Preparing for the Job Search

- Know what you’re looking for and how you’re qualified. Employers are most interested in candidates who have clearly defined career goals and can articulate what they have to offer.
- Have all of your application materials ready: a strong resume or CV, a cover letter that can be tailored to the positions you'll apply for, and all necessary information for job applications (ie. past work history, supervisor names & phone numbers, references).
- Present yourself as a professional on your social media pages and through your voicemail greeting.
- Track everything you do in your job search - you can create a simple spreadsheet using Excel, or use a resource such as JibberJobber (a free software program), which helps you track your job search activities.
- **START EARLY** - many students begin their job search with only weeks left before graduation, but the reality is that job searching can take time. Try to start your job search the semester prior to graduation.

Finding Jobs

Depending on the type of job you’re seeking, finding job openings requires looking in multiple places and using multiple strategies. Some examples of different sources are listed below:

- **In-Person/Direct sources:** career fairs, networking events, employer information sessions, employee referrals, friends/family/faculty referrals, professional association conferences, industry meetings (Remember, approximately 80% of jobs are found through networking!)
- **Online sources:** Hire-A-Niner, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, employer websites, state/federal job banks

Often job seekers rely too much on online sources where jobs are advertised, but many employers find online sources too time-consuming and direct sources more cost effective. That’s why networking is such a crucial part of the job search: most jobs are never formally advertised and are filled by word of mouth. Take advantage of opportunities for in-person networking, and use social media sites such as LinkedIn for follow-up.

Stay on Top of the News

Keep up with the latest news in the community where you want to work. You may find job openings at organizations that are new, growing, or expanding: organizations with new leadership, new product lines, new services; or organizations with new or increased funding.

- Review the social media pages of the companies you are interested in for job openings and for relevant company-related news, which you may wish to mention in a cover letter or interview.
- Follow companies of interest on Twitter to have up-to-the minute information.
- Read local business journals to find out who’s on top in your industry.
Chambers of Commerce are organizations that encourage business among members. Events sponsored by your local Chamber are helpful networking opportunities; you can also use the Chamber to research local industry.

Indeed’s Job Trends provides information on jobs that are growing in demand, job market competition, and employment trends.

Stay on top of the latest hiring and recruiting trends.
- Fistful of Talent is a blog with posts on topics such as how recruiters find candidates online and the kinds of questions they like
- Alltop (careers.alltop.com) is an aggregator of topical RSS feeds of well-known careers bloggers all in one place.

Professionalism in the Job Search

Whether you’re attending a career fair, interview, informational interview, or networking event:

- Look, speak, act, and dress professionally. It will make a positive first impression, set the tone of the meeting, and give you a competitive edge.
- Create and practice your elevator speech so that you are prepared to tell anyone you meet what you are looking for and what you have to offer.
- Arrive on time for any meetings – 15 minutes early, if possible. It may be helpful to drive to the office ahead of time so you know exactly where you are going and how long it will take to get there.
- Practice what you'll say to increase your confidence. The University Career Center offers students and alumni virtual interview practice through InterviewStream, as well as in-person mock interviews, which can be arranged by calling the office for an appointment.
- Send a thank-you note or email to everyone who helps you, and attach a copy of your resume if you speak to an executive or hiring manager. Try to send the note 24-48 hours after your interview or meeting. The note may be handwritten on a small, professional, thank-you card (if your handwriting is neat and your message is brief), printed on letterhead or textured paper, or emailed.

Reality Check

If you’ve implemented your job search and aren’t seeing positive results, maybe there’s more you can do to maximize your chances for success: Do your resume and cover letter look professional? How polished are your interview skills? Have you had a mock interview? Do you have the proper attire? Is the job you want in one location? Check where the job is located – are you open to traveling and/or relocating? Have you conveyed that to the employer? Is your background appropriate for the jobs you want? Are you qualified for the job? If prior experience is required, do you have it? (Consult your career advisor if you aren’t sure that you fit the job qualifications.)

Don’t give up! Job searching is never easy, and it’s even harder when the job market is difficult. Keep plugging away at your job search and eventually, though it may take more time than you expected, the right position will come along.