

Minnesota State University Moorhead

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK

Your guide for developing your professional self



*Career Development Center*



## Career Development Center

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### OUR MISSION

*The Career Development Center at Minnesota State University Moorhead empowers all Dragons to transition from college to career with confidence and competence. We collaborate with students to further their understanding of themselves, their career goals, and the world of work. By providing resources, connections, and support, we inspire students to create a transformational and fulfilling future.*

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### OUR VISION

*Career everywhere for everyone*

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### OUR COMMITMENT

*The MSUM Career Development Center is committed to providing resources and support that will help level the playing field for all Dragons in their transition from college to career. We pledge to foster an inclusive environment where Dragons with diverse experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds feel respected. To do this, we commit to:*

- celebrate the intersectional identities of our students and alumni and gain an understanding of their lived experiences*
- provide opportunities for students and alumni to expand skills and networks*
- empower students and alumni to speak to their abilities and experiences confidently and competently*
- challenge the processes and practices that create barriers and inequities within the world of work*
- engage in professional development and dialogue that moves our staff and services towards greater inclusion*

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### CONNECT WITH OUR OFFICE

*Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218.477.2131*

# YOUR ROADMAP FOR PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477.2131  
[www.mnstate.edu/career](http://www.mnstate.edu/career)

## ASSESS

Career readiness is measured by more than your just educational and professional experiences. Take time to identify your interests, skills, abilities, and values as you finalize your career goals.

- Set up an appointment with the Career Development Center. Meeting with a staff member for career coaching can help you define transferable skills that will be important as you get closer to graduation.
- Clarify your self-knowledge. Begin to ask yourself the following questions:
  - What type of work settings do I prefer? What type of values would I like my future employer to have? What types of positions will allow me to engage in work activities I enjoy? What skills do I possess that will allow me to succeed as a professional?

## EXPLORE

Whether you've decided on a major and career path or are still looking for the best fit, the Career Development Center can help.

- Take the FOCUS2, a free assessment available to all students. This web-based major & career exploration tool helps you explore options that align with your work interests, personality, values, and skills. Then, set up an appointment with our office to discover how to use this information to plan for your future.
- Visit **O\*Net** and **Career One Stop** and other online career exploration tools to help you get a better idea of how to use your education as you enter the workforce.
- Get a part-time job. Regardless of what the job is, you will begin to gain valuable real-world skills necessary for being successful in the workforce. Employers are looking for more than just a degree, they want employees who are critical thinkers, good communicators, have a firm understanding of technology, possess leadership skills, have a strong work ethic, understand one's strengths and weaknesses, and demonstrate inclusiveness.
- You can find more information and links to the sites we mentioned above on our website, [www.mnstate.edu/career](http://www.mnstate.edu/career)

## CONNECT

Begin building your network as soon as you arrive on campus. From the faculty teaching your courses to the business representatives you'll meet at employer events, connecting with others will help set you up for success in your future.

- Connect with your advisor. They are not only a great resource to help ensure you're staying on track academically, they can also help you through the graduate school application and job search process.
- **Join a student organization.** Organizations allow you to develop many foundational skills that employers find necessary in those they hire.
- **Attend events that connect you to those outside of our campus community.** Mark your calendar for Internship & Career Fairs, Meet the Employer events, workshops, etc... These events allow you to broaden your network while gaining valuable skills.
- **Schedule informational interviews.** Connect with professionals in positions that interest you. Learn about their background, career path, and tips and tricks to help you achieve your career and professional goals.

## EXPERIENCE

Your education is only part of the puzzle. Experiences outside of the classroom provide an excellent way to get real-world experience while preparing you for your career.

- Obtain an internship. Although not all majors require an internship in order to graduate, the Career Development Center encourages all students to seek one out. They give you an unparalleled experience in your field and can help open doors in your professional future.
- Seek out leadership opportunities on campus. Whether you are elected to a leadership role in a student organization or apply for a student leadership position, these opportunities can help set you apart.
- Think of every opportunity you're offered as a chance to develop new skills. Part-time jobs, studying abroad, and taking part in research projects are exceptional ways to gain valuable experience outside of the classroom.

# FOUR-YEAR CAREER ACTION PLAN

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## FIRST YEAR

- Start taking LASC coursework as well as foundation and core courses related to your major. If you find yourself struggling with a class, check out **tutoring options with the Academic Success Center**
- Participate in a learning community, or get involved in your residence hall
- Join a major or interest-related **student organization**
- Explore the community and connect with a non-profit organization to volunteer
- Understand your interests, skills, and values and learn about career readiness competencies by taking the **FOCUS 2**, a free online assessment
- Create your **Handshake** account to assist in your on and off-campus job search
- Begin working on the **Student Life Pathways**
- Schedule an appointment with the **Career Development Center** to discuss your career action plan and to assist in creating a resume

## THIRD/FOURTH YEAR

- Schedule an appointment with your academic advisor to make sure you're on track for graduation
- Take inventory of your professional goals and decide if your future will need to include graduate school. Take the necessary exams and begin submitting applications to programs that will help you achieve your goals
- Develop leadership skills by applying for a Student Leadership Position or running for an officer position in a student organization
- Continue working on the **Student Life Pathways**
- Focus on networking. Attend on-campus events like **Job Fairs and Meet the Employer** and community events such as **Start-Up Brew, Creative Mornings, TedX, Chamber of Commerce Events**, etc... to connect with potential employers
- Find an internship or major-related part-time job in the community to learn the ins and outs of your chosen career
- Schedule an appointment with the **Career Development Center** to prepare your internship applications
- Schedule informational interviews with people in your field of study/interest

## SECOND YEAR

- Take a deeper dive into your major and begin to consider a minor or a certificate
- If you didn't find one your freshman year, search for an on-campus or part-time job in the community - research shows that students who work 10-20 hours per week actually have higher GPAs than their peers who don't work. Additionally, those who work *on-campus* graduate at higher rates than their peers who don't
- Continue working on the **Student Life Pathways**
- Join **LinkedIn** and begin building your professional network
- Look into faculty-guided research opportunities
- Explore career paths on **O\*Net** or the **Occupational Handbook**
- Meet with a Career Coach to start learning about transferable skills and ways you can best prepare for your future career
- Schedule informational interviews with people in your field of study/interest

## FOURTH/FIFTH YEAR

- Take the last few classes needed to complete your degree
- Make sure to submit your application for graduation
- Assess what experiences or skills are areas of growth for you and fill in gaps with volunteering, organizations, research, presentations, internships, or part-time employment
- Finish up your **Student Life Pathways** and be sure to add your accomplishments to your resume and LinkedIn
- Join a professional organization related to your field to gain access to research, continuing education, job boards, and message boards
- Network relentlessly by attending on and off-campus employer and networking events
- Schedule a final appointment with the **Career Development Center** to review your resume and cover letters, participate in a mock interview and ask any other career-related questions
- Schedule informational interviews with people in your field of study/interest

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

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careers@mnstate.edu  
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When choosing what to do after graduation, it's essential to gather information about job titles, responsibilities, day-to-day tasks, how to enter the field, and what types of companies employ people like yourself. While researching job titles online is helpful, connecting with professionals currently in the field can be even more impactful.

An **INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW** is a conversation with someone working in an area of interest to you. It allows you to gain firsthand information about the realities of working within a particular field, industry, or position. Through these interviews, you can find out about career paths you did not know existed, get tips and insider knowledge about how to prepare for and land your first career position, learn what it's like to work at a specific organization, initiate a professional relationship, and expand your network of contacts in a specific career field. A word of warning, informational interviews are not an appropriate time for you to ask for a job.

## SIX STEPS OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

### Research Career Fields

- Start your research on career fields using tools like the **Occupational Outlook Handbook**, **O\*Net**, and **FOCUS2**

### Identify People to Interview

- Sort through your own contacts. People you already know, even if they are not in fields of interest to you, can lead you to people who are. This includes family, friends, professors, former employers, and organization members.
- Use LinkedIn. Search for companies you're interested in, or use keywords related to jobs you'd like to find folks to connect with. Or used LinkedIn's searchable database of MSUM's 37,000+ alumni on the platform by searching for Minnesota State University Moorhead and clicking "Alumni."
- Check with the Career Development Center. Staff at the CDC are connected to many organizations and businesses through the community. If you're struggling with figuring out whom to reach out to, set up an appointment with a career coach to narrow down your choices.

### Prepare for the Interview

- Be able to confidently introduce yourself and have an answer for the question "tell me about yourself"? We recommend following this formula when developing your answer: Present (*major/school year*) + Past (*experiences/jobs/involvement*) + Future (*goals/interest areas*).
- Prepare a series of open-ended questions. Here are a few ideas:
  - How did you begin your career?
  - How do most people get into this field? What are common entry-level jobs?
  - What are your main responsibilities as a...?
  - What is a typical day (or week) like for you?
  - What do you like most/least about your work?
  - How does your position fit within the organization/career field/industry?
  - What current issues and trends in the field should I know about/be aware of?
  - What are some common career paths in this field?
  - What related fields do you think I should consider looking into?
  - What advice would you give a college student/college grad looking for a job in this industry?
  - What kind of education, training, or background does your job require?
  - What skills, abilities, and personal attributes are essential to success in your job/this field?
  - Can I contact you again if I have further questions?

## Initiate Contact

- Contact the person via LinkedIn, email, or phone. Be open to connecting with them in person or via Zoom, Teams, or another virtual platform.

*Email template:*

SUBJECT LINE: Request for Informational Interview

Dear Mr. Smith,

My name is [first and last name] and I'm a current student at Minnesota State University Moorhead majoring in [major]. I'm currently exploring opportunities in [industry/field] and after researching companies potential career paths, I decided to reach out to you to learn more about your professional path and to ask a few questions to gain more insight as I prepare to enter the field.

I'm hoping you might have 20 to 30 minutes to meet with me in the next few weeks. Please let me know if this might be possible and what dates and times are most convenient for you.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks,

[first and last name]

*LinkedIn template:*

Dear first name last name,

I see we both went to MSUM (go Dragons!). I am a current MSUM student interested in [topic or job field] and would love to connect with you to learn more about what it's like to work for [company name].

