

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT GUIDE: *ALUMNI*



Career Development and  
Community Engagement  
UNIVERSITY of WEST FLORIDA

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Letter from Career Development and Community Engagement .....	3
Transferable Skills.....	4
Resumes .....	7
a. Basics	
b. Resume Formats	
c. Curriculum Vitae	
d. Reference Sheets	
e. Cover Letters	
Job Search Strategies.....	12
a. Networking	
b. LinkedIn	
Interviews .....	14
a. Process	
b. Best Practices	
c. Sample Questions and Scenarios	
d. Attire	
e. Dining Etiquette	
f. Thank You Letters	
The Job Offer .....	23
Career Shifts .....	24
a. Transitioning to a New Position	
b. Leaving a Workplace	
CDCE Resources Made Easy.....	25

## CDCE is ready to help!

**Hours:** Monday-Friday | 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

**Drop-In Hours:** Monday-Thursday | 10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
No appointment needed

### **UWF Career Development and Community Engagement**

11000 University Parkway  
Building 19  
Pensacola, FL 32514

For assistance, call **850.474.2254** or email [career@uwf.edu](mailto:career@uwf.edu)

# You've Already Graduated... But We Are Still Here to Help You!

---

## **WELCOME TO THE NEXT STEP IN YOUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY!**

The Office of Career Development and Community Engagement (CDCE) invites you to dive into the Alumni Career Development Guide. We understand that many of our alumni need career development assistance. Whether you are a recent graduate, hoping for a promotion, leaving a workplace, or transitioning into a brand-new career, our services are available for you. Within this guide, you will find a collection of information, resources, and tools, that are designed to assist you in the job search and in accomplishing your career goals.



Our office is here to help you as you advance through or change your career as an alumnus. The **Alumni Career Development Guide** is one of many valuable resources that can assist you as you prepare for the next phase. Within these pages, you will find guidance on resume and cover letter development, the job search process, how to effectively prepare for an interview, actions to take after the interview, how to evaluate and negotiate job/salary offers, as well as some considerations for transitioning into a new position or leaving a workplace.

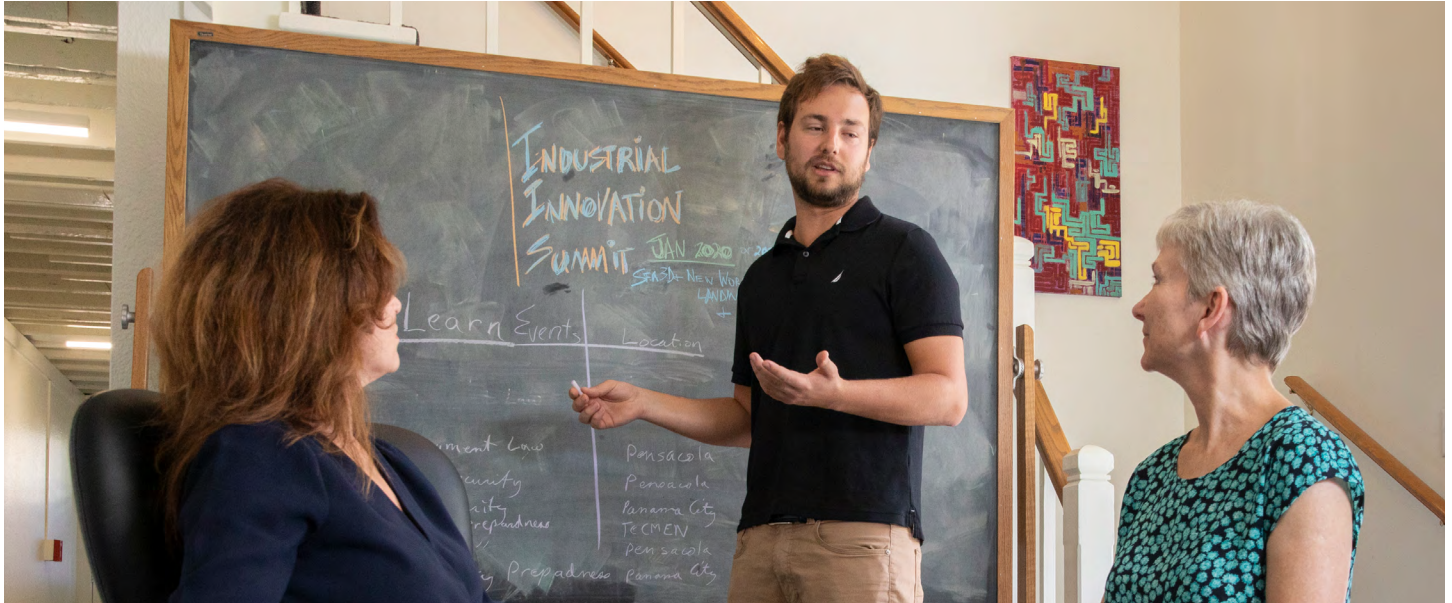
Please note that more detailed information for some topics, including Career Exploration and Graduate School Decision Making, can be found in our student Career Development Guides.

