WELCOME TO THE ENGINEERING CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CENTER

The Engineering Career Development and Experiential Learning Center is here to help prepare students for career and professional opportunities and to provide a place where engineering students, faculty, and employers can meet and develop mutual and beneficial relationships.

Planning for your engineering career is key to being prepared when opportunities for internships, co-ops, and jobs arise. The Career Center offers workshops for resume and cover letter writing, career fair preparation, and interview skills. Located in Marston 112, the staff provides sample resumes, cover letters, and other resources to assist you as well as one-on-one counseling M-F, 8:30-5:00.

Throughout the year they hold a variety of corporate information sessions for companies such as ExxonMobil, AbbVie, Tighe & Bond, General Dynamics, Verizon and Pratt & Whitney. They also work closely with companies to organize networking events, workshops, and plant tours. When you are ready to gain relevant engineering experience, check out UMass.JoinHandshake.com, the searchable job database which includes internship, co-op, and full-time positions.

—Cheryl Brooks
Assistant Dean, Experiential Learning and Corporate Relations
College of Engineering

ENGINEERING CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CENTER
MARSTON 112, Monday – Friday, 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM
Drop in or schedule an appointment through Handshake.
https://engineering.umass.edu/careers

“The Engineering Career Center helped me kick-start my professional development skills from the beginning of my freshman year! I remember walking into the career center as a timid freshman to get my resume checked. After getting tips on how to improve it and talking with the staff, I left the office smiling with confidence. Throughout my four years in college I continued to receive help and guidance from the career center. The staff is very inviting, friendly and knowledgeable. They are more than happy to help you with your resume, perform a mock interview, or simply answer any questions you may have. Companies are always recruiting UMass Amherst students and the career center is sure to let their students know! The weekly emails with job postings, on-campus company recruiting events, as well as the career fairs provided me with ample opportunities to apply and find internships and a job. The Engineering Career Center helped me intern in three different industries and land my dream job in the industry I liked the most!”

—Marina Di Cocco, Eaton
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**ENGINEERING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR YOU!**

As a global leader in custom engineering, radio frequency and microwave technology—and now part of the TTM Technologies family—it's a great time to join Anaren/TTM. We provide a well-structured, hands-on, and rewarding environment for students and young professionals. If you are hard at work on an engineering or other technical degree and looking to gain meaningful experience, join us!
RESOURCES

FIND JOBS AND EVENTS

Use Handshake and read your email from the Engineering Career Center so you have timely information about jobs, fairs, networking events, and workshops.

Second Year

- Attend company information sessions and begin thinking about the type of work you would be doing for a company, the company culture, ability to gain and utilize a variety of skills, as well as the company locations.
- Check out the National Science Foundation’s website: www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/. Make a list of REU sites you are interested in and plan to apply (note deadlines!).
- Ask faculty for letters of recommendation for REU applications and follow up with a thank-you letter.
- Continue to participate in student societies and organizations—begin to take on leadership roles.
- Attend the Graduate School information session and talk with faculty advisors or College of Engineering Career Center advisors to help make this decision.
- If you decide on graduate school, set up a timeline for applying and taking the GRE, LSAT, or GMAT and for meeting all grad school deadlines.

Third Year

- Update your resume.
- Attend various workshops EARLY in the semester so that you will be prepared for the career fairs.
- Attend the Engineering Career Fair, Life Sciences Fair, Civil & Environmental Fair, and Technology Fair in the fall and the Campus-Wide Fair in the spring.
- Attend company information sessions and begin thinking about the type of work you would be doing for a company, the company culture, ability to gain and utilize a variety of skills, as well as the company locations.
- Check out the National Science Foundation’s website: www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/. Make a list of REU sites you are interested in and plan to apply (note deadlines!).
- Ask faculty for letters of recommendation for REU applications and follow up with a thank-you letter.

Fourth Year

- Polish your resume.
- Attend various workshops to fill any gaps in interview or networking skills, job-search techniques, etc.
- Attend the Engineering Career Fair, Life Sciences Fair, and Civil & Environmental Fair in the fall and the Campus-Wide Fair in the spring and all information sessions. Make sure you know what recruiters are looking for and be prepared to present your technical and communication skills at these various events.
- Follow up with companies you meet at information sessions, career fairs, or interviews. Make sure you present yourself in a professional manner—through phone conversations, email, thank-you notes, or in person.
- Prepare to take the FE exam before leaving school—many companies require this for employment. The FE is now a computer-based exam that is administered year-round by NCEES (National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying) at NCEES-approved test centers. Advance registration is required and is available at http://ncees.org/exams.
You’ve spent years applying yourself. Now apply for the perfect job.

We’re proud to sponsor the UMass College of Engineering Career Development & Experiential Learning Center — a valuable resource for students looking to connect with the perfect internship or full-time position after graduation. Speaking of rewarding careers, there are many exciting opportunities to explore right here at Verizon.

Discover where your skills could take you by visiting verizon.com/campus careers, there are many exciting opportunities to explore right here at Verizon.

You’re a Prospector—Start Digging

The questions you ask at a career fair depend upon your goals. Are you interested in finding out about a particular career field? Then ask generalized questions about working within the industry. If you’re seeking career opportunities with a specific employer, focus your questions on the application and interview process, and ask for specific information about that employer.

Fair Thee Well

By all means, try to attend at least one career fair before beginning your formal job interviewing process. For new entrants into the professional career marketplace, this is a good way to make the transition into “self-marketing mode” without the formality and possible intimidation of a one-on-one job interview. It’s an opportunity that’s too valuable to miss.

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CAREER FAIRS—continued

TIPS FOR NETWORKING

What is Professional Networking?
Networking is about making connections. It involves the exchange of information between you and another person in your field of interest.

Who do I “network” with?
In addition to obvious people such as recruiters who come to the career fair, think outside the box in terms of networking. There is a wide range of people who can help connect or advise you about opportunities in your professional field such as:
- On-campus recruiters (these folks come to career fairs, corporate information sessions, technical talks, formal networking events)
- Alumni come back to campus for a variety of events such as reunions, technical presentations, award ceremonies and fundraisers. The UMass Alumni Association offers an online connection to alumni through the CAREER section at UMassAlumni.com.
- Faculty/Staff
- People you meet at professional conferences
- Family, friends, acquaintances from religious institutions, sporting teams, the gym, etc.
  (Does your uncle work for an engineering company? How about the family whose pet you cared for or lawn you mowed? Keep in touch, talk about your classes, projects, interest)
- Co-workers (Other students, especially lab or team mates will be key connections in your future. Ask yourself: what kind of teammate am I? Would a current teammate recommend me to their employer in a few years? Why or why not?)
- LinkedIn, other social media that is directly related to your field of interest (AICHE, ASME...)

What kind of results can I expect from networking?
Don’t expect that someone else is going to “get you a job”. You must get yourself the job by presenting your skills, competencies, knowledge and personality well. However, networking CAN help provide:
- Leads on openings at specific companies
- “Inside information” on what a company is looking for when hiring
- The name of a contact within the company such as a hiring manager or HR person
- Career advice on what type of path to choose in order to meet your career goals
- Names of companies who are doing the type of work you are interested in

What do I say when I am “networking”?
Many people feel awkward at networking events, not knowing what to say or how to present themselves without sounding like a salesperson. However, being prepared with some general information will help you feel more confident in talking about your career interests. Possibly the best thing to remember is to “keep it real”. Start as you would any conversation, by introducing yourself, then be prepared to follow up as the conversation progresses. Don’t forget to ask about them as well. Questions like, “What is your job like?”, “What does a typical day on the job look like for you?”, “How long have you been in the field?” or “What types of problems do you encounter?” make the conversation a two-way street. Make sure you have thought about the following things in advance and practice them out loud.
- Name, major (or degree), and school level (senior, junior, sophomore)
- Your career area of interest. (It is important to find the balance between being very specific yet staying open-minded about career fields. For example, if you are interested in working with high-end sound systems and you are at a networking event with BOSE, you should be very specific about your interest. However, if you are talking with a neighbor who works at company that manufactures medical devices, you should broaden the conversation to talk about your interest in gaining experience in a manufacturing environment.)
- A brief summary about the relevant classes you have taken. This will vary depending on the person you are talking with. For example, if the person works for a specialty materials company, you might talk about your polymer class. However, if the person works for an oil refinery, you might talk about your process design or controls class.
- A brief summary about any relevant projects or internships you have had.
- Activities that demonstrate teamwork, technical writing, leadership skills.

Examples: Depending on the nature of the networking event, your level of preparation will vary. If you are going to a formal networking event, career fair, or professional conference, you should definitely spend some time researching who will be in attendance so that you will be able to tailor your conversation to match the needs of the various attendees. For example: Imagine that you are going to the Society of Women in Engineering Conference and you are participating in the Abbott Networking Night. Your “pitch” could sound something like this:
Hi, my name is Jessica and I’m a senior Chemical Engineering student at the University of Massachusetts. I am very interested in the pharmaceutical field and am doing a biochemical engineering concentration that includes specialty classes in bioprocessing. Last year, I went on a plant tour of Bristol Myers Squibb which really got me interested in working on the manufacturing side of bioprocessing.
Or, if you are at a sporting event and find yourself sitting next to the town engineer, you could say:
(continued on page 10)
Hi, I'm Dan, I will be graduating next year with my degree in Civil Engineering from UMass Amherst. I am interested in structural engineering and am looking to gain some hands-on experience in the field. I’ve had classes in concrete design, soil mechanics and wastewater systems. I’m also the captain of the concrete canoe team. I would love the opportunity to apply some of these principles to a real-world environment.