Thanks so much,

[first and last name]

*After they accept your LinkedIn connection request, follow this up with something similar to the above email message.*

## Conduct the Interview

- Dress neatly and appropriately, as you would for a job interview.
- Arrive on time.
- Bring your list of questions and take notes.
- Restate that your objective is to get information and advice, not a job.
- Give a brief overview of yourself and your education and/or work background.
- Be prepared to direct the interview, but also let the conversation flow naturally, and encourage the interviewee to do most of the talking.
- Respect the person's time. Limit the meeting to the agreed-upon timeframe.
- Ask the person if you may contact them again in the future with other questions.
- Ask for names of other people to meet so as to gain different perspectives.

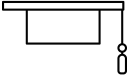
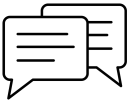


## Follow-Up

- Keep records. Write down what you learned, what more you'd like to know, and what your next steps should be.
- Send a thank-you note or email within 1-2 days to express your appreciation for the time and information given.
- Keep in touch with the person, especially if you had a particularly nice interaction. Add them on LinkedIn. Let them know that you followed up on their advice and the outcome. This person could become an important part of your network.

# CAREER-READINESS COMPETENCIES

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477.2131  
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Most employers consider these 8 competencies to be essential for success in the workplace. Developing your skills in these areas will give you the foundational skills needed to thrive as you launch your career.

	DEFINITION	SAMPLE BEHAVIORS
 <b>CAREER &amp; SELF-DEVELOPMENT</b>	Proactively develop yourself and your career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of your strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Show an awareness of your own strengths and areas for development</li><li>• Identify areas for continual growth while pursuing and applying feedback</li><li>• Develop plans and goals for your future career</li><li>• Professionally advocate for yourself and others</li><li>• Display curiosity; seek out opportunities to learn</li></ul>
 <b>COMMUNICATION</b>	Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the importance of and demonstrate verbal, written, and non-verbal/body language, abilities</li><li>• Employ active listening, persuasion, and influencing skills</li><li>• Communicate in a clear and organized manner so that others can effectively understand</li><li>• Frame communication with respect to diversity of learning styles, varied individual communication abilities, and cultural differences</li></ul>
 <b>CRITICAL THINKING</b>	Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make decisions and solve problems using sound, inclusive reasoning and judgment</li><li>• Gather and analyze information from a diverse set of sources and individuals to fully understand a problem</li><li>• Proactively anticipate needs and prioritize action steps</li><li>• Accurately summarize and interpret data with an awareness of personal biases that may impact outcomes</li><li>• Multi-task well in a fast-paced environment</li></ul>
 <b>EQUITY &amp; INCLUSION</b>	Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engage in anti-racist practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Solicit and use feedback from multiple cultural perspectives to make inclusive and equity-minded decisions</li><li>• Actively contribute to inclusive and equitable practices that influence individual and systemic change</li><li>• Advocate for inclusion, equitable practices, justice, and empowerment for historically marginalized communities</li><li>• Keep an open mind to diverse ideas and new ways of thinking</li></ul>

## DEFINITION

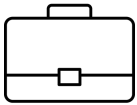
## SAMPLE BEHAVIORS



### LEADERSHIP

Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.

- Inspire, persuade, and motivate self and others under a shared vision
- Seek out and leverage diverse resources and feedback from others to inform direction
- Use innovative thinking to go beyond traditional methods
- Serve as a role model to others by approaching tasks with confidence and a positive attitude
- Motivate and inspire others by encouraging them and by building mutual trust



### PROFESSIONALISM

Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace.

- Act equitably with integrity and accountability to self, others, and the organization
- Maintain a positive personal brand in alignment with organizational and personal career values
- Be present and prepared
- Demonstrate dependability (e.g., report consistently for work or meetings)
- Have an attention to detail, resulting in few if any errors in their work



### TEAMWORK

Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

- Listen carefully to others, taking time to understand and ask appropriate questions without interrupting
- Effectively manage conflict, interact with and respect diverse personalities, and meet ambiguity with resilience
- Be accountable for individual and team responsibilities and deliverables
- Employ personal strengths, knowledge, and talents to complement those of others
- Exercise the ability to compromise and be agile
- Collaborate with others to achieve common goals



### TECHNOLOGY

Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

- Navigate change and be open to learning new technologies
- Use technology to improve the efficiency and productivity of your work
- Manage technology to integrate information to support relevant, effective, and timely decision-making
- Quickly adapt to new or unfamiliar technologies
- Manipulate information, construct ideas, and use technology to achieve strategic goals

**Employers want to hire college students and graduates who know how to use their talents, strengths, and interests. By mastering these career-readiness competencies, you will be prepared for a successful transition from college to career.**

*These competencies were developed by the National Association of Colleges and Employers.*



# CAREER EXPLORATION

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Gathering information is a critical step in making an effective career decision. Thankfully, you have a ton of tools and resources that can help you find a career path that's right for you. Use this worksheet to keep track of information you gather to use in your research and decision-making.

## RESOURCES FOR YOUR SEARCH

- **FOCUS 2-Self Assessment:** A web-based major and career exploration tool that is available to all prospective and current MSUM students and alumni. It will help you learn about yourself through self-assessments and explore career fields and occupations that may align with your interests, skills, and personality.
  - [bit.ly/FOCUS2MSUM](http://bit.ly/FOCUS2MSUM)
- **Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook:** The Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) is an online publication that has information on hundreds of occupations in the United States. The OOH is a rich resource for those seeking career guidance. Using the OOH, you can explore different aspects of occupations including what workers do on the job, work environment, education, training, and other qualifications needed to enter the occupation, pay, projected employment change and job prospects, state and area data, similar occupations
  - [www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm)
- **O\*Net:** Similar to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, O\*Net is a free database with hundreds of occupational definitions to help students, job seekers, businesses, and workforce development professionals to understand today's world of work in the U.S.
  - [www.onetonline.org/](http://www.onetonline.org/)
- **The Career Development Center:** The Center is home to career coaches that can assist you in your career and/or major exploration. Whether it's interpreting your results from the FOCUS 2, or guided one-on-one exploration appointments, we're here to help
  - [bit.ly/MSUMCDC](http://bit.ly/MSUMCDC)
- **The Academic Success Center:** Are you currently undecided in your major? Your academic advisor will be a staff member from the Academic Success Center. They will provide guidance with class selection, major exploration, and other academic needs until you find the right major for you. Once you declare a major, you will be assigned an advisor who teaches in your program of study.
  - [bit.ly/MSUMASC](http://bit.ly/MSUMASC)
- **Your Advisor and Faculty:** Your faculty are experts in their areas and come with a great wealth of knowledge about potential career paths.
- **Networking and Informational Interviews:** A great way to learn more about potential career paths is to connect with professionals in the field. Attending career fairs, Featured Employer events, and student organization (major-specific) meetings allows you to learn more about opportunities in various industries. You can also reach out to individuals employed in careers of interest and ask to meet up for 30 minutes to learn more about their professional path. If you're interested in learning more about informational interviewing, reach out to the Career Development Center.
- **Job Boards:** Looking at various job boards allows you to get a real-time picture of what opportunities are available. In each posting, you will be able to learn more about responsibilities and tasks, required education, skills, and experiences, and can connect you to businesses and organizations that hire individuals like yourself. We suggest looking at LinkedIn, Indeed, JobsHQ, professional organization job boards, and going directly to a company's website.

## BEFORE YOU START SEARCHING

Before you start researching career pathways, it's a good idea to reflect on your strengths, areas for growth, desire to continue your education post-graduation, career wish list, and job deal breakers.

Your strengths (list 3-6): \_\_\_\_\_

Your areas for growth (list 3-6): \_\_\_\_\_

## CAREER WISHLIST

- Minimum annual salary
- Location (where do you want to work):
- Work/life balance
- Predictable schedule
- Varied schedule that includes nights and/or weekends
- Opportunity for advancement
- Being part of a team
- Working independently
- Stability and security
- High level of prestige
- Make a difference in your community
- Position that allows for creative expressions
- Position that involves travel
- Other:

## CAREER DEAL BREAKERS

- Having to move out of city/state
- Limited opportunity for advancement
- A commute longer than:
- A salary that is below target
- Schedule that conflicts too much with other life obligations
- The market for this career is too competitive
- The career is restrictive in terms of creative expression
- The career requires an education/experience I am not willing to obtain
- The position that involved travel
- Other:
- Other:

## START YOUR SEARCH

**Occupation/Job Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Brief Description:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary Responsibilities:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Required Skills & Abilities:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Personality Traits Important for this Occupation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Environment/Employers Hiring This Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Job Outlook/Growth

Much faster than average    Faster than average    Average    Slower than average    Expected to decline

**Educational Preparation/Required Licenses:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Salary Range:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Job Characteristics** (schedules, travel, etc...): \_\_\_\_\_

**Similar Occupations:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you like most about this position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you view as negatives about this position:** \_\_\_\_\_

## REFLECT

How does this role, and the others you've researched, line up with your strengths, areas of growth, career wishlist, and career deal breakers? If they align, now it's time to make sure you're in the right major, look into internships, part-time jobs, or research opportunities that are related to the field to help give you the experience necessary to be successful post-graduation.

Connect with your advisor and the Career Development Center to make sure you're on track.

# DEVELOPING YOUR RESUME

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Think of your resume as a well-crafted marketing document for yourself. It's designed to catch the interest of a potential employer and highlight experiences and skills related to your career interests. It connects your story to future employers and includes your academic achievements, volunteer experiences, extra-curricular activities, job history, and internships. Follow these simple suggestions and how-to's to ensure you'll have a well crafted and effective resume.

## THE 5 STEPS OF RESUME DEVELOPMENT

### Step 1: Brainstorm and Generate a List of Experiences

Create a detailed list of all your experiences/accomplishments. Think back through your education, jobs, volunteer experiences, projects, and involvement in student and community organizations. Don't sell yourself short, and remember, every experience you've had has allowed you to develop at least one skill. There's no such thing as a "pointless" job.