Do not hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions about this content or need further career/job search guidance. This guide provides a lot of valuable information, but we always recommend meeting with a Career Coach.

We look forward to working with you!

*The CDCE Team*

# Transferable Skills



## TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

You develop and practice them every day, but knowing how to showcase them can be difficult at first. Let's review these transferable skills in the list below and identify which skills you excel in. How can you develop the skills you aren't as confident in?

### NACE Top Eight Skill Competencies / Transferable Skills

- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Teamwork
- Professionalism
- Global Learning
- Technology
- Career and Self Development
- Leadership

**From the list of career readiness skills above, which do you excel in?**

---

---

---

---

**How can you develop the skills you aren't as confident in?**

---

---

---

---

## COMMUNICATE YOUR VALUE WITH TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

You have likely used more transferable skills than you realize, even if you have not gained experience in your field yet. Use the table below to inventory your skills and brainstorm how you could highlight them on your resume and cover letter.

<b>Organization and Management</b> Direct and guide a group in completing tasks and attaining goals	<b>Interpersonal and Communication</b> Exchange, transmit, and express knowledge and ideas	<b>Research, Data and Technology</b> Search for specific knowledge and utilize technology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiating new ideas</li> <li>• Making decisions</li> <li>• Overseeing tasks or projects</li> <li>• Solving problems</li> <li>• Meeting deadlines</li> <li>• Managing time</li> <li>• Working under pressure</li> <li>• Multi-tasking</li> <li>• Prioritizing and organizing</li> <li>• Developing goals</li> <li>• Supervising</li> <li>• Motivating</li> <li>• Coordinating</li> <li>• Assuming responsibility</li> <li>• Teaching</li> <li>• Interpreting policy</li> <li>• Mediating</li> <li>• Recruiting</li> <li>• Resolving conflict</li> <li>• Organizing</li> <li>• Giving directions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining team cooperation</li> <li>• Interacting and appreciating people from different backgrounds</li> <li>• Leading others</li> <li>• Speaking effectively</li> <li>• Writing concisely</li> <li>• Listening actively</li> <li>• Expressing ideas</li> <li>• Facilitating discussion</li> <li>• Providing appropriate feedback</li> <li>• Negotiating</li> <li>• Perceiving nonverbal messages</li> <li>• Persuading</li> <li>• Describing feelings</li> <li>• Interviewing</li> <li>• Editing</li> <li>• Summarizing</li> <li>• Promoting</li> <li>• Working on a team</li> <li>• Conducting presentations or speeches</li> <li>• Thinking on one's foot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyzing statistical data and ideas</li> <li>• Defining needs</li> <li>• Investigating</li> <li>• Reviewing literature for information</li> <li>• Gathering information</li> <li>• Formulating hypotheses</li> <li>• Calculating and comparing</li> <li>• Developing theory</li> <li>• Developing questionnaires/surveys</li> <li>• Identifying resources</li> <li>• Outlining</li> <li>• Producing results</li> <li>• Setting goals</li> <li>• Thinking critically</li> <li>• Predicting and forecasting</li> <li>• Solving technical problems</li> <li>• Utilizing specific programs and software</li> <li>• Preparing graphs and documents</li> <li>• Conducting effective Internet research</li> <li>• Illustrating computer programming</li> <li>• Designing web pages</li> </ul>
<b>Human Relations</b> Attend to social, physical, or mental needs of people	<b>Design and Planning</b> Imagine the future; develop a process for creating it	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being sensitive</li> <li>• Counseling</li> <li>• Advocating</li> <li>• Coaching</li> <li>• Providing care</li> <li>• Convey feelings and thoughts</li> <li>• Empathizing</li> <li>• Attending to others' needs</li> <li>• Facilitating group process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipating problems and identifying key issues</li> <li>• Creating images</li> <li>• Designing programs</li> <li>• Planning events</li> <li>• Brainstorming new ideas</li> <li>• Improvising and creating solutions</li> <li>• Conceptualizing and composing</li> <li>• Thinking visually</li> <li>• Anticipating the consequences of action or inaction</li> </ul>	

