING | FLEXTIME
SPORTS LEAGUES | PERSONAL PROJECTS
ON-SITE FACILITIES (restaurant, gym, daycare)

Excerpted from "The Benefits of Company Benefits" by John Martalo, a freelance writer based in San Diego. Graphics by Nan Mellem.

Graduate School Checklist

12 months prior:

- ☐ Develop a list of 5-7 programs you are interested in applying to.
- ☐ Research the programs, making note of average GRE/GMAT scores, average GPA, application and admission deadlines, required materials to be included in your application and name and contact information, for each program.
- ☐ Consider potential sources of funding including professional organizations, the programs/schools you're applying to, graduate assistantships and fellowships and government agencies.
- ☐ Register for the GRE or GMAT exams depending on the program requirements.
- ☐ Outline and draft your personal statement. Visit with an OCPD staff member for help with your personal statement.

9 months prior:

- ☐ Set up meetings with your professors and faculty members in your department. They can serve as your references, discuss program requirements and help you develop your personal statement.
- ☐ Narrow down the list of programs you are interested in to those to which you will submit applications.
- ☐ Schedule campus visits to schools you are interested in to learn more about the programs.
- ☐ Take the online free version of the GRE (or GMAT) test to determine how much studying you'll need prior to taking the actual graded exam. Be aware that taking the exam multiple times can reflect poorly on you as an applicant and could delay the application process (you can only take the exam once per calendar month and so many times in a calendar year).
- ☐ Build a timeline of all dates including exam dates, application deadlines and admission dates. Make note of instructions and addresses; application materials may not go to the same address.

7 months prior:

- ☐ Finalize draft of your personal statement and have it reviewed by the Office of Career Planning and Development.
- ☐ Have all GRE/GMAT scores sent to the appropriate programs.
- ☐ Secure at least 3 letters of recommendation from your professors or other faculty members.
- ☐ Request transcripts from all institutions (including dual credit institutions) you've attended and send them to the schools where you've applied.

6 months prior:

- ☐ Follow up with those who are writing letters of recommendation for you to remind them of deadlines; provide a stamped envelope with the address of where the letter should be sent if a hard copy of the letter of recommendation is required.
- ☐ Fill out applications, completing a draft version first, and then submitting the final application at least 4 weeks prior to the application deadline. Keep a copy of each application submitted for your records.

3-4 months prior:

- ☐ Confirm that the programs you applied to received your application materials.
- ☐ Schedule interviews as appropriate and send thank you notes to all you meet with.

Month of:

- ☐ After receiving acceptance into a program, inform the other schools of your decision.
- ☐ Update those individuals who assisted during the process and send thank you notes to those who wrote letters of recommendation.

Graduate School Personal Statement

Answer the questions asked

- Find questions in each application that are somewhat similar.
- Don't be tempted to use the same statement for all applications. Customize your answer for each individual application.

Be specific

- Back up your statements with specific examples or reasons.
- Be sure your desire to obtain your prospective career is logical, the result of specific experience that is described in your statement.

Concentrate on your opening paragraph

- Grabbing the reader's attention in the opening paragraph is crucial. This paragraph is the framework for the rest of the statement.

Avoid certain subjects

- Avoid references to experiences or accomplishments in high school or earlier.
- Avoid potentially controversial subjects (for example, controversial religious or political issues).

Write well

- Be meticulous. Type and proofread your essay very carefully.
- Express yourself clearly and concisely.
- Adhere to stated word limits.

Tell a story

- Think in terms of showing or demonstrating through concrete experience.
- Make your statement fresh, lively and different to distinguish yourself and make yourself memorable.

Find an angle

- Figure out a way to make your story interesting. Finding an angle or a "hook" is vital.

Tell what you know

- Be specific. Use the language professionals use to convey your knowledge of the field.
- Refer to experiences such as work, research, courses and professional readings, and explain why you are suited for it.

Do research

- Identify and capitalize on the attributes that set your choice apart from other universities or programs. Mention the values these characteristics have on your interest in attending this school.

Avoid clichés

- Avoid cliché statements such as stating on your medical school application that you are "good at science and want to help people." This is not expressing an original thought.

Questions to Think About When Writing Your Personal Statement

1. How did your pre-college education influence your decision to pursue graduate study in your field?
2. How has your college experience influenced your decision?
3. How has your work experience influenced your decision?
4. Who has had the most influence on your decision to pursue graduate study? In what ways?
5. What situation has had the most influence on your decision?
6. What personally motivates you to pursue graduate study in this field?

The typical personal statement should be 2-3 double spaced pages or 500-700 words. A good outline to follow:

Paragraph 1—A personal human-interest story

Paragraph 2—Your academic interests and achievements

Paragraph 3—Your relevant work and/or research experiences

Paragraph 4—Your career interests

Paragraph 5—Why you are interested in this particular school

Paragraph 6—The qualities you will bring to this school

Adapted with permission from the Rutgers University Career Services Guide and Purdue University's Career Planning Handbook.

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