### Step 2: Categorize Experiences

Now that you've finalized your list of experiences/accomplishments, group them into headings such as Professional Experience, Education, Involvement, Related Coursework, Internships, and Research.

Follow a consistent format throughout your resume for listing your experiences. Choose one part to be the focal point (usually the position names or organizations) that will be bolded, underlined, or in capital letters along the left side.

**Position Name** | Organization Name | City, State

Month 20XX–Month 20XX

**POSITION NAME**

Organization Name - City, State

20XX–20XX

Position Name, Organization Name, City, State

Month 20XX–Month 20XX

### Step 3: Identify Keywords

Your resume needs to be targeted to the position/field you're applying for. Never assume that the individual reading your resume knows anything about your skills and abilities. Use the position posting as a guide and jot down important keywords, skills or attributes. Start with the qualifications or skills section, and if there isn't much there, incorporate key skills from the job responsibilities. If an employer is looking for someone with communication skills and experience with CRMs be sure to use those words in your resume.

If you are creating your resume for the future, consider incorporating the NACE Career Readiness Competencies or reading about related positions on [O\\*Net](#).

### Step 4: Expand on Experiences by Writing Bullet Points

Now that you have identified important keywords and skills, it's time to focus on the experiences that are most relevant to the position(s) you're interested in and elaborate. Focus on the outcomes of your efforts, especially the skills you've developed and the positive impact you had. Quantify your results if possible. Set a goal of developing three to five bullet points for each experience you want to highlight on your resume.

### Step 5: Review and Get a Second Opinion

Read over your resume multiple times to check for spelling and grammatical errors and schedule a resume review appointment with the Career Development Center.

# LAYOUT BASICS

Name: 16-20pt, **bolded** and/or ALL CAPS

Professional Email

1-2 pages long

**SCORCH DRAGON**  
 Moorhead, MN 56560 ♦ 218-555-5555 ♦ scorch.dragon@email.com ♦ www.linkedin.com/in/sdragon

**JOB TARGET: PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST**  
 Graduating senior with public relations and marketing internships. Extensive experience writing promotional materials, including social media posts and press releases. Developed leadership and administration skills, training 30+ staff and managing \$30,000 budget.

**Skills**  
 Spanish (conversational) ♦ German (proficient) ♦ Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram ♦  
 Adobe Photoshop ♦ Adobe Illustrator ♦ Adobe Dreamweaver

**EDUCATION**  
 Bachelor of Arts in **Communication Studies** Expected May 20XX  
 Minor in **Art**  
 Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), Moorhead, MN  
 ▪ GPA 3.6/4.0, Dean's List every semester

**RELATED EXPERIENCE**  
**Public Relations and Development Intern**, Fargo Non-Profit XYZ, Fargo, ND May 20XX-Present  
 ▪ Write and edit brochures and publications mailed to target donor audience  
 ▪ Manage social media, press, and video communication for 5 donor stewardship events



.5-1 inch margins

Optional skills section:  
 Include "hard skills"
 

- languages
- computer programs
- skills unique to your major (care plans, data analysis)

Lead with the most important information

Non-header text should be 10-12pt font. Use fonts that are easy to read and used on most computers (Arial, Calibri, Cambria, Garamond, Georgia, Verdana, Tahoma, Helvetica, Times New Roman)

Don't use textboxes to add blocks of color. Instead use shading.  
Microsoft Word      Google Docs  
      

## RESUME HEADING SUGGESTIONS

### Education & Academics

- Education
- Related Coursework
- Relevant Courses
- Study Abroad
- Licensures
- Certifications
- Training
- Professional Development
- Conferences
- Research
- Presentations
- Publications

### Skills

- Skills
- Areas of Expertise

### Technical Skills

- Technology
- Core Competencies
- Languages

### Experience

- Experience
- Employment
- Professional Experience
- Relevant Experience
- Related Experience
- Additional Experience
- Work Experience
- Internship

### Involvement

- Involvement

### Volunteer Experience

- Volunteer Involvement
- Community Involvement
- Civic Engagement
- Leadership
- Professional Organizations
- Memberships
- Associations
- Activities
- Athletics

### Honors & Awards

- Awards
- Honors
- Accomplishments
- Achievements
- Scholarships

# COMBINATION RESUME

Like this format?  
[Download the template!](#)



A combination resume is the most common format. Rather than only listing work experience, combination resumes can include classes, internships, student organizations, volunteerism, etc...

This example includes optional sections including a headline (Job Target: Public Relations Specialist), summary (typically 2-3 sentences), and skills section (featuring technical skills).

## SCORCH DRAGON

Moorhead, MN 56560 ♦ 218-555-5555 ♦ scorch.dragon@email.com ♦ www.linkedin.com/in/sdragon

### JOB TARGET: PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST

Graduating senior with public relations and marketing internships. Extensive experience writing promotional materials, including social media posts and press releases. Developed leadership and administration skills, training 30+ staff and managing \$30,000 budget.

#### Skills

Spanish (conversational) ♦ German (proficient) ♦ Social Media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram ♦  
Adobe Photoshop ♦ Adobe Illustrator ♦ Adobe Dreamweaver

### EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in **Communication Studies**

Expected May 20XX

Minor in **Art**

Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), Moorhead, MN

- GPA 3.6/4.0, Dean's List every semester

← Could also include "Related Coursework:" and list 3-5 classes related to the industry

### INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

**Public Relations and Development Intern**, Fargo Non-Profit XYZ, Fargo, ND

May 20XX-Present

- Write and edit brochures and publications mailed to target donor audience
- Manage social media, press, and video communication for 5 donor stewardship events
- Correspond with donors regarding campaign feasibility study
- Contribute to annual PR/marketing plan for Foundation

**Marketing and Editing Intern**, National Public Radio: KZZT, Moorhead, MN

Jan. 20XX-May 20XX

- Edited and created 30% of content for quarterly program guide with circulation of 20,000
- Wrote and disseminated 5 newsletters, 3 media guides, and 10 press releases for clients
- Coordinated 50+ volunteers and tabulated donations during fundraisers

### LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

**Treasurer**, Campus Activities Board, MSUM, Moorhead, MN

Aug. 20XX-May 20XX

- Maintained \$30,000 account, the largest student organization budget on campus
- Led committee of 5 members in making budget decisions and reviewing policies
- Paid invoices for campus events including comedians, bands, and movies

### WORK EXPERIENCE

**Cashier/Swim Instructor**, Moorhead Parks & Recreation, Moorhead, MN

Summers 20XX-20XX

- Trained up to 30 new cashiers, concession workers, and swim instructors per summer season
- Reconciled front desk and concession cash registers, often totaling \$5000+ per day
- Taught swimming lessons to 150+ children and monitored safety of pool patrons

### INVOLVEMENT

**Member**, Public Relations Student Society of America

Jan. 20XX-Present

**Member**, United Campus Ministry

Aug. 20XX-Present

**Volunteer**, Dragons Give

April 20XX

# WORK EXPERIENCE FOCUSED RESUME

Like this format?  
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This format for a resume is frequently used by individuals who have ample experience in their field. It includes an education section and work experiences listed from newest to oldest. When experiences relate to one another and when trying to show progression in responsibility, this format is an excellent choice.

## SCORCH DRAGON

218.555.5555 | scorch.dragon@email.com | Moorhead, MN 56560

### EDUCATION

#### Master of Science in Counseling, Emphasis in Clinical Mental Health Counseling

Anticipated May 20XX

Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) | Moorhead, MN

- CACREP Accredited
- President, Member | Counseling Student Organization
- Vice President, Member | Chi Sigma Iota (Chi Sigma Alpha, MSUM Chapter)

#### Bachelor of Science in Psychology

May 20XX

Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) | Moorhead, MN

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### Graduate Assistant | MSUM Career Development Center | Moorhead, MN

August 20XX-Present

- Used active listening while conducting 1:1 student appointments, supporting them with resume and cover letter reviews, mock interviews, and social media reviews
- Planned and executed 3 outreach events, strengthening time management skills
- Wrote detailed appointment notes for each client, recording them via electronic records

#### Student Services Advisor | Trollwood Performing Arts School | Moorhead, MN

June 20XX-August 20XX

- Built and maintained friendly, approachable relationships with students to ensure all felt connected, accepted, and safe in creative environment
- Coordinated and supervised 8-week Student Leader and Students at Risk (STAR) Program
- Developed crisis intervention skills by assisting teachers with classroom behavior issues

#### Emotional Behavior Disorder Paraprofessional | Moorhead Public Schools | Moorhead, MN

June 20XX-January 20XX

- Provided support to 5 students with emotional behavior disorders, including anxiety disorder, ADHD, and oppositional-defiant disorder
- Oversaw student behaviors daily and document data as needed
- Aided students in de-escalation of their behaviors and taught coping skills for future situations

#### Behavioral Health Services Program Coordinator | Anne Carlson Center | Fargo, ND

June 20XX-January 20XX

- Generated and updated plans with client's treatment teams and met state deadlines
- Provided administrative support for 50+ families served by department
- Assisted team by stepping in as Behavior Technician when needed

#### Site Coordinator | YMCA of Cass and Clay Counties | Fargo, ND

July 20XX-June 20XX

- Organized 4 parent events that showcased children's unique talents and strengths
- Generated relationships among children, parents, staff, coworkers, and school personnel
- Provided 1 on 1 behavior management support and accessed resources for children with financial need

#### School Age Assistant | YMCA of Cass and Clay Counties | Fargo, ND

April 20XX-August 20XX

- Mentored children in lifelong skills such as leadership, teamwork, and empathy
- Communicated with children at developmentally appropriate level while leading recreational and academic activities

# COURSEWORK FOCUSED RESUME

*Like this format?  
Download the template!*



A related coursework section can be a great way to fill in your resume. Focus on related skills or knowledge you gained in the classroom. Include accomplishments such as extensive projects, research, or presentations.