Other General Tips for Networking

- If you will be attending a formal networking event or career fair, ask the event coordinators for a list of attendees so that you can research the type of work they do.
- Know the dress code for the event. (business casual vs. suit and tie) Bring breath mints!
- Remember to ask for business cards
- Follow up with contacts after the event. A nice email or LinkedIn note goes a long way!

BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE LINKEDIN PROFILE

As more and more recruiters turn to social media sites for their recruiting efforts (studies suggest that approximately 94% of recruiters use these sites), it is clear that students need to spend time creating an effective online profile.

Fully “Complete” Your Profile

- According to LinkedIn, your profile will get significantly more views if you complete the following sections:
  - Industry and location
  - Current Position (include description)
  - Education
  - Skills set
  - Profile Photo
  - Have at least 50 connections

Your Professional Photo

Your LinkedIn profile picture should be a headshot of you in a professional, straight-forward position. Don’t include props, scenery, etc. Keep it simple and professional, but also remember to smile and look friendly and approachable. Ask a friend or colleague to take the picture (no selfies!) or come by the UMass COE Career Center and ask one of our staff to help.

Your Customized Headline

Use industry-specific terms to highlight your key skills and competencies to market yourself to recruiters. LinkedIn gives you 120 characters to set yourself apart from the competition!

Your Summary Statement

The Summary serves as an “Opening Statement” to recruiters about why they should hire you. This section should summarize what background, skills, achievements and interests you bring to the table. Remember that skills and competencies included in the Summary Statement should be “fleshed out” in the following “Experience” section. You should be able to back-up any claims you make about yourself in the Summary Statement with evidence from your experiences.

Your Experience

This is the largest section of your LinkedIn profile, and it should show clear and concise examples of professional experiences you have had that demonstrate your technical and professional skills. It is not necessary that every “experience” be a paid one—class projects and research are excellent examples of places where you may have gained technical proficiencies, trouble-shooting, teamwork and presentation skills. Many large companies use a Key Word search when reviewing resumes. Make sure your Experience Section includes the Key Words for any specific position you are applying to.

Your Education

As a student, you will be looking for a position while you are still completing your degree. Make sure that you have included your “Anticipated Graduation Date” so that employers know when you expect to graduate and when you would be available for work.

Recommendations

One important component of networking is to begin to build credibility in a professional capacity. Consider asking faculty or colleagues who can comment on your technical competencies, work ethic, teamwork, writing or presenting skills to provide a recommendation for you.

Joining and Following Groups and Companies

Joining discipline-specific groups helps you to connect with other like-minded professionals in your field. Make sure that you are joining groups that you can both benefit from and contribute to. LinkedIn is a community, not just a one-sided search site. In addition, “Follow” companies that you might be interested in applying to. Knowing about upcoming recruiting events or recent projects will give you an edge in the recruiting process.
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: INTERNSHIPS, CO-OPS, RESEARCH, EXTRACURRICULARS

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING—continued

R

Turning your Internship into a Full-Time Position

Of the best benefits of an internship or cooperative education experience is that it can serve as your calling card. It is the vehicle through which you distinguish yourself as a short-term job from an internship. It is up to you to establish a common language between your learning goals and the daily work you are doing. You may be the first to create a journal of your activities and accomplishments in order to move forward. Seek regular reviews from your supervisor to assess your performance and reinforce the fact that you mean business.

6. Communicate Respectfully
Assume that everyone else knows more than you do. Don’t be afraid to present useful ideas that may save time or money or solve problems. Make sure, however, that your style does not come across as cocky. Employers value assertiveness but not aggressiveness. Find out the proper way to address individuals, including colleagues and clients. Be a pleasant and respectful demeanor with everyone, regardless of his or her rank.

7. Be Flexible
Accept a wide variety of tasks, even those that may not relate directly to your assignments or those that may seem like grunt work. Your willingness to go the extra mile, especially during “crunch time,” will help you carve the way to assuming greater responsibilities.

8. Be a Team Player
Learn how your assignment fits into the grand scheme of things and keep a keen eye on getting the job done. In today’s work environment, success is often defined along the lines of your utility to get along with and interact with others. You’re a winner only if your team wins.

9. Get a Mentor
dentify at least one individual to serve as your mentor or professional guardian. It should be someone who is willing to take a personal interest in your career development and success. Once you know your way around, begin to network wisely and get “plugged in” by associating with seasoned employees who may share their knowledge, perspectives and insights. Get noticed, because many more people will have a role in determining your future than you might at first realize.

10. Have Fun!
Last but not least, enjoy learning, sharpening your skills and developing professionally and personally. Participate in work-related social functions and become an active member in your work community. Make your internship or co-op experience work for you. It can be the first link in the chain of your career.

Written by Lisa Melkonian, Executive Director of Development at San José State University, College of Engineering.

https://engineering.umass.edu/careers
When applying to engineering positions you should demonstrate technical acumen, problem-solving skills, a results-oriented mindset, teamwork, and communication skills.

The Top 10 Pitfalls in Resume Writing

1. Too long. Restrict your resume to one page.
2. Typographical, grammatical, or spelling errors. Have at least two people proofread your resume.
3. Hard to read. Keep it simple with clean lines and white space.
4. Too verbose. Say as much as possible with as few words as possible, avoid use of jargon.
5. Not enough information. Give dates describing your relevant experience and skills, as well as your accomplishments.
6. Irrelevant information. Customize each resume to each position you seek (when possible). Of course include education and work experience, but emphasize relevant experience, skills, accomplishments and activities. Do not include marital status, sex, age, children, height, weight, health, church membership, etc.
7. Obviously通用. The employer needs to feel that your resume serves as a marketing tool to highlight your qualifications in competition with the other applicants. Put your best foot forward without misrepresentation, falsification, or arrogance.
8. Too fancy. Avoid exotic fonts, colored paper, photographs, binders, and graphics. Electronic resumes should include appropriate industry keywords and use a font size between 10-12 points. Use italics and bold face sparingly.
9. Too static. Make your resume as dynamic as possible. Begin every statement with an action verb. Use active verbs to describe what you have accomplished in past jobs. Take advantage of your rich vocabulary and avoid repeating words, especially the first word in a section.
10. Too modest. The resume showcases your accomplishments, activities, interests, and memberships. Your resume must be concise, easy to read and understand, and use words that are familiar to the reader and have universal appeal. The goals of your resume are to: illustrate achievements, attributes, and expertise to the best possible advantage and minimize any weaknesses. Your resume should provide all of the information necessary to allow a prospective employer to identify your transferable skills.

The Three Rs of Resume Writing are Research, Research, Research. You must know what the prospective company does, what the position involves and whether you will be a fit. Before submitting your resume or covering letter means doing research—about the company, about the position and about the type of employee the company typically hires.

Research the company. Read whatever literature the company has placed in the career library. For additional information, call the company. Ask for any literature it may have, find out how the company is structured and ask for their recommendation for next steps. Thank that person for the information, and ask to whom your recommendation should be directed.

The Internet is another key tool to utilize in your research. Most companies have websites that include information regarding company background, community involvement, special executive brief or even past annual reports. Be sure to take advantage of the Internet during your job search.

Research the position. The more you know about the position, the better able you will be to sell yourself and to target your resume to that position. If possible, interview someone who does that same job. In addition to finding out the duties, ask if there is on-the-job training, whether they value education over experience (or vice versa) and what kind of turnover the department experiences. Ask what they like about the position and the company. More important, ask what they don’t like about it.

Finally, research yourself. Your goal is not just to get a job. Your goal is to get a job that you will enjoy. After you find out all you can about the company and the position, ask yourself honestly whether this is what you really want to do and where you really want to be. The odds and end over whether you will not hold this position for more than two or three years, so it’s not a lifetime commitment; however, this first job will be the base of your lifetime career. You must start successfully so that future recommendations will always be positive. Furthermore, three years is a long time to spend doing something you don’t like, working in a position that isn’t challenging or living somewhere you don’t want to live.

One last word of advice: Before you go to the interview, review the version of your resume that you submitted to this employer. The resume can only get you the interview; your goal is to get a job that you will enjoy. After you acquire that job, the resume serves as a marketing tool to highlight your accomplishments, activities, interests, and memberships, and use words that are familiar to the reader and have universal appeal. The goals of your resume are to: illustrate achievements, attributes, and expertise to the best possible advantage and minimize any weaknesses. Your resume should provide all of the information necessary to allow a prospective employer to identify your transferable skills.
RESUMES—continued

RESUME OUTLINE

NAME
EMAIL ADDRESS
PHONE NUMBER
PERMANENT ADDRESS
PHONE NUMBER

SUMMARY STATEMENT
• A summary statement is a one- or two-sentence description of the skills and qualities that you would bring to the job that would make a recruiter interested in hiring you. It is like an introduction which is supported by the details in the body of your resume. It is a good way to put keywords in the head of the reader, so that they are thinking of them as they read through your resume.
• Avoid self-serving statements such as “...a company where I will be able to advance my career.” Show your interest in the company, not what you hope the company will do for you.