*Adapted and reprinted with permission from Binghamton University Career Development Center*

## PRACTICE: TAKE STOCK OF YOUR TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

This activity will help you to identify which skills and examples you can highlight on your resume and cover letter depending on what is listed in the job description.

1. Review the tables of transferable skills on page 5 and underline all the skills that you have.
2. On the same table, circle the 10 underlined skills you enjoy using the most.
3. Write your top 10 skills in the blanks below.
4. Below each preferred skill, briefly describe how you have used that skill in a job, class, internship, or other activity.

**1** Preferred Skill: \_\_\_\_\_  
Example of Using This Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

**2** Preferred Skill: \_\_\_\_\_  
Example of Using This Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

**3** Preferred Skill: \_\_\_\_\_  
Example of Using This Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

**4** Preferred Skill: \_\_\_\_\_  
Example of Using This Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

**5** Preferred Skill: \_\_\_\_\_  
Example of Using This Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

**6** Preferred Skill: \_\_\_\_\_  
Example of Using This Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

**7** Preferred Skill: \_\_\_\_\_  
Example of Using This Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

**8** Preferred Skill: \_\_\_\_\_  
Example of Using This Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

**9** Preferred Skill: \_\_\_\_\_  
Example of Using This Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

**10** Preferred Skill: \_\_\_\_\_  
Example of Using This Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

# Resumes

## BUILDING YOUR RESUME AND IDENTIFYING YOUR EXPERIENCE

As you gain experience and develop your skills, it is important to learn how to show off your skills to employers by building a resume. Let's start by reviewing the basics of resume writing.

## RESUME BASICS

Your resume is a professional representation of who you are and what you can bring to the position. Use your resume to highlight your skills, accomplishments, and experience.

The first step is choosing your resume format. You can choose a chronological, functional, or hybrid format. Each format emphasizes a different side of your unique qualifications, be it experience, skills, or a bit of both.

After you decide on a format, reflect on what you have accomplished in and out of the classroom. Approach this from the employer's perspective, and think about the skills they seek in a candidate. Make a connection by showcasing experience related to the position you are applying for.

## RESUME CONTENT

### Header

Include important contact information, namely phone number, email address, and your address. If you are not comfortable using your full address, using the city and state where you currently live is acceptable as well. Links to access your completed LinkedIn profile or professional website/portfolio can also be in the header if you have them.

### Objective

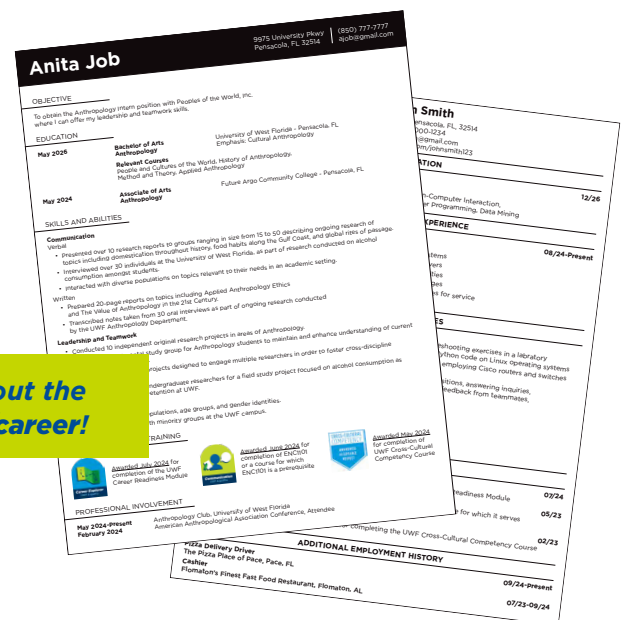
Objective statements are usually optional and should only be included if the application does not require a cover letter. You should include the position title, the name of the organization you are applying to and a few skills you would like to highlight.