This example includes an "Areas of Expertise" section (AKA Skills, Technical Skills, or Core Competencies) to highlight the relevant keywords mentioned elsewhere in the resume.

## DAVID JOHNSON

100 Dragon Lane South  
Moorhead, MN 56560  
djohnson@fakemail.com • 218.555.5555

### EDUCATION

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology Expected May 20XX  
Minor in Special Education  
Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), Moorhead, MN

- 3.85 GPA
- Dean's List three semesters

### AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Behavior Plans • Motivational Theories • SPSS • Data Analysis • Child & Adolescent Development

### EMPLOYMENT

**Server**, Cumberson Restaurant, Green Lake Township, MN May 20XX - Present

- Gain communication skills by greeting and assisting customers in a friendly manner.
- Resolve conflicts with customers by listening to concerns and answering questions.

**Swim Instructor**, Dragon Swim School, MSUM September 20XX - May 20XX

- Taught swimming skills in an age-appropriate manner to children ages 3-8.
- Informed parents about child progress and support needed.

### RELATED COURSEWORK

**Educational Psychology**, MSUM Fall 20XX

- Applied motivational theories by designing behavior plans for case studies of elementary-aged students.
- Studied theories of personal, social, cognitive, and moral development and explored their implications for the classroom.

**Statistics for Behavioral Sciences**, MSUM Spring 20XX

- Used SPSS to conduct t-tests and correlation, ANOVA, and regression analyses.
- Practiced defining and measuring variables and collecting data.

**Individuals with Exceptionalities**, MSUM Spring 20XX

- Created 30-page handbook on various disabilities including main characteristics and potential adaptations to curriculum and assessment.
- Gained an understanding of disability laws within and outside of educational settings.

**Developmental Psychology**, MSUM Spring 20XX

- Expanded knowledge about how parents and peers can impact the physical and socio-emotional development of children and adolescents.

# FIRST YEAR RESUME

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First year college students can include high school accomplishments, leadership positions, honors, and experiences on their resume. If you have no work history, think of things you have done such as babysitting, mowing lawns, etc. If you truly have no past work experience, leave the "Employment" section off and focus on your school involvement and volunteer work.

Include your major or write "Bachelor's Degree" if you haven't declared a major yet.

## SCORCH DRAGON

Moorhead, MN 56560 | 218.555.5555 | scorch@gmail.com

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### EDUCATION

#### BACHELOR'S DEGREE

Expected May 20XX

Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), Moorhead, MN

### EMPLOYMENT

#### SANDWICH ARTIST | Subway, Fargo, ND

June 20XX–Present

- Completed 3-hour customer service training and applied concepts to provide exceptional assistance
- Collaborate with 4-member team to efficiently meet strict drive-thru deadlines
- Use critical thinking to resolve customer order issues

#### COUNSELOR | YMCA Summer Camp, Fargo, ND

May 20XX–Aug 20XX

- Led games and crafts for 20 pre-teen campers, showcasing public speaking abilities
- Built relationships with campers, demonstrating interpersonal skills
- Exhibited responsibility, following safety protocols for pool and boat use

#### NANNY | Private Families, Fargo, ND

Sept 20XX–May 20XX

- Developed conflict resolution skills while supervising up to 5 elementary-aged kids

### INVOLVEMENT

#### CONCERT BAND, CONCERT CHOIR, GLEE CLUB

Smalltown High School, Smalltown, MN

Sept 20XX–May 20XX

- Selected to participate in all-state Honors Choir senior year

#### STUDENT COUNCIL TREASURER/MEMBER

Smalltown High School, Smalltown, MN

Oct 20XX–May 20XX

- Elected as Treasurer Oct 20XX
- Organized social event for 80+ attendees, coordinating advertising and decorations

### ATHLETICS

#### VARSITY VOLLEYBALL | Smalltown High School, Smalltown, MN

Sept 20XX–May 20XX

- Exhibited time management, balancing academics with 10 hours athletics per week

### VOLUNTEER

#### DOG WALKING VOLUNTEER | FM Humane Society, Fargo, ND

May 20XX–Present

- Demonstrate commitment to service, walking shelter dogs weekly



# TEACHING RESUME

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A teaching-focused resume is an excellent way for future educators to highlight your classroom experience gained through practicums and student teaching. Also include work experience, volunteerism, leadership, awards, honors, involvement, skills, etc. If you are specializing in a subject area (art, music, etc.) include any related experiences (ex: playing in bands, art exhibitions, etc.).

## Jamar Smith

100 Dragon Lane South, Moorhead, MN 56560 | 218.555.5555 | jsmith@fake.com

### Career Focus: Elementary Teacher

New teacher with coursework and practicums focused on serving English language learners and students with disabilities. Experience in curriculum development from 6-summer program leader experience.

### Education

Bachelor of Science in **Elementary Inclusive Education** Dec 20XX  
Minor in **Teaching English as a Second Language**  
Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM), Moorhead, MN - **3.95 GPA**

### Student Teaching & Practicum Experience

- Student Teaching: 4th Grade ELL**, Fargo North High School, Fargo, ND Fall 20XX
- Created and implemented 6-week curriculum, collaborating with cooperating teacher and ELL teachers
  - Led team-building activities for students to gain language skills and build personal connections
- 5th Grade**, Ellen Hopkins Elementary School, Moorhead, MN Spring 20XX
- Taught 20 students for 3 weeks, modifying instruction for 7 students with IEPs
  - Differentiated instruction for reading groups and reading recovery and gained experience with Everyday Mathematics
- 2nd Grade**, Madison Elementary School, Fargo, ND Fall 20XX
- Developed 2 weeks of meaningful inquiry-based lessons by collaborating with 2 student teachers
  - Became familiar with the school-wide discipline plan, "Nurtured Heart," including positive reinforcement, praise, and being proactive with student behavior
- 6th Grade**, Fargo South High School, Fargo, ND Spring 20XX
- Promoted student engagement by creating interactive game for ELL students to review test material and highlight language skills
  - Taught students in 5 sheltered instruction classes including: Economics, Western Civilization, U.S. Government, Political Science, and Intro to Social Studies
- 1st Grade**, Cheney Middle School, West Fargo, ND Fall 20XX
- Executed hands-on social studies lesson plans that utilized PowerPoint and Smart Board

### Classroom Experience

- ELL Tutor**, Lincoln Elementary School, Fargo, ND Fall 20XX
- Tutored caseload of 7 students, 3 days a week, to help students reach academic goals
- ELL Tutor**, Fargo South High School, Fargo, ND Fall 20XX
- Empowered student to raise science grades from C+ to A, personalizing approach to their individual learning style

### Related Experience

- Recreation Leader and Coach**, Parks and Recreation, Underwood, MN Summers 20XX-20XX
- Planned curriculum 6 consecutive summers for children ages 3-12 in day camp environment
  - Measured effectiveness of program, building in daily formative assessments
  - Co-created and implemented Tiny Tots Sports Program; coached ages 3-4
- Student Orientation Counselor**, First Year Programs, Moorhead, MN 20XX-20XX
- Provided individualized support for 25+ incoming college students throughout academic year

# BUILDING BETTER BULLET POINTS

Bullet points don't just tell the reader what you did in your previous positions, but what skills you used and what were the outcomes. They help those that are reading your resume to understand why you may be a good fit for their organization.

Using the steps below, you can take your resume up to the next level, making sure your skills and accomplishments are shown in the best light.

## 1 BRAINSTORM

- Choose an experience and list ALL of your responsibilities/accomplishments
- Also list skills you developed or needed to do your job successfully, especially ones needed for your target field/jobs
- Choose one skill/responsibility/accomplishment for your first bullet point

\* I led meetings

Teamwork

I created a binder with notes for the next person in the role

## 2 START WITH AN ACTION VERB

Led meetings

## 3 ANSWER A QUESTION TO ADD DETAILS

How did you do it? Why did you do it? What was the result? Who was involved?

Led meetings

with team members (who)

to plan learning objectives and activities (why)

## 4 ADD NUMBERS (IF APPLICABLE)

Ex: # of attendees, size of budget, amount of \$ raised, # of people trained, frequency (daily, weekly, monthly)

Led **biweekly** meetings with **4** team members to plan learning objectives and activities

## PRACTICE

Now it's your turn! Using the steps above and the list of action words on the next page, practice writing bullet points that highlight your skills, responsibilities, and accomplishments.

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# ACTION WORDS

## Leadership Skills

administered  
analyzed  
appointed  
approved  
assigned  
attained  
chaired  
consolidated  
contracted  
converted  
coordinated  
developed  
directed  
eliminated  
emphasized  
enforced  
enhanced  
established  
executed  
generated  
handled  
headed  
hired  
hosted  
improved  
incorporated  
increased  
initiated  
inspected  
managed  
merged  
motivated  
organized  
originated  
oversaw  
planned  
presided  
prioritized  
produced  
reviewed  
strengthened

## Communication Skills

advertised  
arbitrated  
arranged

authored  
clarified  
collaborated  
communicated  
composed  
condensed  
conferred  
consulted  
contacted  
conveyed  
corresponded  
debated  
defined  
described  
developed  
directed  
discussed  
drafted  
edited  
elicited  
enlisted  
explained  
expressed  
formulated  
furnished  
incorporated  
influenced  
interacted  
interpreted  
interviewed  
involved  
joined  
judged  
lectured  
listened  
marketed  
mediated  
moderated  
negotiated  
observed  
outlined  
participated  
persuaded  
presented  
promoted

## Technical Skills

adapted  
assembled

built  
calculated  
computed  
conserved  
constructed  
converted  
debugged  
designed  
determined  
developed  
engineered  
fabricated  
fortified  
installed  
maintained  
operated  
overhauled  
printed  
programmed  
rectified  
regulated  
remodeled  
repaired  
replaced  
restored  
solved  
specialized  
standardized  
studied  
upgraded  
utilized