EDUCATION
Institution, Location
Degree, Major, GPA, Date of (anticipated) Graduation
• Traditionally, either education or experience is the first category after Objective/Professional Summary. Which one you choose will depend on where you are in your career and the types of jobs for which you are applying.
• Check with your major department to make sure you have listed degree information correctly.
• It is up to you whether or not to list your GPA. If it is above a 3.0, it is suggested.
• You can include academic honors here or in a separate section.
• List coursework if it is unique for your major and relates to the position for which you are applying, or if you are an underclassman applying for an internship and want to include the engineering courses that you have taken thus far.

EXPERIENCE
Company, Location (mm/yy-mm/yy of total time employed by company)
Title (mm/yy-mm/yy in that position, if you have held more than one position with same company)
• List experience in reverse chronological order.
• Begin each point with an action verb of the appropriate tense.
• Begin with an overall summary of the project you did in context of the problem you were trying to solve. Then, walk through the process you took to solve the problem in a logical, systematic way, making sure that you include any instrumentation, computer software, or standardized methods that you used. What were the results you achieved?
• Quantify wherever possible—“Increased the efficiency of the process by 20%.”
• Make sure your descriptions make sense and have enough detail to be meaningful.
• Make sure to include any communication skills that you used in the project or job such as writing a technical report, giving a presentation, or working in a team.

OTHER
• Use this section to highlight any additional skills, qualification or experiences. Label this section appropriately (Global Profile, Computer Skills, Certifications, Volunteer Experience, etc.).
• Computer Skills should contain programs you are familiar with, especially those mentioned in the job description. If you are applying for technology positions and have extensive computer skills, consider placing this section between the Education and Experience sections.
• Volunteer Activities can be listed here or with your experience.
• If you held a leadership position with an organization, consider including your notable duties/accomplishments.
• If necessary, you can list your work authorization in this section.

GENERAL RESUME TIPS
• Spell check, proofread, read backwards, have someone check your resume, etc.
• Don’t include “References available on request.” This is assumed by the employer and wastes valuable space.
• In general, resumes should be kept to one page. Individuals with extensive full-time work experience or multiple degrees can extend their resume beyond the one-page limit. The danger of having a long resume is that the recruiter may not make it past your first page.
• Present your qualifications in the best possible light, but do not exaggerate or mislead. Employers will verify the information with your references and educational institutions.
• Resumes should be tailored to the type of position/industry for which you are applying.
• High school information should start to come off your resume when you enter college and be completely gone by graduation.
• Remember the guidelines for scannable resumes, such as avoid italics and underlines, don’t fold a resume that might get scanned, and use keywords where possible.
• Don’t use smaller than 10 pt. font.

https://engineering.umass.edu/careers
SAMPLE FRESHMAN RESUME

Michael Martinez
17 Verona Street, Sharon, MA 02067
mzmartinez@umass.edu  (781) 555-1234

Summary
Well-rounded, driven electrical engineering student with excellent communication and teamwork skills along with an interest in computer hardware and software design.

Education
University of Massachusetts Amherst Anticipated May 2021
Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering, GPA: 3.4
Abigail Adams Scholarship

Relevant Courses
Java Programming, Intro to Electrical & Computer Systems Engineering, Physics I & II, Calculus I & II

Academic Projects
Intro to Electrical & Computer Engineering Fall 2017
• Worked in a team to create hardware buzzer system for four person game show that would accept first contestant response only
• Designed circuit using D flip-flops, AND gates, switches, and LEDs
• Wrote project report including description of internal circuitry
• Constructed successful circuit and demonstrated to faculty and peers

Experience
Tech Connections, Sharon, MA October 2016 – May 2017
Customer Consultant
• Worked with business and consumer clients providing technical support for computer and hardware, software, and mobile devices
• Diagnosed and solved networking, device security, and backup problems
• Supported tech team that earned first place in corporate wide customer satisfaction survey

YMCA Camp, Sharon, MA Summer 2017
Camp Counselor
• Coordinated and lead the daily activities of 20 children
• Planned camp events with other camp counselors and assessed camper activities

Skills
Java, C, MATLAB, Microsoft Office Suite

Volunteer Experience
Sharon Community Food Basket Summer 2017
• Helped serve meals to over 150 low-income individuals and families
• Assisted with food intake and inventory

Affiliations & Activities
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)
Society of Hispanic Engineers (SHPE)
Travel, team cycling, swimming

SAMPLE SOPHOMORE RESUME

Sarah James
15 Bella Rd, Troy, NY 12180
sqames@umass.edu  (413) 555-1234

Summary
Diligent, reliable civil engineering sophomore with strong academic track record and demonstrated leadership and communication skills

Education
University of Massachusetts Amherst Anticipated May 2020
Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering, GPA: 3.7
Dean’s List

Coursework

Relevant Projects
Concrete Mix and Testing Spring 2018
• Developed concrete mix to meet compressive strength of 4,000 psi based on properties of fine and coarse aggregates including particle-size distribution, moisture content, and specific gravities
• Prepared the concrete by batching and mixing and performed compressive and splitting tensile strength tests on the cured specimens
• Detailed process and results in written lab report

Surveying & Measurements Spring 2017
• Created topographic map of local public park as part of a four member team
• Measured elevations and surfaces features using total station
• Used AutoCAD to create a topographic map from data collected
• Wrote a technical report including project details and final map

Engineers Without Borders, Kenya Fall 2016
• Traveled with UMass EWB group to help improve water quality in Kenyan village
• Constructed new spring boxes and repaired existing boxes using local tools
• Collected water samples at various sources and analyzed quality with a bacteria agar
• Educated local community on safe water storage, disinfection, and hygiene

Work Experience
ABC Building & Remodeling, Troy, NY Summers 2016, 2017
• Worked with construction crew electrician, plumber and carpenters on residential renovations
• Gained hands-on experience from a wide range of projects including barn construction, support beam replacement, and kitchen remodels

Leadership
Co-captain, University of Massachusetts Intramural Soccer Fall 2017-Present
• Organize team, schedule games, reserve fields and communicate with members

Skills
AutoCAD, MATLAB, Microsoft Office Suite, Total Station, construction hand tools

Activities & Interests
Engineers Without Borders, hiking, intramural soccer, skiing, guitar

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SAMPLE JUNIOR RESUME

Brent Riff

Permanent Address
49 Pelly Rd.
Sudbury, MA 01776

Summary Statement:
Technically strong engineering student with hands-on experience in mechanical design and analysis in independent and team-based projects. Effective communicator motivated by new challenges.

Education:
University of Massachusetts Amherst Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering, 3.2 GPA

Additionally, pursuing Certificate in Material Science

Technical Skills:
• Received a grade of an “A” for the research done.
• Delivered a final research paper on the subject explaining the various forms of radar interference, the causes of the various radar interferences, as well as, mitigation techniques to minimize wind turbines_negative effects on radar.
• Designed test plan and implemented, testing circuit breakers at various initial pressures, water loads, and launch angles was mathematically modeled with MATLAB.
• Collected data on the varying launch distances and compared them to the MATLAB model.
• Constructed prototype rockets and launch pad with ProEngineer.
• Group leader for engineering project in which the trajectory of a water rocket at varying initial pressures, water loads, and launch angles was mathematically modeled with MATLAB.
• Coordinated logistics of meeting times/locations, deadlines, and final presentation.
• Constructed prototype rockets and launch pad with ProEngineer.
• Physically built three rocket types and launch pad for field testing based on ProEngineer specs.
• Collected data on the varying launch distances and compared them to the MATLAB model.
• Delivered a PowerPoint presentation and submitted a technical paper to Professors, TAs, and class.

Research Experience:
Independent Study – Wind Turbines Effect on Radar Interference

• Conducted force characterization analysis on aircraft circuit breakers to determine cause of low first pass yield rates on production line.
• Designed test plan and implemented, testing circuit breakers at various current levels per device specifications.
• Used high-speed and thermal imaging camera and real time x-ray machine to test devices.
• Analyzed data and recommended re-design to improve first pass production yield rates.
• Compiled final report of the findings and delivered results in a PowerPoint presentation to senior managers.

Academic Projects
Carbon Fiber Composite Sandwich Design
• Fall 2017

• Received a grade of an “A” for the research done.
• Delivered a final research paper on the subject explaining the various forms of radar interference, the causes of the various radar interferences, as well as, mitigation techniques to minimize wind turbines_negative effects on radar.
• Designed test plan and implemented, testing circuit breakers at various current levels per device specifications.
• Used high-speed and thermal imaging camera and real time x-ray machine to test devices.
• Analyzed data and recommended re-design to improve first pass production yield rates.
• Compiled final report of the findings and delivered results in a PowerPoint presentation to senior managers.

Rocket Prototype Modeling & Design
• Fall 2015

• Designed test plan and implemented, testing circuit breakers at various current levels per device specifications.
• Used high-speed and thermal imaging camera and real time x-ray machine to test devices.
• Analyzed data and recommended re-design to improve first pass production yield rates.
• Compiled final report of the findings and delivered results in a PowerPoint presentation to senior managers.

Chemical Engineering
• Spring 2018

• Conducted force characterization analysis on aircraft circuit breakers to determine cause of low first pass yield rates on production line.
• Designed test plan and implemented, testing circuit breakers at various current levels per device specifications.
• Used high-speed and thermal imaging camera and real time x-ray machine to test devices.
• Analyzed data and recommended re-design to improve first pass production yield rates.
• Compiled final report of the findings and delivered results in a PowerPoint presentation to senior managers.

Technical Skills:

Interests:
General fitness, community service, snowboarding, boating, and fishing.