### Body

Here are some examples of possible resume headings to include:

- Education
- Related Coursework
- Honors and Achievements
- Experience
- Volunteer Experience
- Skills
- Language Skills
- Professional Affiliations

**For more detailed resume and cover letter examples, check out the Career Development Guide, Level 2: Experience on [uwf.edu/career/](http://uwf.edu/career/)!**



## Best Practices for Your Resume

- Tailor your resume to each position for which you apply.
- Use bulleted lists to describe activities and offer examples of experiences that convey your skills.
- **Begin bullet points with power verbs (Attained, Demonstrated, Earned, Exceeded, etc.).**
- **Answer the journalistic questions of who, what, when, where, why and how.**
- **Quantify results and use numbers whenever possible.**
- Avoid personal pronouns (I, we, my, etc.).
- Use bold text to emphasize information such as headers but avoid italics and underlining.
- Write your resume yourself. Do not use a generator, online format, or have someone else write it for you.
- Keep your resume concise (1-2 pages) and maintain consistency across sections (formatting, spacing, font, dates, titles, etc.), as employers typically scan it as they evaluate your application.

## Power Verbs

### Communication

- Addressed
- Arranged
- Authored
- Briefed
- Communicated
- Composed
- Convinced
- Described
- Developed
- Directed
- Documented
- Drafted
- Edited
- Enlisted
- Formulated
- Influenced
- Informed
- Interpreted
- Interviewed
- Lectured
- Marketed
- Mediated
- Moderated
- Motivated
- Negotiated
- Persuaded
- Presented
- Promoted
- Publicized
- Published
- Reconciled
- Recruited
- Reported
- Spoke
- Summarized
- Translated
- Wrote

### Creative

- Acted
- Composed
- Conceived
- Conceptualized
- Conducted

- Created
- Designed
- Developed
- Directed
- Established
- Fashioned
- Founded
- Illustrated
- Improvised
- Instituted
- Integrated
- Invented
- Originated
- Performed
- Planned
- Revitalized

### Financial

- Accounted for
- Adjusted
- Administered
- Allocated
- Analyzed
- Appraised
- Audited
- Balanced
- Budgeted
- Computed
- Controlled
- Financed
- Forecasted
- Managed
- Marketed
- Monitored
- Planned
- Procured
- Projected
- Purchased
- Reconciled
- Researched

### Helping

- Advised
- Advocated
- Assessed
- Assisted

- Clarified
- Coached
- Counseled
- Demonstrated
- Educated
- Ensured
- Evaluated
- Facilitated
- Familiarized
- Fostered
- Guided
- Observed
- Provided
- Referred
- Rehabilitated
- Represented
- Supported

### Management

- Administered
- Analyzed
- Appointed
- Approved
- Assigned
- Assumed
- Attained
- Chaired
- Consolidated
- Consulted
- Contracted
- Delegated
- Designated
- Determined
- Developed
- Directed
- Evaluated
- Executed
- Formulated
- Managed
- Organized
- Oversaw
- Planned
- Prioritized

- Produced
- Recommended
- Recruited
- Scheduled
- Supervised

### Organization

- Approved
- Arranged
- Catalogued
- Classified
- Collected
- Compiled
- Consolidated
- Dispatched
- Distributed
- Enlisted
- Executed
- Expedited
- Generated
- Implemented
- Inspected
- Integrated
- Monitored
- Operated
- Organized
- Prepared
- Processed
- Purchased
- Recorded
- Revised
- Retrieved
- Scheduled
- Screened
- Specified
- Systemized
- Updated
- Validated