## Teaching Skills

adapted  
advised  
clarified  
coached  
communicated  
conducted  
coordinated  
developed  
enabled  
encouraged  
evaluated  
facilitated  
guided  
individualized  
informed  
instructed

## Data Skills

administered  
adjusted  
allocated  
analyzed  
appraised  
assessed  
audited  
balanced  
calculated  
computed  
conserved  
corrected  
determined  
developed  
estimated  
forecasted  
managed  
marketed  
measured  
planned  
programmed  
projected  
reconciled  
reduced  
researched  
retrieved

## creative skills

acted  
adapted  
began  
combined  
conceptualized  
created  
customized  
designed  
developed  
directed  
drew  
entertained  
established  
fashioned  
formulated  
illustrated  
integrated  
invented  
modeled  
modified

originated  
performed  
photographed  
planned  
shaped  
solved

## Helping skills

adapted  
advocated  
aided  
assessed  
assisted  
cared for  
clarified  
coached  
collaborated  
contributed  
demonstrated  
encouraged  
ensured  
expedited  
facilitated  
familiarize  
furthered  
guided  
helped  
insured

## intervened

motivated  
provided  
referred  
rehabilitated  
presented  
resolved  
simplified  
supported  
volunteered

## Organization Skills

approved  
arranged  
cataloged  
categorized  
charted  
classified  
coded  
collected  
compiled

originated  
corresponded  
distributed  
executed  
generated  
implemented  
logged  
maintained  
monitored  
obtained  
operated  
organized  
prepared  
processed  
provided  
recorded  
reserved  
reviewed  
scheduled  
screened  
set up  
submitted  
supplied  
standardized  
updated  
validated  
verified

## More verbs for

## Accomplishments

achieved  
completed  
expanded  
exceeded  
improved  
pioneered  
reduced (losses)  
resolved (issues)  
restored  
spearheaded  
succeeded  
surpassed  
transformed  
won

# WRITING A SUMMARY FOR YOUR RESUME

Employers review your resume in 8 seconds or less ([Ladders, 2018](#)). Having a strong summary helps you capture your reader's attention from the start and share your strongest selling points.

Like the summary of a book, your resume summary should be an overview of what your reader will read later. It should not include any super-specific details.

## 1 COMMUNICATE YOUR LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE

Doing this in your first sentence helps the employer understand who you are. This could be...

- Your standing in college
  - **Current student** with strong communication skills from co-curricular leadership roles.
  - **Graduating senior** with public relations and marketing internships.
  - **New graduate** with project management certificate.
- The number of years' experience you have (even if you are still a student!)
  - Energetic relationship-builder with **1 year sales experience**.
- Or both
  - **Aspiring Registered Dietitian with 2 years' experience** in community nutrition.

## 2 IDENTIFY BIG PICTURE FACTS YOU MOST WANT YOUR AUDIENCE TO KNOW

This could be...

- Information that helps you stand out from your competition
  - Ex: Fluent in a language, leadership roles, special training or certifications, winning an award
- Skills you've developed across multiple positions that help you be qualified for the role
  - Ex: Communication skills, interpersonal skills, technological skills, teamwork, customer service
  - Include evidence for each skill mentioned

## 3 TURN BIG PICTURE FACTS INTO SENTENCES

- Each sentence should start with the imaginary word "I," "I have," or "I am." For example, a sentence could start with "Managed" but not "Manages."
- Try to back up any skills mentioned with evidence. You need to avoid mentioning specific roles. However, you can reference a role more generally, or summarize what you gained from multiple experiences.

Examples:

- Demonstrated ability to work on a team through multiple campus leadership positions.
- Experience writing promotional materials, including social media posts and press releases.
- Attained interpersonal skills from customer service roles over 2 years.
- Conducted undergraduate research, using critical thinking.
- Completed extensive conflict resolution training.
- Three years' patient-care experience, specializing in working with children and families.
- Received awards for leadership and involvement.

Note that these examples don't name the positions/job titles, trainings, or awards. Those specific details will come later in the resume.

## 4 PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Current student with strong communication skills from co-curricular leadership roles. Attained interpersonal skills from customer service roles over 2 years. Conducted undergraduate research, using critical thinking.

Junior student with industry certifications. Developed graphic design skills through project-based coursework. Received awards for leadership and involvement.

Graduating senior with public relations and marketing internships. Experience writing promotional materials, including social media posts and press releases. Fluent in Spanish.

# DEVELOPING YOUR COVER LETTER

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477.2131  
www.mnstate.edu/career

A cover letter serves as a bridge connecting your resume to the specific job opportunity you're applying for. Each letter you submit should be unique, addressing specific requirements that are listed in a job posting, and should clearly explain why you are interested in **that** job at **that** company.

While every cover letter you submit will vary in content, here is a general guide of what to include:

## YOUR NAME

555-555-5555 | firstlast@email.com, | City, state | LinkedIn URL/online portfolio (if complete)

The date you're submitting your application (May 25, 20XX)

Hiring manager's name & title  
The company  
The company's street address  
City, state, zip

Re: Position Title Opportunity (Accounting Intern Opportunity)

Dear Hiring Manager's Name (First and Last),

**First Section - Why them?:** Grab the employer's attention with a first sentence that could only be written by you. Tell them why you are interested in this position and/or organization. Connect their mission, values, or initiatives to yourself by sharing a related experience from your life. Or share a key past achievement that relates to the role.

**Middle Section - Why me?:** Introduce a bulleted list of 3-5 skills or accomplishments. Ex: "Key skills I would bring to the position include:" or "Notable accomplishments include:"

- Use the position posting as a guide for deciding which skills you choose to highlight.
- Provide an example of how you have demonstrated each skill listed. Even better, sum up a few experiences to show a track record of success in that area.
- Examples could come from your academic, work, volunteer, or co-curricular experiences.
- Optional: Include a unique skill or strength you possess that helps you stand out from other applicants.

**Last Section - Next steps:** State your interest in the next step, usually an interview or discussing the opportunity further. Thank them for considering you for the position.

Sincerely,

Your written signature (If submitting online you do not need to sign it, just leave 2-3 blank lines)

Full Name

Applicants with a tailored cover letter receive **31%** more callbacks than those with a generic cover letter

# COVER LETTER TIP: USE AN OUTLINE

Plan your cover letter by brainstorming an outline before you write your first draft.

## Why them?

Why am I interested in this position/organization?

- I care about the mission
- I like their values of "service" and "commitment"

Experiences or accomplishments related to those interests:

- Growing up in low-income housing
- Volunteering through college

## Why you?

Skill #1: Event Planning  
Example: Event planning coursework

Skill #2: Communication  
Example: Customer service jobs

Skill #3: Community Outreach  
Example: Working with orgs through Community Engagement Club + Dragon Communicators

**SALLY JONES**

Fargo, ND 58103 | 701.555.4564 | sjones@dragon.edu

December 14, 20XX

Gerald Brown, Assistant Director  
FM Housing Group  
555 Dragon Drive  
Fargo, ND 58103

Re: Event Planning and Outreach Intern Opportunity

Dear Gerald Brown:

Having grown up in low-income housing, I am intimately familiar with many of the situations your clients face. Because of this experience, I have a deep appreciation for the mission of FM Housing Group and the incredible work your organization does for the Fargo-Moorhead community. Furthermore, I resonate with your values of "service" and "commitment." I have a deep commitment to making a difference and have volunteered over 300 hours at non-profit organizations throughout my time in college.

In addition to my deep appreciation for the mission and values of FM Housing Group, notable competencies I would bring include:

- **Event Planning:** Developed understanding of project management process, contract negotiation, and best practices for promotion through coursework.
- **Communication:** Refined oral communication through 3 years in customer service roles.
- **Community Outreach:** Collaborated with 10+ local organizations as Vice President of Community Engagement Club and as member of Dragon Communicators.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss my qualifications in an interview. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sally Jones

Same contact information format as your resume

If you don't know the hiring manager's name, just address the company

It's best to address your letter to an individual, but "hiring manager," "search committee," or "(company name) team" will do

**YOU CAN ALSO ADDRESS**

Previous experience in a related company  
How you found the position  
Who referred you to the position  
Your passion for the industry/role  
What makes you unique

Internships  
Previous experience in a related role  
Part-time employment  
Volunteerism  
Student org involvement  
Scholarships

Area of interest  
Your professional goals  
Your mission/vision statement  
Your values  
Your technical or soft skills

## TARGETING YOUR RESUME & COVER LETTER

The most important thing you can do when applying for jobs is to target your documents to the unique needs and requirements listed in each position description. The reason? Many companies utilize an applicant tracking system to scan your resume to make sure you're a good fit before having a human review it. Scan the job description for skills, qualities, and other keywords, then update your bullet points to describe your experiences, skills, and background that meets their needs.

<b>Requirements, preferred skills, key words in job description</b>	<b>Applying it to my experience</b>
<i>Ex. Strong organization, multitasking, and time management skills</i>	<i>Ex. Successfully managed part-time employment alongside campus involvement, volunteering, and class schedule while maintaining a high GPA</i>

# APPLICANT TRACKING SYSTEMS (ATS)

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477.2131  
www.mnstate.edu/career

An Applicant Tracking System (ATS) is a software application that collects and sorts through documents submitted by applicants. Frequently, these systems scan documents to find keywords, making sure the only candidates that make it to the desk of a hiring manager have the minimum skills necessary for success in the role. Because of this, it is essential to individualize your resume and cover letter to each unique position you apply for. Follow the tips and tricks below and you're one step closer to landing an interview.

98.8% of Fortune 500 companies use ATS

(Jobscan, 2023)

## 1 Include the right keywords

On a very basic level, applicant tracking systems are programmed to read application material, scanning for keywords to decide if you're a good match for the position you applied to. So, how do you know what those keywords are? Look through the position posting and find the skills, qualifications, experience, or qualities listed.

If a company states they are looking for a bachelor's degree in business, a good team player and three years of experience working with CRM's, you should address these three topics in your resume and/or cover letter.