Brent Riff
49 Pelly Rd.
Sudbury, MA 01776

(413) 555-1234
briff@umass.edu

SAMPLE SENIOR RESUME

Samuel T. Mitchell

Chemical engineering senior experienced in both manufacturing and research and development in an industrial setting. Effective problem-solver with solid technical skills and demonstrated leadership interested in pharmaceutical processing.

Education:
University of Massachusetts Amherst Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering, GPA: 3.5 Concentration in Biochemical Engineering

Additional Coursework:
Cellular and Molecular Biology, Biochemistry for Chemists, Intro to Biochemical Engineering, Bioprocessing
Engineering Lab, Tissue Engineering (Graduate Level)

Engineering Experience:
Bioprocessing Lab, University of Massachusetts Amherst

• Synthesizing, purifying and analyzing a novel protein (hPP1) with potential cancer treatment applications.
• Used PCR to engineer primers for the gene encoding the protein of interest, inserted completed gene into pet-2f, expressed the protein in E. coli, and purified the expressed protein with affinity chromatography.
• Designed a process to purify hPP1 from the fermentation broth through various processes of protein concentration, dialysis, and gel electrophoresis. Will quantify amount and activity of protein present in the purified fermentation product.

Byers PharmaTech, Boston, MA
Manufacturing Engineering Co-op

• Coordinated the review and updating of over 500 electronic records of the Clean In Place/Steam In Place (CIP/ SIP) systems as Engineering teams identified necessary modifications to the CIP/SIP routes.
• Created and presented a Plant Hazards Training Seminar to over 25 professionals including the site-wide First Aid/Safety Team (FAST) and Environmental Health and Safety Department (EHS).

Stein In Place Validation Engineer

• Executed over 100 Steam in Place Performance Qualification tests on biopharmaceutical manufacturing equipment including Biorators, Liquid Filters, Chromatography skids and an Ultra Filtration device.
• Troubleshoot failed tests, analyzed data and compiled extensive data packages that will be used by the FDA during their final review of the plant.

Leadership & Activities:
President of American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AICHE) UMass Student Chapter

• Organized Executive Board and General Chapter Body of over 80 students to decide the direction of the society.
• Interacted with leadership of other school’s societies, organized a delegation to the National Student Conference.

Chem-E-Car Team - American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AICHE) Competition

• Worked on team of four to build a hydrogen fuel cell powered model car to travel specified distance at set weight.
• Applied pressure-distance curve to predict travel distance based on varying pressures of hydrogen vessel.
• Designed chassis components to ensure optimal structural integrity using 3D printer.
• Earned 1st place among 40 cars in the AICHE regional competition

Skills:
Proficient in MATLAB, MATLAB and AutoCAD, Microsoft Office Suite. Working knowledge in Aspen.

Samuel T. Mitchell
333 Jodi Lane, Townsend MA, 01469

(413) 555-1234
smitchell@umass.edu

Additional Coursework:
Cellular and Molecular Biology, Biochemistry for Chemists, Intro to Biochemical Engineering, Bioprocessing
Engineering Lab, Tissue Engineering (Graduate Level)

Leadership Experience:
(413) 555-1234

UMass Student Chapter April 2017 - April 2018

• Organized Executive Board and General Chapter Body of over 80 students to decide the direction of the society.
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• Earned 1st place among 40 cars in the AICHE regional competition

Skills:
Proficient in MATLAB, MATLAB and AutoCAD, Microsoft Office Suite. Working knowledge in Aspen.
The interview process can be scary if you don’t know what to expect. All interviews fit a general pattern. While there are many different types of interviews, there are three common characteristics: the beginning, middle, and conclusion.

The typical interview will last 30 minutes, although some may be longer. A typical interview structure is as follows:
- Five minutes—small talk
- Fifteen minutes—a detailed discussion of your background and credentials as they relate to the needs of the employer
- Five minutes—asks you for questions
- Five minutes—conclusion of interview

As you can see, there is not a lot of time to state your case. The employer may try to control the talking. When you do respond to questions or ask your own, your statements should be concise and organized without being too brief.

It Starts Before You Even Say Hello

The typical interview starts even before you get into the inner sanctum. The recruiter begins to evaluate you the minute you are identified. You are expected to shake the recruiter’s hand upon being introduced. Don’t be afraid to extend your hand first. This shows assertiveness.

It’s a good idea to arrive at least 15 minutes early. You can use the time to relax. It gets easier later. It may mean counting to ten slowly or wiping your hands on a handkerchief to keep from trembling.

How’s Your Small Talk Vocabulary?

Many recruiters will begin the interview with some small talk. Topics may range from the weather to sports and will rarely focus on anything that tests out your skills. Nonetheless, you are still being evaluated.

Recruiters are trained to evaluate candidates on many different points. They may be judging how well you communicate on an informal basis. This means you must do more than smile and nod.

The Recruiter Has the Floor

The main point of the interview begins when the recruiter begins discussing the organization. If the recruiter uses vague generalities about the position and you want more information, ask questions. Be sure you have a clear understanding of the job and the company.

As the interview turns to talk about your qualifications, you might be prepared to deal with aspects of your background that you might have direction and motivation. This can be demonstrated by extending your hand first. This shows assertiveness.

Research the company, product lines and competitors.

Research will provide information to help you decide whether you’re interested in the company and important data to refer to during the interview.

Keep an interview journal.

As soon as possible, write a brief summary of what happened. Note any follow-up action you should take and put it in your calendar. Review your presentation. Keep a journal of your attitude and the way you answered the questions. Did you ask questions to get the information you needed? What might you do differently next time? Prepare and send a brief thank-you letter. Restate your skills and stress what you can do for the company.

In Summary

Because of its importance, interviewing requires advance preparation. Only you will be able to positively affect the outcome. You must be able to compete successfully with the competition for the job you want. In order to do that, be certain you have considered the kind of job you want, why you want it and how you qualify for it. You also must face reality: Is the job attainable?

In addition, recognize what it is employers want in their candidates. They want “can do” and “will do” employees. Recognize and use the following factors to your benefit as you develop your sales presentation. In evaluating candidates, employers consider the following factors:
- Skill
- Character
- Loyalty
- Initiative
- Personality
- Communication skills
- Acceptance
- Recommendations
- Outside activities while in school
- Impressions made during the interview

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University
How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview
✓ Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially those involving coursework, work experience, leadership role, or an experience with the employer or customer service.
✓ Prepare specific stories about each situation; be ready to give details if asked.
✓ Be sure each story has a beginning, a middle, and an end; i.e., be ready to describe the situation, your action and the outcome or result.
✓ Be sure the story or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable).
✓ Be honest. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation.
✓ Be specific. Don’t generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.

A possible response to the question, “Tell me about a time when you were on a team and a member wasn’t pulling his or her weight” might go as follows: “I had been assigned to a team to build a canoe out of concrete. One of our team members wasn’t showing up for our lab sessions or doing his assignments. I finally met with him in private, explained the frustration of the rest of the team and asked if there was anything I could do to help. He told me he was preoccupied with another class that he wasn’t passing, so I found someone to help him with the other course. He not only was able to spend more time on our project, but we also was grateful to me. We finished our project on time and got a ‘B’ on it.”

The interviewer might then probe: “How did you feel when you confronted this person?” “Exactly what was the nature of the project?” “What was his responsibility as a team member?” “What was your role?” “At what point did you take upon yourself to confront him?” You can see it is important that you not make up information and why you should have a clear memory of the entire incident.

Use the STAR Method as You Prepare

STAR answer Example from above

S Describe a time when you...  Working on a team
D Describe a Task  Building a canoe out of concrete
A Describe the Action you took  Offered help to team mate who was struggling (leadership), arranged to meet with potential employer.
R Describe the Result  Team mate was supported, project completed for a B grade.

Don’t Forget the Basics
It will always be important to put your best foot forward and make sure you present yourself well. Wear appropriate attire, grooming, a firm handshake and direct eye contact. Since the behavioral interviewer is looking for past actions only, all you need to do next remember your own past. Using your STAR stories, highlight the skills the employer is seeking.

The site visit/interview: one step closer

While on-campus screening interviews are important, on-site visits are where jobs are won or lost. After an on-campus interview, strong candidates are usually invited to visit the employer’s facility. Work with the employer to schedule the on-site visit at a mutually convenient time. Sometimes times and days will vary so you will have to arrange site visits for several candidates to take place at the same time, so there may not be much flexibility — but you’ll never know if the employer is flexible unless you ask.

1. An invitation to an on-site interview is NOT a guarantee of a job offer. It is a chance to examine whether or not you will be a good match for the job and for the organization.

2. If invited to an on-site interview, respond promptly if you are sincerely interested in this employer. Decline politely if you are not. Never go on an on-site interview for the sake of the trip. Document the name and phone number of the person coordinating your trip. Verify who will be handling trip expenses. Most medium- and large-size companies (as well as many smaller ones) will pay your expenses, but others will not. This is very important, because expenses are handled in various ways: 1) the employer may handle all expenses and any arrangements; 2) you will handle your expenses and arrangements (the employer may assist with this); and the employer will reimburse you later; 3) the employer may offer an on-site interview, but will not pay for your travel.

3. Know yourself and the type of job you are seeking when you are hired. Be prepared in your interview so you can make a good impression on the interviewer with your demeanor during the entire interviewing process — both in terms of how you act and how you look. The employer is interested in hiring people who want to be associated with them and they will never know of your interest if you don’t voice your opinion. Keep in mind that although the employer has the final power to offer a job, your desire during the entire interview to show that you are both open and on-off campus — also gives you a great deal of power.