### Research

- Acquired
- Analyzed
- Calculated
- Clarified
- Collected
- Compared

- Conducted
- Critiqued
- Designed
- Determined
- Diagnosed
- Evaluated
- Examined
- Extracted
- Formulated
- Identified
- Inspected
- Interpreted
- Interviewed
- Investigated
- Located
- Modified
- Organized
- Processed
- Researched
- Reviewed
- Summarized
- Surveyed

### Results

- Accelerated
- Accomplished
- Achieved
- Attained
- Awarded
- Completed
- Contributed
- Decreased
- Eliminated
- Enlarged
- Established
- Expanded
- Improved
- Increased
- Initiated
- Introduced
- Launched
- Pioneered
- Recognized as
- Selected as
- Succeeded

### Teaching

- Adapted
- Advised
- Clarified
- Coached
- Coordinated
- Developed
- Enabled
- Encouraged
- Evaluated
- Explained
- Facilitated
- Guided
- Implemented
- Incorporated
- Informed
- Initiated
- Instructed
- Integrated
- Modified
- Motivated
- Persuaded
- Reinforced
- Set goals
- Stimulated
- Taught

### Technical

- Assembled
- Built
- Calculated
- Computed
- Designed
- Devised
- Engineered
- Fabricated
- Integrated
- Maintained
- Operated
- Overhauled
- Programmed
- Remodeled
- Repaired
- Solved
- Trained
- Upgraded



## RESUME FORMATS

### Functional Resumes

A functional (or skills-based) resume organizes information into functional groupings of skills or accomplishments.

#### Key characteristics include:

- Emphasizes skills, de-emphasize job history.
- Presents skills and experiences grouped by specific functions (i.e., writing, research, communication, leadership, graphic design, etc.).
- Used by career changers and those wanting to summarize, not reiterate, the same experiences.

### Chronological Resumes

A chronological resume organizes information by jobs and/or experiences in reverse chronological order with the most recent experience listed first.

#### Key characteristics include:

- Emphasizes employment history.
- Lists positions and employers in reverse chronological order.
- Describes activities and accomplishments in each job.
- Used by people changing jobs or advancing within a career field.

### Hybrid Resumes

A hybrid resume is a combination of the chronological and functional formats. This type can be used to highlight skills that are relevant to the job you are applying for and provide the chronological work history.

#### Key characteristics include:

- Emphasized both skills and work/experiential learning background, employing relevant aspects of each to promote experience related to opportunity sought.
- Utilizes best practices for both functional and chronological resumes.
- Includes supplemental experience or additional employment sections as experience allows.
- Used by individuals who have some—but not extensive—experience in the field/industry they hope to enter.

### Federal Resumes

A federal resume uses the same information from other resume formats, but goes into more depth about your skills, past duties and accomplishments. Visit [gogovernment.org](http://gogovernment.org) to see more in-depth instructions on how to create a federal resume.

#### Private industry key characteristics:

- 1-2 pages.
- No salaries or supervisors listed.
- Fewer details in descriptions.
- Creative, graphic, and functional resumes are acceptable.
- Keywords are desirable.

#### Federal government key characteristics:

- 3-5 pages.
- Salaries and supervisor names included.
- More details for work descriptions to demonstrate your qualifications for a job.
- Chronological, traditional formats are acceptable.
- Keywords are needed.

# Curriculum Vitae

---

## CURRICULUM VITAE BASICS

A Curriculum Vitae (CV) is used in academic circles and medical careers as a replacement for a resume and is far more comprehensive. A CV elaborates on education to a greater degree than a resume and is expected to include a comprehensive listing of professional history, including every term of relevant employment, academic credential, publication, contribution or significant achievement. In certain professions, it may even include samples of the person's work and be several pages in length. One of the most important things to remember when working on your CV is that there is not one standard format. There are different emphases in each discipline, and a good CV emphasizes the points that are considered to be most important in your discipline and conforms to standard conventions within your discipline.