## 2 Choose the right file type

When it comes to saving and submitting your application documents, you have two options: .docx or .pdf. Documents saved and submitted as PDFs are your best bet to ensure your information stays intact, but it's been found ATSS have an easier time reading documents saved and submitted as .docx.

While there is no definitive right or wrong way, keep these tips in mind. And always, ALWAYS, follow directions. If a listing asks for a certain file type, do as they say.

## 3 Make your documents easy to read

Whether the company or organization you're applying to utilizes an ATS or not, you need to format your resume in a way that is easy to read. Both humans and ATS typically read left to right, top to bottom, so format your resume in that way. The most important information should be at the top - your contact information. Then list your education, employment or internship, volunteering and involvement, additional skills, and so on.

## 4 Avoid over-formatting

While fancy templates and heavily designed resumes may look nice at first glance, they can cause a number of issues. They are just more difficult to read - both by humans and ATS. In order to scan your resume, an ATS will likely convert your documents to a text-only file. At best, your design and formatting will be lost. At worst, the ATS won't be able to read your document. It won't matter if you're the most qualified candidate or not, you won't make it on to the next round.

### Things to avoid

- Tables and text boxes (Canva and Photoshop use text fields and should be avoided - use Microsoft Word or Google Docs instead)
- Logos, images, graphs, or other visuals
- Columns
- Headers and footers

### Other things to think about when creating your resume

- Apply for jobs you're qualified for
- Include a skills section
- Use basic language
- Stick to ATS-friendly fonts (Arial, Calibri, Cambria, Garamond, Georgia, Verdana, Tahoma, Helvetica, Times New Roman)



# HOW TO PREPARE FOR A CAREER FAIR

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477.2131  
www.mnstate.edu/career



Review the companies on Handshake to determine who you want to talk to



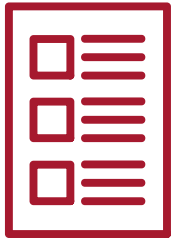
Know what they do! Know their history, customers, and/or clients



Visit their company website to review job description & required skills



Plan your time wisely. Select your top five companies and make sure you see them first



## CREATE A STANDOUT RESUME

Think of your resume as a well-crafted marketing document for yourself. It's designed to catch the eye of a potential employer and highlight experiences and skills related to your career interests. It connects your story to future employers and includes your academic achievements, volunteer experiences, extra-curricular activities, job history, and internships. Make sure to print enough copies to hand out to recruiters you connect with.

## PERFECT YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH



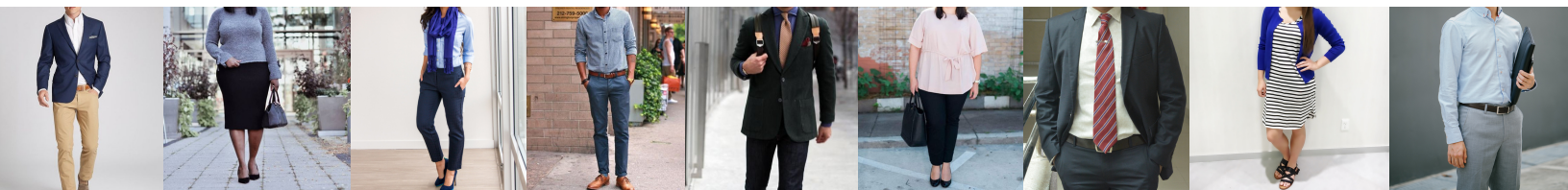
How would you answer the question "So, tell me about yourself"? Your personal introduction should be brief, professional, and make the person you're speaking with want to continue the conversation.

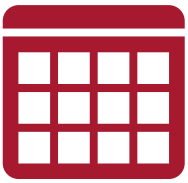
Still at a loss for what to say? Follow this simple equation:

**Present** (*major/school year*) + **Past** (*experiences/jobs*) + **Future** (*goals*) + **Why This Company/Job**  
= **Your Elevator Pitch**

## DRESS FOR SUCCESS

- Professional dress is required
- Hygiene is important. Avoid strongly scented cologne and perfume
- Be mindful of piercings, tattoos, and what accessories you choose to wear. Some businesses/organizations are more conservative than others
- Nails should be well-kempt as should nail polish if you choose to wear it
- Hair should be polished but worn in a comfortable style
- Bring a notebook or portfolio/padfolio to write down company information, recruiter information and to hold printed copies of your resume





## AT THE FAIR

You've updated and printed off copies of your resume, perfected your elevator pitch, and put on your most professional outfit, so check-in using your Dragon ID and grab a map of the employers/schools and get to networking!

- Be confident in approaching companies. Start off with a smile, a handshake, and an introduction
- Once you've both introduced yourselves, utilize your elevator pitch to let them learn important information
- Use your time with recruiters to learn more about their company, what positions they have open, what kind of person they want to join their team
- Don't expect an interview or to be hired right on the spot. Do your best to leave a great first impression
- Prepare a few questions to ask recruiters to gain a better understanding of their company and its opportunities
- Make sure to take a business card, or at least get their contact information so you can follow up with a note or email after the event

## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE RECRUITERS



- What are you looking for in the employees you hire?
- What are the characteristics of your most successful employees in \_\_\_\_\_ role?
- What are the goals your company/team has set for the upcoming year?
- Can you tell me more about your company's culture **or** what do you like about your company's culture?
- What made you choose to work for this company and why do you stay?
- Do you have a favorite work experience **or** what do you like most about your current role?
- What is one thing you wish you would have done early in your career?



## VIRTUAL CAREER FAIRS

Attending a virtual career fair on Handshake will give you an edge in landing that next job or internship. Employers who attend the fair want to hire students at your school—and they'll host virtual sessions to find the students they want to interview. Here are some tips for putting your best foot forward—before, during and after a virtual fair.

- **Update your Handshake profile**
- **Research the employers attending**
- **Prepare talking points**
- **Dress professionally**
- **Find a quiet spot with a neutral background**
- **Log-on on time**
- **Maintain eye contact & practice active listening**
- **Ask questions**

For more information on virtual fairs, [click here](#).

## FOLLOWING UP



Whether you send a snail mail thank you or a quick email, it is imperative that you follow up with the individual(s) whom you connected with at the fair within 24 hours. This helps them keep you top of mind and allows you to continue the conversation you started the day before.

*Dear [Representative's Name],*

*It was great connecting with you at the MSU Moorhead Career Fair yesterday. I enjoyed learning more about your company/organization/team, and I'm very excited about the [title of the role you plan on applying to] position we discussed. I plan on submitting an application by the end of the week.*

*I look forward to hearing about the next steps in the hiring process. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if you would like additional information on my education, skills, and previous experiences.*

*Best regards,*

*[Your Name]*

# NAVIGATING YOUR JOB SEARCH

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477.2131  
www.mnstate.edu/career

## BEFORE YOU START SEARCHING

Before you start researching career pathways, it's a good idea to reflect on your strengths, areas for growth, desire to continue your education post-graduation, career wish list, and job deal breakers.

Your strengths (list 3-6): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Your areas for growth (list 3-6): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## CAREER WISHLIST & DEAL BREAKERS

- Minimum annual salary:
- Location (where do you want to work):
- Commuting
- Work/life balance
- Predictable schedule
- Varied schedule that includes nights and/or weekends
- Opportunity for advancement
- Being part of a team
- Working independently
- Stability and security
- High level of prestige
- Make a difference in your community
- Position that allows for creative expressions
- Position that involves travel
- Requiring continued education
- Other:

## WORK INTERESTS

What types of industries are you interested in working in? : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are some job titles/roles you would be interested in? : \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

- **Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook:** The Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) is an online publication that has information on hundreds of occupations in the United States. The OOH is a rich resource for those seeking career guidance. Using the OOH, you can explore different aspects of occupations including what workers do on the job, work environment, education, training, and other qualifications needed to enter the occupation, pay, projected employment change and job prospects, state and area data, similar occupations
  - [www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/home.htm)
- **O\*Net:** Similar to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, O\*Net is a free database with hundreds of occupational definitions to help students, job seekers, businesses, and workforce development professionals to understand today's world of work in the U.S.
  - [www.onetonline.org/](http://www.onetonline.org/)
- **Your Advisor and Faculty:** Your faculty are experts in their areas and come with a great wealth of knowledge about potential career paths.
- **FOCUS 2-Self Assessment:** A web-based major and career exploration tool that is available to all prospective and current MSUM students and alumni. It will help you learn about yourself through self-assessments and explore career fields and occupations that may align with your interests, skills, and personality.
  - [bit.ly/FOCUS2MSUM](http://bit.ly/FOCUS2MSUM)
- **The Career Development Center:** The Center is home to career coaches that can assist you in your career and/or major exploration. Whether it's interpreting your results from the FOCUS 2, or guided one-on-one exploration appointments, we're here to help
  - [bit.ly/MSUMCDC](http://bit.ly/MSUMCDC)

## START YOUR JOB SEARCH

### HELPFUL ONLINE JOB SEARCH TOOLS

 handshake



A powerful job searching tool that students and alumni at MSUM have access to. We have connected to thousands of employers from the community, region, and country and they post hundreds of jobs per day.

 LinkedIn



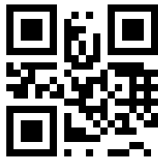
The world's largest professional network on the internet. You can use LinkedIn to find the right job or internship, connect and strengthen professional relationships, and learn the skills you need to succeed in your career.

 jobsHQ



The largest regional career search site across the Upper Midwest, with 35 media websites contributing to its vast network of employment offerings.

 indeed



Indeed is a free service to job seekers, where you can upload a resume, create job alert emails, search for jobs, save them and apply to them directly.

 MONSTER



Monster is a global leader in connecting people and jobs. Every day, Monster aims to make every workplace happier and more productive by transforming the way employers and candidates find the right fit.

 flexjobs



As the #1 job site to find the best remote, work from home, and flexible jobs for over 14 years, we know how to help you have a faster, easier, and safer job search. Just as we've helped millions of people, let us help you!

 glassdoor®



Offers insights into the employee experience powered by millions of company ratings and reviews, CEO approval ratings, salary reports, interview reviews and questions, benefits reviews, office photos and more, combined with the latest jobs.