Written by Rosanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.
INTERVIEWING—continued

FREQUENTLY ASKED ENGINEERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. What do you know about this company?
3. Why do you want to work here?
4. Why should I hire you?
5. What is your greatest strength/least weakness?
6. Tell me about a conflict you had with another person and how you dealt with it.
7. Tell me about the most challenging engineering project that you have been involved with during past year.
8. Describe the most significant written technical report or presentation that you had to complete.
9. What is your most/least favorite class and why?
10. Think of a specific engineering project when you answer this question. What could you have done to be more successful in achieving your goal?
11. Describe a time when you confronted a problem that really tested your engineering know-how.
12. What is your overall career objective? Where do you see in your future?
13. Give me an example of a time when you had to teach a skill to other engineers.
14. Some of the best-engineered ideas are born out of an individual’s ability to challenge others’ ways of thinking. Tell me about a time when you were successful in doing this.
15. If I offer you a position as an engineer with us, how do you plan to get off to a jackrabbit start?
16. Give me an example of something that you have learned from a mistake that you made on a project or at an internship.
17. Tell me about a time when a project team effort that you were involved in failed.
18. Describe a time when you had to interact with a variety of people.
19. What resources do you use when you run into technical problems?
20. Why did you choose engineering and your specific major?
21. Give me two examples of technical decisions that you had to make in a class project or at an internship.
22. In the field of engineering, priorities often change quickly. Give me an example of a time when that happened. How did you handle it?
23. What personal characteristics do you feel are necessary to be a successful engineer?
24. What single technical skill or ability is your best asset?
25. Tell me about a time when you surpassed all expectations by going “above and beyond” in a class project or at an internship.
26. How do you feel about the workload in the engineering department at school or in an internship?

“[The Engineering Career Center] greatly helped me get a job with Verizon. Throughout college I took advantage of the services they offered by going to resume workshops, company info sessions, career fairs and networking nights. In the early fall semester of my senior year, I attended a Meet and Greet for Verizon to improve my networking skills and learn why Verizon was looking for Mechanical Engineers. Realizing that Verizon looked at engineers as problem solvers that could be trained for any position, I applied to their Leadership Development Program. With multiple job offers, I turned to the Engineering Career Center to decide which job was the best fit. Using their ranking system, I accepted Verizon’s offer.

I am thankful for the knowledge and support I gained from the Engineering Career Center that led me to a career in Verizon. I encourage everyone to look at all job opportunities and not limit yourself to jobs traditionally held by your major. Engineering opens up many doors to careers you might have not thought about when you decided on an engineering major.”

—Kate Fay, ME ’12, Equipment Engineer, Verizon

QUESTIONS TO ASK EMPLOYERS

1. Please describe the duties of the job for me.
2. What kinds of assignments might I expect the first six months on the job?
3. What skills are especially important for someone in this position?
4. Does your company encourage further education?
5. What are your growth projections for next year?
6. What products (or services) are in the development stage now?
7. Do you have plans for expansion?
8. What are your current projects for the year to come?
9. Have you cut your staff in the last three years?
10. How do you feel about creativity and individuality?
11. Do you offer flextime? (This should be asked AFTER you have received an offer.)
12. In what ways is your company environmentally conscious? In what ways are you cutting back?
13. Is your company competitive with the market in terms of salary?
14. Is there a lot of team/project work?
15. Will I have the opportunity to work on special projects?

INTERVIEWING TIPS FROM ON-CAMPUS RECRUITERS

Research organizations in advance of interviews—Since most on-campus interviews are relatively short, it is important that you use this time to sell yourself to an employer. Don’t waste your opportunity by spending too much time on issues that could have been answered by browsing the company’s website. Displaying your knowledge about a potential employer will greatly enhance your chances of interview success.

Define your career goals and the opportunities you want—One of the keys to making a successful sale is product knowledge. In the case of job interviews, that product is you. You need to perform a thorough self-evaluation well in advance of your interviews. Know what your strengths, weaknesses, skills and abilities are and be prepared to discuss them during the interview.

Be enthusiastic and sincere during your interviews—It is important for you to convey a genuine sense of interest during the interview. You must appear eager and flexible, but not too rehearsed. Don’t fixate on being nervous. Even seasoned pros can have the “interview jitters.” Above all, never be late for an interview appointment.

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

Be honest—Don’t claim interest in an employer if you really do not intend to work for that organization. Don’t lie on your resume or during the interview. While you should never draw attention to your weaknesses, don’t attempt to hide a shortcoming by being untruthful. Learn how to deal with perceived (or real) weaknesses before your interviews by talking to a campus career services professional and/or reading books on job interviewing techniques.

Be realistic—Carefully evaluate what an employer has to offer you... and what you have to offer the employer. Don’t accept a position that isn’t suited to you “just because you need a job.” Although most entry-level salaries have been on the rise, do not set your starting salary expectations too high. If a starting salary seems inordinately low, but is for a position that you really want, you might be able to arrange for an early salary review.

Some of this material is adapted from Recruiting Trends by L. Patrick Scheetz, Ph.D., Collegiate Employment Research Institute, © Michigan State University.
DRESSING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Shirts: With suits, pair a long sleeve, button down, collared shirt and a tie, or a tailored blousé or sweater with a modest neckline.

Accessories: Wear professional-looking business shoes, keeping heels flat to modest in height. Shoes should be clean and polished. If socks are worn, they should be dark colored and high enough so no skin is visible when you sit down and cross your legs. Keep jewelry simple and professional.

Grooming: Good personal hygiene is critical including clean and well-trimmed hair, facial hair, and fingernails. Also avoid strong perfumes or cologne and keep any make-up minimal and professional.

Polished and Professional! Remember, you want your experience and qualifications to shine. Your appearance should enhance your presentation, not overwhelm it!

Eight Guidelines to Ward Off Rejection

1. Don’t live in the past. When you dodge up past failures, your nervous system kicks in and you experience all the feelings that go with failure. Unwittingly, you overestimate the corresponding responses you get from yourself and underestimate yourself.

2. Don’t get mad at the system. Does anything less pleasurable exist than hunting for a job? Still, you must adjust to the world rather than make the world adjust to you. The easiest thing is to conform, to do what 400,000 other people are doing. When you sit down to play bridge or poker or drive a car, do you complain about the rules?

3. Take the spotlight off yourself. Sell your skills, not yourself. Concentrate on what you’re there for: to find out the interviewer’s problems and to show how you can work together to solve them.

4. See yourself in the new role. Form a mental picture of the positive self you’d like to become in job interviews, rather than focusing on what scares you. All therapists agree on this: Before a person can effect changes, he must really “see” himself in the new role. Just for fun, play with the idea.

5. Keep your sense of humor. If you do a round of interviews with three people, say, then send three slightly different thank-you notes that day, or the next. (Get business cards so you have everyone’s contact information close at hand.)

6. Thankless. Sending a thank-you note is an important way to demonstrate good manners. It doesn’t have to be handwritten, but it should be considered and specific. “An email is fine, but make sure it shows thought and consideration,” says Klaus. “Don’t do it in the elevator on the way down. Do it with forethought, so you can translate what you got out of the interview.”

7. Too Negative. If you’re given an interview with three people, say, then send three slightly different thank-you notes that day, or the next. (Get business cards so you have everyone’s contact information close at hand.)

8. Keep up your sense of humor. Nobody yet has contracted an incurable disease from tattooing. Similarly, if everyone in the office calls your interviewer ‘Sam,’ you probably should too, not because it’s right, but rather because it makes people comfortable. (Similarly, if everyone in the office calls your interviewer ‘Sam’) don’t adjust to that. ‘Mr. or Mrs. Jones,’ says Yate. ‘Be respectful of the people who can put food on your table.’

What Dress Code?

Dressing appropriately for an interview is a balancing act. Dress appropriately for the level in foreign companies, in which people normally we expect the job. For example, if you’d wear khakis and a polo shirt on the job, wear dress slacks and a blazer to the interview, or even better, wear a suit!

Business etiquette blunders and how to fix them

“On an interview, you’re dressing to get hired, not dated,” says Yate. “Your dress must be conservative and clean cut. It shows respect for the occasion, job, company, interviewer, and most of all—for yourself.”

Dining Disaster

“Dining disasters abound,” says Downs. “A guy with a piercing came to an interview with a tongue ring in,” says Downs. “I told him to go to the restroom and take it out. It was stuck. He had to go to the tattoo parlor a few miles away and have it cut out.”

If your personal style is more important to you than a position with a company, spend a little more time researching the corporate culture of a company before you apply, so you can find the right fit.

Written by Jebara Turner, a former human resources manager, who writes about business issues, and other business topics. She lives in Portland, Ore., and can be reached at www.jebara.com.
PROFESSIONAL CORRESPONDENCE

JOB SEARCH LETTERS

Uses and Formats
Job search letters—or cover letters, as they are known generically—are a vital part of your search for a professional position. The different types of letters are an opportunity for you to prove your communication and organizational skills to prospective employers.