 ZipRecruiter



Empowering job seekers with the tools they need to stand out and get hired. Like a personal recruiter, we track down relevant opportunities in our marketplace, proactively pitch job seekers to hiring managers at top companies, and deliver status updates along the way.

- Company or organization websites
- Professional Association or Organization Job Boards
- Industry Specific Sites
  - [USA Jobs](#) - government jobs
  - [Idealist](#) - non-profit jobs
  - [AngelList](#) - jobs at startups
- [O\\*Net](#)
- [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

## DEVELOP YOUR JOB SEARCH SCHEDULE

Finding a job can be a job itself. Creating a routine can help ensure you're staying on top of job postings and can give you the structure needed to help you achieve your goals (getting a job).

### DEVELOP YOUR OWN SCHEDULE

#### Monday

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Tuesday

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Wednesday

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Thursday

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Friday

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

## ORGANIZE YOUR JOB SEARCH

Before you can begin to submit applications, you need to make sure that your professional documents are prepared.

- Resume
- Cover letter tailored to each position
- Certifications/transcripts
- Name, email, phone number, company name, position title, and address for three to five professional references

We encourage you to cast a wide net when it comes to your job search, so keeping track of all the positions you apply for is important! Create a table that keeps track of the positions you apply for and important details for you to remember.

Application Submission Date	Company	Job Title	Position Description, Requirements, Preferred Qualifications - include URL	Position Closing Date

## NETWORKING

Building a professional network is an important part of your job search. Your network is a group of people that you have worked with, taken a class with, or from, advisors, supervisors, organization members, friends, family, etc... who may play a role in you landing your next job. Take some time to reflect on your current network and what steps you can take to broaden it.

**Professors or Staff from MSUM:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Coworkers & Supervisors:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Classmates:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Classroom/Event Presenters:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Friends & Family Members:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**New ways to broaden your network:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

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Interviews give employers an opportunity to make sure candidates will be able to complete the responsibilities and tasks of the job. They also give candidates an opportunity to make sure that the role and company are a good fit for their own values, needs, and goals.

## COMMON INTERVIEW FORMATS



### Phone

Frequently used as a first-round screening tool  
Have a professional voicemail message  
Be somewhere quiet



### Group

3+ people interviewing for same role at same time  
For internships, grad school, or when company is hiring multiple people



### Video

Check your technology in advance  
Prop up your laptop to eye level  
Have a simple background



### Panel

2+ people interviewing you  
Include future coworkers, management, HR, etc.



### 1:1 In Person



### Technical/Working

Shows your skills in action (ex: solve a job-related problem, give a presentation, complete a project, etc.)



### Lunch

Assesses your social skills  
Can be a more laid back environment

## COMMON QUESTIONS

### Resume/Experience Based Questions:

Questions about your experience overall. Often includes questions that come up while the employer walks through your resume. (ex: Tell me about your research project.)

- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about how your past experience relates to this role.

### Behavioral Questions

The most common type. Employers ask about your past performance to get an idea of how you will respond in the future. To answer, tell a story from your past experience.

- Tell me about a time you collaborated with others.
- Tell me about a time you had to step up as a leader.
- Describe a situation when you had a conflict at work.
- Tell me about a time you had to solve a difficult problem.

### Self-Analysis Questions

Relate to your view of yourself, your strengths, and your goals.

- Why do you want to work here? In this role?
- What are your three greatest strengths?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- Why should I hire you?
- What is your proudest accomplishment?

(Big Interview, 2023)

## TIPS

- **Research the company:** 47% of employers say they will reject candidates if they don't know much about the company (Twin Employment). Learn about their mission/values (on their website), recent news, and culture (via social media). Think about how you and your experience connects with what you learned.
- **Brainstorm related questions:** Turn qualifications from the job into behavioral questions. Ex: Tell me about a time you demonstrated \_\_\_\_\_ skills.
- **Choose your attire:** Dress one notch more formal than a typical day on the job. Look at social media or watch the main office door to get a sense of typical attire.

## TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

### PRESENT

Describe your current situation

### PAST

Work backwards by highlighting 2-3 key points along your professional and/or educational journey. Could be jobs, volunteering, co-curriculars, classes, etc.

### FUTURE

Connect your background, interests, or qualifications to the job.

## HOW TO PREPARE

1

Examine the job description

2

Reflect on your resume, cover letter, skills, and experiences

3

Research the company and position

4

Review common interview questions

5

Practice your speaking voice and body language

6

Prepare several questions to ask the interviewer

7

Practice - conduct mock interviews & test-run the drive

8

Finalize your outfit. Bring resume copies, pen, notepad/padfolio

## STARR STRATEGY FOR BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

**Sample question:** Tell me about a time you failed.

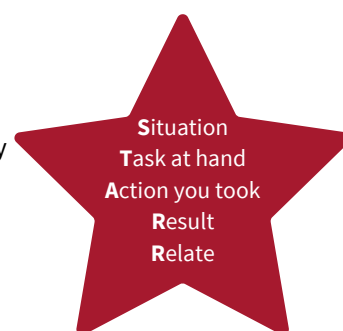
**Situation:** My first semester in college I earned a grade that I was disappointed with in my history class.

**Task:** I am very committed to excellence and set a goal to earn an A on the next exam. My understanding of the material was even more important than my grades, so I resolved to comprehend the information.

**Action:** I began to review my notes daily and used timelines and charts to organized the information. I met with the professor to communicate my commitment to his class and identify if he had any additional suggestions. I created flashcards for myself and formed a study group the week before the exam.

**Result:** I earned an A on my next exam and in the class. Since that time, I have been satisfied with my academic achievement and, have made the Dean's list every semester.

**Relate:** This will help me as a teacher because I learned how to teach myself, manage my time, and be persistent. The experience also cultivated a sense of empathy for students who are failing and about to give up. (Strefert, B., 2018)



## QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER (PREPARE AT LEAST 3)

- What do you personally like most about working for this company?
- What characteristics best describe individuals who are successful in this position?
- What are the most important priorities for the company/department/ team right now?
- Can you tell me a little bit about the training associated with this position?
- How is job performance evaluated?
- How would you describe the culture of your company?
- What has to happen for you to know you've hired the best person?
- What have others found challenging about this position in the past?
- What is your timeline for making a decision?

\*Don't ask about salary/benefits until you have a job offer

## FOLLOWING UP

Whether you send a handwritten thank you or a quick email, it is imperative that you follow up with the individual(s) who interviewed you within 24 hours of your interview. Below is an example of a well-written thank you.

Dear [Interviewer Name],

Thank you so much for meeting with me today. It was such a pleasure to learn more about the team and position, and I'm very excited about the opportunity to join [Company Name] and help [bring in new clients/develop world-class content/anything else awesome you would be doing] with your team.

I look forward to hearing from you about the next steps in the hiring process, and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide additional information.

Best regards,  
[Your Name]



# SALARY NEGOTIATION

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477.2131  
www.mnstate.edu/career

Salary negotiation may seem like a skill necessary only for seasoned professionals who have a wealth of knowledge and experience under their belt. In reality, having the confidence to negotiate earnings and benefits is something that *EVERYONE* should possess, especially if you're female-presenting and/or a person of color. So, do your research, define your value, and practice your pitch and you will be primed to negotiate with confidence.

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO NEGOTIATE YOUR SALARY AND BENEFITS

Congratulations! You've been offered a job at your dream company. While you may be inclined to say "yes" to any salary and benefits package you're being offered, this is the perfect time to utilize your negotiating skills to ensure you're getting a compensation package your comfortable with.

- The salary/benefits you receive from your first position outside of college set the stage for the rest of your professional life. Negotiating just a few thousand dollars can lead to hundreds of thousands of dollars more over your lifetime.
- The wage gap is real. Women on average are paid just 80% of what men are paid. Factor in race and the difference is staggering. If you identify as a woman and/or are a person of color, negotiating your salary and benefits package can help you decrease the wage gap, not only for yourself, but others as well.

## PREPARING TO NEGOTIATE

- **Understand your experiences and develop a value proposition.** It's easy to think that the part-time jobs, volunteer experiences, and classes you've taken won't matter once you've graduated and entered the workforce, but we're here to say that just isn't the case. Every single experience you've had is valuable and can help set you up for success when it comes time to discuss wages. Be confident in your past and help educate the hiring manager on your value to the company while negotiating your salary and benefits package.
- **Research similar positions.** Having an understanding of what others are making in comparable positions can give you a leg up during the negotiation process. There are a number of websites and organizations that can help.
  - Bureau of Labor Statistics - [www.bls.gov/ooh/](http://www.bls.gov/ooh/)
  - US Department of Labor - [www.onetonline.org/](http://www.onetonline.org/)
  - [www.payscale.com](http://www.payscale.com) or [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com)
  - The MSUM Career Development Center
  - Your local Economic Development Corporation or Chamber of Commerce

Once you've finished your research, decide on a **target salary** (usually near the median salary for the job/region), a **target salary range** (usually 10%-15% above the target salary for new grads), and your **walk-away point** (lowest amount you will accept). Keep your budget, debts, and savings goals in mind when defining your walk-away point.

\*\*It is important to understand the local economy of the city you're looking to be employed in. If you're choosing to stick around the FM community, don't use statistics from individuals living in New York City.

- **Think beyond salary.** An offer for employment is more than just a salary. It will also include benefits and perks. Healthcare and other insurance plans, retirement match, paid time off/vacation, flexible working hours or the ability to work remote, professional development funds, parental leave, etc... are all ways employers can increase your benefits package and can reduce living costs, making it easier for you to be more flexible with your minimum salary. Employers will often use the term "total compensation" or "total reward" when discussing an offer that includes both salary and benefits. Be sure to clarify salary vs. benefits. They may say your total reward is \$75,000, but your salary is only \$55,000.

- **Practice Makes Perfect.** First and foremost, don't assume that the negotiation process will be negative or combative. There is no way to know how it will end, so go into the conversation positive and open-minded. That being said, it's OK to prepare for different scenarios.

Pretend you've just been made an offer 20% below your target salary. While this would be above your walk-away point, you're hoping to increase it by at least 10%. How would you respond to that initial offer?

*"Thank you for that offer. Based on my previous experience in the field and my education as well as the research I've done on compensation packages for positions similar in the region, I was hoping to make \$XXX-\$XXX per year."*

The hiring manager responds well and agrees to increase the offer by 12%. You could simply say thank you and begin talking about your start date, but we encourage you to inquire about other benefits.

*"I appreciate you being flexible in your offer. While it's not at my target, I am comfortable with that salary. I'm also interested in discussing other benefits available for this position. Do you offer opportunities for professional development? Continuing education is important to me and I'm looking to work for a company that is interested in supporting their employee's growth"*

At this time, be sure to reiterate your thankfulness for their flexibility and request the offer in writing.

- **Negotiating a raise and/or a change in benefits once you're in the role.** Negotiation isn't just a skill for those who are seeking a new position. It can also come in handy when you've made significant contributions to your employer's success, you've taken on additional responsibilities, your role has changed, or you've been sought out by another organization.
- Follow the same tips and tricks listed for those who are being offered a position with a new company/organization, but focus on sharing the positive changes you've made in your current role. Be specific. Have you increased sales, increased usage of your product or service, or saved a sizable amount of money? Being able to discuss the impact you've made will play in your favor.
- **Be realistic.** Are you looking for a job in the non-profit or government sector? Understanding the financial capacity and limitations of the organization you're looking to work for will help you have a more fruitful and less frustrating conversation. As we've stated previously, do your research on comparable positions locally or regionally, but keep your mind open to other benefits and perks.
- **Know when to walk away.** If the employer is unwilling to budge on salary or benefits, ask yourself if it would make sense financially to accept the offer/stay with the company.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- Career Development Center - [www.mnstate.edu/career](http://www.mnstate.edu/career)
- Your academic advisor and other faculty members
- American Association of University Women Work Smart Program - [www.salary.aauw.org](http://www.salary.aauw.org)
- Company Reviews and Salary Calculator - [www.glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com)
- LinkedIn Salary Tool - [www.linkedin.com/salary/](http://www.linkedin.com/salary/)
- Salary Calculator - [www.jobsearchintelligence.com/salary-calculator-intro-etc](http://www.jobsearchintelligence.com/salary-calculator-intro-etc)
- Cost of Living Comparison - [www.foundationsu.com/college/tools](http://www.foundationsu.com/college/tools)
- Transparent Career - [www.transparentcareer.com/](http://www.transparentcareer.com/)

# CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION

MSUM Career Development Center  
Flora Frick 151  
careers@mnstate.edu  
218-477.2131  
www.mnstate.edu/career

Continuing your education is not something that should be taken lightly. Graduate and doctoral degrees cost money and take time, so before you start submitting applications, we encourage students to answer the following questions.

- **Do you have a clear purpose and goal for attending graduate school?**

*What are your long and short term goals?*

*What is necessary for you to achieve these goals?*

*How will a graduate degree add or enhance my career path?*

- **What are your values, interests, and priorities for your career and life?**

*What kind of work and experiences do you find meaningful?*

*What skills do you already have? Do you need to expand upon these to land a meaningful job in your chosen field?*

- **Have you researched all of your graduate school options?**

*Do you know all of your options when choosing a graduate program?*

*If you have mentors, ask them for their perspectives and advice.*

*Do you have the capacity to take on additional time and financial investments for a graduate degree?*

*What is your potential for success in a graduate program?*

*Is it necessary for you to continue your education to be employed in your field?*

## **SO, YOU'VE MADE YOUR DECISION. YOU'RE GOING TO CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION.**

You've weighed the pros and cons and have decided that continuing your education is the right fit for you. Now it's time to start researching universities to find the best fit. A few things to consider when determining your top choices:

- Reputation of faculty
- Quality of the program
- Financial cost & Financial Aid
- Admission requirements
- Available course offerings
- Employability of graduates
- Facilities
- Geographic location
- Student life

After you've decided on your top three to five universities/programs you intend on applying to, you will need to get familiar with the unique admissions requirements for each program. Typically, requirements include:

- Application
- Application fee
- Official transcripts from all colleges/universities you've attended
- A baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution
- A minimum GPA
- An essay, personal statement, or letter of intent. Some programs will list questions you must address in your personal statement, while others simply ask why you're interested in the program
- Professional resume that discusses employment, involvement, and possibly related coursework. Make sure to target your resume to the program you're applying to
- Test results (GRE, GMAT, LSAT, etc...). Keep in mind, not every program will require tests results
- Letters of recommendation
- Application deadline

This information can be found online on graduate school admission's pages or by contacting program representatives.

**WRITING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT OR STATEMENT OF PURPOSE-** A graduate school personal statement or similar type of application essay is your opportunity to show the admissions committee what you're made of. The statement serves two basic purposes:

1. To showcase your ability to write clear, coherent content that is logically written and free of grammatical errors
2. To answer the questions *why you want to continue your education* and *why you should be accepted into the program*

**Statement of Purpose General Content:**

- Academic and professional background
- Skills
- Accomplishments
- Research interests
- Academic and career goals
- Why is this program a good fit for you?

*These are typically more formal than personal statements. Length is typically 1-3 double-spaced pages*

**Personal Statement General Content:**

- Your personal motivations for applying to the program and why you would be a great fit
- Your accomplishments and success stories
- The challenges you've faced and overcome
- Your passion for the field of study

*These are typically less formal than statements of purpose. Length is typically 1-3 double-spaced pages*

## RESOURCES

- **Career Development Center**

The Career Development Center is here to help you be a prepared professional. Whether that is assistance with your resume and cover letter, or helping you in the graduate school application process, there are many ways their experienced staff can provide support.

[Connect on Handshake](#) | Flora Frick 151 | [careers@mnstate.edu](mailto:careers@mnstate.edu) | 218-477-2131

- **MSUM Library**

The MSUM Library offers ample resources for students who are interested in continuing their education including test preparation books to check out as well as online practice tests and resources for the GRE, GMAT, and the MCAT.

[Click for Online GRE resources](#)

[Click for Online GMAT resources](#)

[Click for Online MCAT resources \(enter MCAT info the search bar. Sign in using your StarID & password\)](#)

Livingston Lord Library | [refdesk@mnstate.edu](mailto:refdesk@mnstate.edu) | 218-477-2922

- **Advisor & Faculty**

Your faculty and advisor are all great resources when it comes to education and career planning. They have first-hand experience in your chosen field and can offer insights into your specific profession.

- **University Writing Support Center**

The University Writing Center is run by student tutors—undergraduates with a strong background in writing and formal training in tutoring. They offer valuable feedback on a wide variety of writing issues, ranging from content to organization to style and mechanics. They are a great resource for your personal statement.

Livingston Lord Library room 111 | <https://mnstate.mywconline.com/>

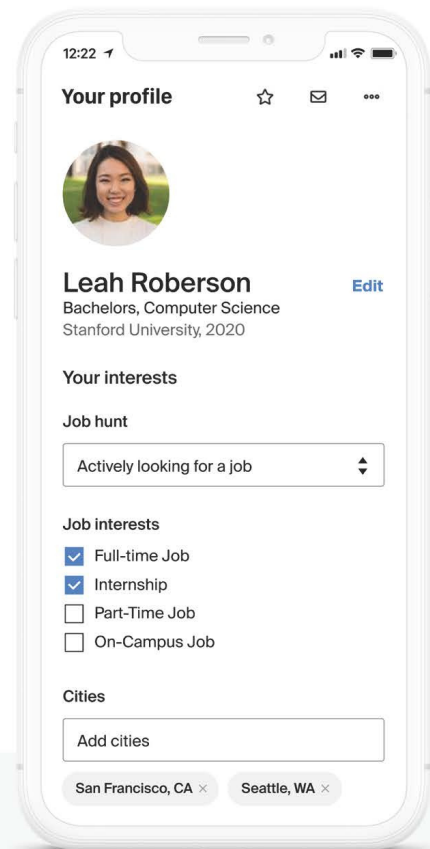
# COMPONENTS OF TYPICAL GRADUATE & PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL APPLICATIONS

This list is intended to help you plan for graduate school however it is imperative that you check with each program you intend on applying to to learn the details of their specific requirements.

	Academic MA or PHD Program	Graduate Certificate Program	Professional Degree	Business	Law	Medical or Dental School
<b>Deadlines</b>	Nov - Jan	Rolling	Nov - Jan	Late Oct - Nov	Nov (rolling)	June (rolling)
<b>Centralized Application</b>	Not Common	Not Common	Not Common	Not Common	CAS (LSAC)	AMCAS (AAMC)
<b>Application Form</b>	Usually	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Transcript</b>	Official Transcript					
<b>Entrance Exam</b> (not all programs require an exam)	GRE	GRE or Other Relevant	GRE or Other Relevant	GMAT or GRE	LSAT	MCAT
<b>Personal Statement</b>	Personal Statement or Statement of Purpose	Yes	Yes	Personal Essays	Yes	Yes and Essays
<b>Letters of Recommendation</b>	Typically 3	Varies	Typically 3	Typically 2-3	Typically 3	Typically 3
<b>Resume or CV</b>	CV	Resume	Varies, Typically Resume	Resume	Resume	Resume
<b>Field Specific Writing Samples</b>	Sometimes	No	No	No	No	No
<b>Application Fee Per School</b>	\$50-125	\$30-125	\$30-175	\$100-265	\$50-100	\$75-100

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### Job Type

Looking for an internship, part-time job, or full-time job? You can choose more than one.

### Location

Select the cities you would like to work in, and Handshake will show you jobs in that area.

### Job Role

Choose at least three jobs you would like to explore, like marketing associate or software engineer.

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

80% of students who share their interests receive a message from a recruiter on Handshake.