Follow several basic principles when composing the letters:

- Know your audience and purpose
- Use an active voice, not passive
- Be professional—proofread, check for spelling, grammar, and a professional tone

Uses/types of job search letters:
- Application Letter: when applying to a specific job within a specific company
- Prospecting Letter: when applying to a company without a specific job posted
- Networking Letter: when seeking information from a professional in your field
- Thank-You Letter: when thanking an employer for assisting you in some way; i.e., conducting an interview with you or taking time to speak with you at a career fair
- Acceptance Letter: when formally accepting a job offer
- Withdrawal Letter: when withdrawing your application from consideration
- Rejection Letter: when declining a job offer

Cover Letter Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Street Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City, State Zip Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact Name, Title
Name of Organization
Street or P. O. Box Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Ms./Mr. Name Last Name:

Opening Paragraph:
The first paragraph should be brief, perhaps two or three sentences. Use this paragraph to identify the position you are applying for, how you heard about this position, and to identify any personal contacts you have with the company. Do some research so you can state your interest in this particular company/position.

Second Paragraph:
The middle paragraph(s) is used to expand upon your qualifications and experiences and why you qualify for the job. Be sure to focus on the reader’s needs, not your own.

Third Paragraph:
The concluding paragraph should summarize why your background, experience, and personality would be a good fit for the position. State how you can be reached and express your willingness to come in for an interview or supply further information and thank them for their time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name Typed

While descriptions and samples follow, remember these tips:

- The immediate purpose of your Application and Prospecting Letters is to draw attention to your resume. The ultimate goal of your letter and resume is to get you an interview.
- Letters should be unique and tailored to each job/company, but you should have a basic letter that can be easily adapted to numerous companies quickly and easily.
- Address each employer by their title and professional name, unless you’ve received permission to call them by their first name.
- Indicate your knowledge and interest in the company by doing your homework on the company’s recent projects and having an understanding of the job description.

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

For most of us, sending and receiving email is simple and fun. We use it to communicate with friends and family and to converse with our contemporaries in an informal manner. But while we may be unguarded in our tone when we email friends, a professional tone should be maintained when communicating with prospective employers.

Email is a powerful tool in the hands of a knowledgeable job-seeker. Use it wisely and you will shine. Use it improperly, however, and you’ll brand yourself as immature and unprofessional. It’s irritating when a professional email doesn’t stay on topic, or the writer just rambles. Try to succinctly get your point across—then end the email.

Be aware that email is often the preferred method of communication between job-seeker and employer. There are general guidelines that should be followed when emailing cover letters, thank-you notes and replies to various requests for information. Apply the following advice to every email you write:

- Use a meaningful subject header for your email—one that is appropriate to the topic.
- Always be professional and businesslike in your correspondence. Address the recipient as Mr., Ms. or Mrs., and always verify the correct spelling of the recipient’s name.
- Be brief in your communications. Don’t overload the employer with lots of questions in your email.
- Be brief in your communications. Don’t overload the employer with lots of questions in your email.
- When applying to a company, but you should have a basic letter that can be easily adapted to numerous companies
- Address each employer by their title and professional name, unless you’ve received permission to call them by their first name.
- Indicate your knowledge and interest in the company by doing your homework on the company’s recent projects and having an understanding of the job description.

Tips
In addition to the guidelines stated above, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

- Make sure you spell the recipient’s name correctly. If the person uses initials such as J.A. Smith and you are not certain of the individual’s gender, then begin the email: “Dear J.A. Smith.”
- Stick to a standard font like Times New Roman, 12-point.
- Keep your email brief and businesslike.
- Proofread everything you write before sending it.

While a well-crafted email may not be solely responsible for getting you your dream job, rest assured that an email full of errors will result in your being overlooked. Use these email guidelines and you will give yourself an advantage over other job-seekers who are unaware of how to professionally converse through email.

Written by John Martalo, a freelance writer based in San Diego.
QUALITIES DESIRED IN NEW COLLEGE GRADUATES

By Businesses, Industries and Government Agencies

Energy, Drive, Enthusiasm and Initiative
- Hard-working, disciplined and dependable
- Eager, professional and positive attitude
- Strong self-motivation and high self-esteem
- Confident and assertive, yet diplomatic and flexible
- Sincere and preserves integrity
- Ambitious and takes risks
- Uses common sense

Adapts Textbook Learning to the Working World
- Quick learner
- Asks questions
- Analytical; independent thinker
- Willing to continue education and growth
- Committed to excellence

Open-minded, willing to try new things

Knowledge of Computers
- Established word processing, spreadsheet, database and presentation software skills
- Excellent computer literacy

Communications Skills
- Good writing skills
- Excellent oral communication skills
- Listens well; compassionate and empathetic
- Excellent problem-solving and analytical skills
- Creative and innovative

Leadership Skills
- Organizational skills and attention to detail
- Accepts and handles responsibilities
- Action-oriented and results-driven
- Loyal to employers
- Customer-focused
- Team-spirited; understands group dynamics
- Always willing to help others
- Mature, poised and personable
- Diversity aware; treats others with respect and dignity

Oriented to Growth
- Acceptance of an entry-level position; doesn’t view required tasks as “menial”
- Academic excellence in field of study
- Views the organization’s total picture, not just one area of specialization
- Willing to accomplish more than required


JOB SEARCH RESOURCES

RESOURCE INFO
HANDSHAKE umass.joinhandshake.com
Search for jobs, internships, co-ops, and recruiting events such as career fairs and info sessions.

ON-CAMPUS RECRUITING
One of the primary ways companies recruit for technical positions. This includes Career Fairs, Networking events and company sponsored information sessions, tech talks, workshops and resume drop tabling. Check for Engineering Career Center events at UMass.JoinHandshake.com.

YOUR UMASS EMAIL
UMass Engineering Career Center sends weekly emails highlighting job, internship/co-op, and research opportunities, and upcoming events.

UMASS AMHERST STUDENT EMPLOYMENT OFFICE
On-campus and local positions at https://www.umass.edu/umfa/seo.

SOCIAL MEDIA
LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter. Follow your favorite companies and check for job openings. Complete your LinkedIn profile and highlight your technical skills/experience and display an appropriate photo. Perform a search on your name to review your internet presence, clean up results if necessary.

NETWORKING
Talk to everyone you know to develop contacts; ask for information on jobs/companies/industries and circulate your resume. You may learn of unadvertised openings or get a courtesy interview.

OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION NETWORK (O*NET)
https://www.onetonline.org
The O*NET is the nation’s primary source of occupational information, containing information on hundreds of jobs. The database provides the basis for the Career Exploration Tools that describe occupations in terms of the skills and knowledge required, typical work settings, and average salaries.

FEDERAL JOBS
Engineering undergraduates can search for Federally sponsored opportunities including research and non-research based internships, scholarships, fellowships, etc. across many U.S. government organizations (http://stemundergrads.science.gov). The Federal government has hundreds of entry-level engineering jobs as well as internships across all engineering majors https://www.usajobs.gov.

INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
http://www.umass.edu/careers/jobsearch/workingabroad
Explore a variety of resources for international job opportunities as well as resources for international student looking to work in the U.S.

Your future can make a difference.

35 UMass Amherst alumni are influencing the future of technology with their career. You can too.

22% of our 2018 technical interns came from UMass Amherst.

Check out sensata.com/careers for open positions.

Sensata
Technologies

32 UMass Amherst College of Engineering Career Development and Experiential Learning Center
CHOOSING BETWEEN JOB OFFERS

First question many of your friends will ask when you receive a job offer is where to go. For many college graduates this consideration is near the top of the list, which is not surprising.

In order to evaluate a salary offer you need to know what the average pay scale is for your degree and industry. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is a good source of salary information for entry-level college graduates. Their annual Salary Survey should be available in your campus career center. Make sure you factor cost-of-living differences when considering salary offers. For example, you may need an offer of $76,000 in San Francisco to do the same amount of work as an offer of $40,000 in Huntsville, Ala.

Bonuses and commissions are considered part of your salary, so take them into consideration when evaluating an offer. It’s also important to have a good understanding of an employer’s policies concerning raises. Be sure to never make your decision on salary alone. Students tend to overemphasize salary when considering job offers. Money is important, but it’s more important that you like your job. If you like your job, chances are you’ll be good at it. And if you’re good at your job, eventually you will be financially rewarded.

Factor in Benefits

Of course, salary is only one way in which employers financially compensate their employees. Ask anybody with a long work history and they’ll tell you how important benefits are. When most people think of employer benefits, they think of things like health insurance, vacation and retirement savings. But employers are continually coming up with more and more creative ways to compensate their workers, from health club memberships to flextime. The value of a benefits plan depends on your own plans and needs.

Who’s the Boss?

What is the climate like where you work or extracurricular activities at another employer soon, make sure you have time to consider both offers. But don’t ask for too much time to consider. Like all of us, employers don’t like uncertainty. Make sure you give them an answer one way or another as soon as you can.

Reneging on Offers

It is UNETHICAL to reneg on an offer. If you accept an offer, you should stop your job search and cancel any scheduled interviews. If you decide to continue your job search in hopes of securing a higher salary, you should decline the offer and then proceed with your search.

It’s Your Call

Once you make a decision, act quickly. If you are accepting an offer, make sure you’re confident. If you are withdrawing from another offer, give the employer as much notice as possible. If you are withdrawing a job offer far away from your current address, will the employer pay for part or all of your moving expenses? Even if you are looking at a local job, location is important—especially as it relates to travel time. A long commute will cost you time, money and probably more than a little frustration.

Time Is On Your Side

It’s important to remember that you have at least a week or two before you hear back from another employer soon, make sure you have time to consider both offers. But don’t ask for too much time to consider. Like all of us, employers don’t like uncertainty. Make sure you give them an answer one way or another as soon as you can.

Corporate Culture

There are three aspects to a work environment: 1) the physical workspace, 2) the “corporate culture” of the employer, and 3) fellow co-workers. Don’t underestimate the importance of a good workspace. If you are a private person, you probably will not be able to do your best work in a cluster of cubicles. If you are an extrovert, you won’t be happy shut in in a office for hours on end.

Corporate culture comprises the attitudes, experiences, beliefs and values of an organization. What’s the hierarchy of the organization? Is there a dress code? Is overtime expected? Do hourly wage earners or salaried employees have a more important that you follow protocol? Whenever possible, you should talk to current or previous employees to get a sense of the corporate culture. Ask yourself if the corporate culture is compatible with your own attitudes, beliefs and values. Your boss and fellow co-workers make up the last part of the work environment. Hopefully, you will like the people you work with, make sure you make that effort, be able to work well with them professionally. You may not be able to get a good fit if you do not have good communication skills. But before you can be a successful worker in the interview process. But if you do develop strong feelings one way or the other, be sure to take them into consideration when making your final decision.

Like What You Do

The hired help are seldom able to land their dream jobs right out of school, but it’s still important that you at least like what you do. Before accepting a job offer, make sure there are no major changes in what you do day-to-day that will be. Are your responsibilities? Will you be primarily working in teams or alone? Will your job tasks be repetitive or varied? Will your work be challenging? What level of stress can you expect with the position?

Location, Location, Location

Climate, proximity to friends and family and local population (i.e., urban vs. rural) should all be evaluated against your duties. If you are accepting a job far away from your current address, will the employer pay for part or all of your moving expenses? Even if you are looking at a local job, location is important—especially as it relates to travel time. A long commute will cost you time, money and probably more than a little frustration.

The following is a list of cities where many graduating students accept offers. The cost of living index is based on the composite price of groceries, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, clothing and entertainment for each city. Use the calculator to compare salaries in different cities. For further information about the data please refer to www.bestplaces.net/cost-of-living. To compare information from other sources, visit these websites: www.salary.com and www.hometrack.com/economic-reality/salary-calculator.aspx.

THE COST OF LIVING INDEX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Cost of Living Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>$168,000</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>$50,000 – $81,553</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>$97,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>$168,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE JOB SEARCH—continued

ACCEPTING A JOB OFFER

When you accept an offer for an internship or full-time position with the UMass College of Engineering Career Center and the employer is expected that you are acting in good faith and will honor that commitment. Accepting an offer is considered a precautionary measure and then reneging on that commitment is considered unprofessional, unethical, and may seriously damage your future job prospects, as well as those of other UMass students and alumni. It is your responsibility to thoroughly evaluate an offer and decide if the opportunity is right for you before accepting it, even if the company provides you with less time than you would actually like to make this decision.

Once you accept an internship, fulltime job, or decide to go to graduate school, AND the employer has confirmed to you that any other contingencies such as background checks, reference checks, or drug screens have been cleared, you should withdraw from the recruiting process. This requires that you stop looking for positions and withdraw from any interviews or discussions with employers that are actively considering you for a job. Employers expect and value this professionalism, and it allows them to engage with other students to fill the position.

If you have any questions or need help in evaluating an offer or making your decision, please contact the Engineering Career Center, we are happy to help! COECareers@ecs.umass.edu

Adapted from “Playing Fair: Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Job Seeker,” and “Can You Change Your Mind About a Job After You’ve Accepted?” by Kaylee Villvoc, Intern Program Manager for SAS. Courtesy of NACE (National Association of Colleges and Employers).

Salary Comparison Equation

City #1 x Salary = City #2 x Salary

Visit these websites:

https://engineering.umass.edu/careers
Searching for Federal Jobs

Federal agencies now fill jobs like private industry by allowing applicants to contact the agency directly for job information and applications. However, most of these positions cannot be accessed through USAJOBS. All competitive service positions must be posted on the USAJOBS site, and although agencies are not required to post these positions, they are encouraged to do so. Registered visitors to USAJOBS can create and post up to five resumes, which can be made searchable, allowing recruiters from federal agencies to find resumes during applicant searches. Applicants can also use these resumes to apply directly to jobs that have an online application option. In addition, job applicants can create as many as ten “search agents,” which watch for job openings using certain criteria (such as location, job type, agency, salary requirements), and emails matching postings directly to their inbox. Applicants can also search for jobs directly using the “search jobs” button on the USAJOBS homepage.

If you are looking for engineering-specific federally sponsored opportunities including research and non-research based internships, scholarships, fellowships, etc., across many U.S. government organizations then go to https://stemundergrads.science.gov.

How to Apply

There is no general way to submit an application to OPM or to individual federal agencies. Instead, students should refer to each job posting for specific directions. Whether for competitive service or excepted service positions, federal job applications must be submitted electronically. A typical posting can run over 2,000 words and include sections on eligibility requirements, educational requirements, necessary experience or equal opportunity and a description of how applicants are evaluated.

Most importantly, all federal job postings include a section titled “How to Apply.” Instead of letting all of this information overwhelm you, use it as a resource to help you put together the best application possible, paying particularly close attention to Appendix A. If you have questions about the instructions and procedures closely, your application may not be processed. “I would emphasize that applicants should carefully read the ‘step by step’ of all printed and online materials and applications,” says Dr. Richard White, Employer Relations Coordinator, Drew University. “Applicants who dot all their i’s and cross their t’s can get a competitive advantage and rise to the top of the application pool.” Federal agencies require specific information on your resume, and if it can be provided through USAJOBS, in most cases, human resources staff or employment agencies) will most likely use several resources to find workers, including:

- College recruiting
- Campus or community job fairs
- Post job openings on the Internet
- Post job openings in professional associations
- Resume searches on online job banks
- Employee referrals
- Regional and national conferences
- Employment agencies (“headhunters”)

Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer from Nashville, Ind.

Importance of Skills and Career Field

Find out if your degree skills and set are currently in demand in the U.S. job market. An advanced degree, highly marketable skills or extensive experience will make your job search easier. Find out what region of the United States holds the majority of the jobs in your field, you may need to relocate in order to land the job you want. Locate career forums that can about your targeted career field by talking to professors, related industry publications, attending professional meetings and regional conferences.

Role of Employers

It is the employer’s responsibility to find the right people for their business, and they’re gaining a competitive advantage and rise to the top of the application pool. Federal agencies require specific information on your resume, and if it can be provided through USAJOBS, in most cases, human resources staff or employment agencies) will most likely use several resources to find workers, including:

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Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer from Nashville, Ind.

THE JOB SEARCH—continued

FEDERAL JOBS: WORKING FOR UNCLE SAM

Searching for Federal Jobs

Federal jobs are no different from jobs in the private sector in terms of job search processes, and enough links to publications and resources to support your job search. The federal government offers a variety of career opportunities with federal employment trends, salary ranges, benefits, retirement and other valuable resources. You can find information for anyone interested in federal jobs, including the federal government’s human resources agency. OPM’s mission is to create a merit system in which a person holds the majority of the jobs in your field; you may need to relocate in order to land the job you want. Locate career forums that can about your targeted career field by talking to professors, related industry publications, attending professional meetings and regional conferences.

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Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer from Nashville, Ind.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND THE JOBSITE SEARCH

Are you accessible to employers through at least some of the above strategies? If not, develop a plan to make sure your credentials are widely circulated. Notify as many people as possible in your field about your job search.

Strong Communication Skills

Develop your job search decision if you:

- Provide a well-prepared resume that includes desirable skills and relevant employment experiences.
- Clearly convey your interests and ability to do the job in your resume.
- Understand English when spoken to you and can effectively express your thoughts in English.
- It’s important to be able to positively promote yourself and talk with confidence about your education, relevant skills and related experiences. Self-promotion is rarely easy for anyone. But, it can be especially difficult for individuals from cultures where talking about yourself is considered inappropriate. When interviewing in the United States, however, you are expected to be able to explain your credentials and why you are the suitable candidate for the position. Be prepared to discuss your verbal and nonverbal cues. Some international students may not realize whether their accent is causing them to be misunderstood.

Interviewers are sometimes too embarrassed or impatient to ask for clarification, so be on the lookout for nonverbal clues. If you think the interviewer is about to interrupt you, ask for clarification, as you might not be sure about your targeted career field by talking to professors, related industry publications, attending professional meetings and regional conferences.

Role of Employers

It is the employer’s responsibility to find the right people for their business, and they’re gaining a competitive advantage and rise to the top of the application pool. Federal agencies require specific information on your resume, and if it can be provided through USAJOBS, in most cases, human resources staff or employment agencies) will most likely use several resources to find workers, including:

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Written by Chris Enstrom, a freelance writer from Nashville, Ind.

Career Center

The career center can be a valuable resource in your job search. However, some career centers won’t interview students who are not U.S. citizens. As a result, you may need to take your ability to participate in some campus interviews, there are numerous ways to benefit from the career center career center.

If your English language skills need some work, get involved with campus and community activities. These events will allow you to practice speaking English.

Written by Rosita Smith, https://engineering.umass.edu/careers

UMass Amherst College of Engineering Career Development and Experiential Learning Center

THE JOB SEARCH—continued
t some point in your college career, you must decide what you would like to do after graduation—and that includes whether to go to graduate school. If you’re trying to determine whether graduate school is right for you, here are some pointers to help you make an enlightened decision.

1. Should I consider going to graduate school? Going to graduate school might be a good idea if you:
   • want to be a professor, lawyer, doctor, or work in any profession that requires a post-secondary education.
   • wish to develop additional expertise in a particular subject or field to maximize your future earning potential and opportunities for career advancement.
   • are deeply interested in a particular subject and wish to study it in-depth—AND have the time and financial resources to devote to further education.

   Going to graduate school might not be a good idea if you:
   • are trying to delay your entry into the “real world” with empty responsibilities and self-indulgence.
   • are clueless about your career goals.
   • haven’t applied for any scholarships, grants, fellowships and assistantships, which could pay for a great deal of your education.

   2. Is it better to work first or attend graduate school immediately after completing your undergraduate degree? Work first if:
   • you would like to get some real-world work experience before investing thousands of dollars in a graduate degree.
   • you cannot afford to go to graduate school now and you haven’t applied for any scholarships, grants, fellowships and assistantships, which could pay for a great deal of your education.

   Go to graduate school now if:
   • you are absolutely sure you want to be a college professor, doctor, lawyer, etc., and need a graduate degree to pursue your dream job.
   • you have been awarded grants, fellowships, scholarships or assistantships that will help pay for your education.
   • you’re concerned that once you start earning real money, you won’t be able to return to the lifestyle of a “puck with individual departments to make sure you know how they handle funding.

   • Student Loans: Even if you’ve taken out loans in the past, another $50,000 – $75,000 may be a sound “investment” in your future graduate school.
   • Fellowships/Scholarships: A free education is always the smart option. The catch is you need a high GPA, good GRE/GMAT/LSAT/MCAT scores and the commitment to search out every possible source of funding.
   • Teaching/Research Assistantships: Many assistantships include tuition waivers plus a monthly stipend. It’s a great way to get paid for earning an education.
   • Employer Sponsorship: Did you know that some companies actually pay you to continue your graduate education? The catch is they usually expect you to continue working for them after you complete your degree so they can recoup their investment.

4. What are the pros and cons of going to graduate school full-time vs. part-time? Benefits of attending graduate school full-time:
   • you’ll be able to complete your degree sooner.
   • you can totally commit your intellectual, physical and emotional energy to your education.
   • ideal if you want to make a dramatic career change.

   Benefits of attending graduate school part-time:
   • work income helps pay for your education.
   • you can take a very manageable course load.
   • you can juggle family responsibilities while completing your degree.
   • allows you to work in the function/industry/career of your choice while continuing your education.
   • employer will often pay for part (or all) of your graduate degree.

5. Assessing if you would like to go to graduate school in the near future, what should I do now?
   a. Identify your true strengths, interests and values to help you discover what is right for YOU—not your friends or parents.
   b. Keep your grades up and sign up (and prepare) to take the required standardized tests.
   c. Talk to faculty, friends and family who have been to graduate school to get their perspective about the differences between being an undergraduate and a graduate student.
   d. Talk to faculty, friends and family who are in your targeted profession to get a realistic sense of the career path and the challenges associated with the work they do.
   e. Investigate creative ways to finance your education—by planning ahead you may reduce your debt.
   f. Research graduate schools to help you find a good match. Investigate the admissions process and the current student body profile of your targeted schools to evaluate your probability for admission.
   g. Have faith and APPLY! Remember, you can’t get in unless you apply.

   Written by Roazyn J. Bradford.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

STEP 1: Brainstorming

Actions:
1. Devote time to reflect on the following questions.
2. Discuss them with friends or family members.
3. Jot down notes. In some cases write sentences.
4. Think about all the answers to each question. For example, why are you really committed to the field of biology despite pressure from your parents to become a lawyer or to get a job?
5. Your answers to some of these questions will form the heart of your personal statement.

1. How did your pre-college education influence your decision to pursue graduate study in this field?
   Think about:
   • High school courses, teachers, special programs, student organizations, and community or volunteer work.

2. How has your college experience influenced your decision?
   Think about:
   • College courses, professors, academic interests, research, special programs, student organizations, and the decision-making process you went through to choose your major.

3. How has your career experience influenced your decision?
   Think about:
   • Internships, externships, part-time jobs, summer jobs, and volunteer or community work.

4. Who has had the most influence on your decision to pursue graduate study in this area? In what ways?
   Think about:
   • Parents, relatives, teachers, professors, clergy, friends of the family, college friends, parents of friends, local lawyers, supervisors, coaches, doctors, dentists, lawyers, etc.

5. What situation has had the most influence on your decision?
   Think about:
   • Family, academic, work or athletic situations. Think about happy, sad, traumatic, moving, or memorable situations.

6. What personally motivates you to pursue graduate study in this field?
   Think about:
   • Your personal skills, interests, and values.

STEP 2: Writing Your Personal Statement

Actions:
1. Incorporate your responses to the above questions. Begin writing your first draft:
   1. Develop an outline of your statement prior to writing. It doesn’t have to be detailed. It can be three or four main points in the order you want them to make.
   2. Accentsuate your strengths and what makes you unique.
   3. Emphasize your weaknesses in positive ways. For example, refer to them not as weaknesses but as areas for improvement or growth.
   4. Paint pictures and tell stories about what makes you special. In this way the admissions readers will remember you. The story can be happy or sad. The more feeling you can inject into your statement, the more you will stand out.
   5. Find out the specific orientation and philosophy of the graduate program. Adapt and refine your statement to fit. This will make you stand out from other applicants who recycle the same personal statement with each application.

   Suggested Outline
   Your personal statement will likely range from 250-1200 words or 1-6 pages. The typical personal statement should be 2-3 double-spaced pages or 500-700 words. Here is a suggested outline. You should adjust the main point of each paragraph and number of paragraphs depending on the desired length of your personal statement and the areas in your background that you choose to emphasize.

   Paragraph 1: Personal background and experience
   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

   References
   Peterson’s Guide 2004

   Personal Statement Critiques
   Contact your campus career office and make an appointment with a career counselor to have your personal statement critiqued. A professor or the adviser may provide feedback. They should provide a detailed analysis of the content and style of your statement. They should comment on the use of first person and the presentation of your strengths.

   Adapted with permission from the Office of Career Services at Rutgers University, New Brunswick Campus.

https://engineering.umass.edu/careers
Canidates for employment, graduate school, scholarships or any activity for which others will evaluate their talents and abilities will need to request letters of recommendation. The content and quality of these letters, as well as the caliber of the people who write them, are critical to the selection process.

Selecting People to Serve as References
Select individuals whom you feel are knowledgeable of your skills, work ethic, talents and future capacity. The selection of your references is critical, as a reference that is ill-informed could sabotage all the great work you have done in a matter of minutes. Choose people who have known you for a minimum of six months. The longer they have known you the better, but they must have had regular contact with you to observe your growth and development. A reference from someone who may have known you several years ago but you have not spoken to in a year or more is not in a position to critique your skills. If you must choose between several people, select those who know you the best but who also hold a higher rank in their profession. A department head is a better candidate than a graduate assistant or an instructor. Never choose someone on status alone, continue to choose people based on how well they know you and how much they want to assist you in your job search. Do not choose people who are not committed to you or who are not very familiar with your background.

Try to Meet Face to Face
Never assume someone will want the responsibility to serve as your reference. Make an appointment to discuss your career goals and purpose of the letter of recommendation. Determine if the person would want the responsibility of serving as your reference, which involves not only writing a letter supporting your skills, but also handling any phone inquiries and responding to other questions which may be posed by a selection committee. Persons who serve as a reference have responsibilities that go beyond the words they put on paper. They should feel valued by the employer. An employer will interview you and then contact your references to determine consistency in your answers. You should not inflate what you are able to do or what you may have completed in work or school assignments. A reference is looked upon as someone who can confirm your skill and ability level. Any inconsistencies between what you said in your interview and a reference’s response could eliminate you from further consideration. The key is to keep your references informed of what you are going to be discussing with employers so there is a clear understanding of what is valued by the employer.

What’s the Magic Number?
Each situation will dictate the appropriate number of references that will be required. The average would be three to five letters of recommendation. Generally, references are people whom you have known professionally; they should not be family or friends. When selecting people as references, choose people who know you well and have the most to say pertaining to the purpose of the letter. One person may be very appropriate for a reference for employment, while another would be best for use in admission to graduate or professional school or a scholarship application.

Encourage your reference to use strong, descriptive words that provide the evidence of your interpersonal skills initiative, leadership, flexibility, conflict resolution, decision-making, judgment, oral and written communication skills, and grasp of your field of study. Education majors are encouraged to request a letter from the cooperating teacher, supervising teacher, professor(s) in your major, and a current or former employer.

Maintain Professional Courtesy
Give your reference writers ample time to complete their letters and provide a self-addressed stamped envelope. Make it as easy for them as possible so they don’t have to spend valuable time searching for the proper return address and a stamp. Follow up with your letter writers and let them know the status of your plans and search. They will want to know how you are doing and whether there is anything else they may do to increase your candidacy. You never know when you will need their assistance again, and it is just good manners to keep those who care about you informed of your progress. Finally, many times when two or more candidates are considered equally qualified, a strong letter of reference can play an important role in determining who is selected for the position.

Maintaining a good list of references is part of any professional’s success. Continue to nurture valuable relationships with people who will want to do whatever they can to aid in your success. Your personal success is based on surrounding yourself with positive people who all believe in you. No one makes it alone; we all need a little help from our friends.

Written by Roseanne R. Bensley, Career Services, New Mexico State University.