### Common CV Headings

- Name and contact information
- Education
- Dissertation title or topic
- Fellowships/awards/honors
- Research experience
- Teaching experience
- Other relevant experience
- Presentations\*/conferences
- Publications\*

### Additional Headings to Consider

- Certification(s)
- Professional associations
- Leadership and service
- Community involvement
- Research Interests
- Special training
- Languages (include level or proficiency)
- References

*\*Consult your field's publication style guide for the recommended approach to citing these works.*

## REFERENCES FOR RESUMES AND CV

You want to avoid listing your references on your resume. Instead, state "References are available upon request" at the bottom of your resume and create a separate reference sheet.

### Reference Sheets

The purpose of a reference sheet is to list people that a potential employer can call to receive an honest recommendation of you as an applicant. Examples: Past employers, professors and advisors all make for excellent references.

### Best Practices on Reference Sheets

- Ensure you have permission from all your references to include them in an application.
- Give them a copy of the job description and resume you apply for so they are prepared for any questions they may be asked.
- Unless otherwise requested, do not include friends or family members as references.

*Our Career Coaches can provide you with feedback and help you determine the best format for your job search documents.*

# Cover Letter

---

## COVER LETTER BASICS

A well-written cover letter should complement your resume and will help paint a more complete picture of who you are as a person and candidate. Each cover letter should be specific to the position for which you are applying; therefore, one cover letter does not apply to all circumstances. When writing a cover letter, make sure you write it from the employer's perspective (e.g., what unique contributions are you going to bring to the job/company?). Try to keep your letter to one page and include at least three paragraphs.

- Distinguish yourself by addressing your cover letter to a specific individual if possible. Call or visit the company to get the appropriate person's name and title.
- Do not just reiterate your resume; make sure you touch upon aspects of your character and personality.
- If you heard about the position through networking, make sure you state that early in your letter.
- Show that you have done your research by mentioning what interests you most about the position/company.
- Use the same high-quality paper for your resume, cover letter, and reference sheet.
- If you are emailing your resume to an employer, use a shortened version of the text of your cover letter in the body of the email. It must be effective and concise.



## Types of Cover Letters

**Application Letter:** You are applying for a job posted for open recruitment. In this case, you can use the job description to help draw a connection between what the company is looking for and your unique skills and experiences.

**Prospecting Letter:** In this case, there is not an open position, but you are interested in working for a specific company. You will need to highlight your unique contributions. In your concluding paragraph, be sure to make mention of the next step and be prepared to follow up on your own.

**Networking Letter:** Your main objective is to identify a specific connection between you and the reader. Make sure to mention this connection early on in the cover letter. The rest of the letter should be written as a prospecting letter.

# Job Search Strategies

---



## NETWORKING

Your ability to create and foster relationships just may be your most powerful job search strategy. **According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, approximately 70% of the time, individuals find their careers through networking.**

Networking can be done anytime and anywhere—at a coffee shop, through online social networking, at a job fair, or through a chance encounter. The most important first step in networking is to smile and be friendly. You never know with whom you might strike up an important conversation.

### Tips on how to get the most out of networking:

**Know what you want.** Clear and specific career goals can guide you in identifying individuals you should connect with — those who have applied their skills and aspirations to their own careers.

**Be assertive.** Treat networking like a political campaign and do not be afraid to promote yourself. Use your time with new people wisely. You need to give the impression that you are confident.

**Don't ask for jobs.** Imagine calling an individual to ask if they have any jobs available. It may force the other person to say no to you. Instead, ask for advice, and people will be more likely to share their time.

**Pack your marketing materials.** An up-to-date resume as well as networking or business cards with your contact information are great to keep with you and will make it easy to give people access to your information. Follow up after meeting someone by making a call or sending an e-mail telling the person how much you enjoyed your discussion, and never forget to say, "Thank you."

**Don't forget your current network.** Your current network is comprised of family members, friends, teachers, coaches, pastors, and community members who can be great resources, both as advocates and advisors.

**Use social media as a networking tool.** Social media is a great tool to begin your professional networking. Employers are actively utilizing social media to recruit and hire employees. Once you have connected with someone through social media, try to arrange face-to-face interactions through informational interviews or other meetings.

## LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional social network. It is commonly used by recruiters, hiring managers, and professionals in hundreds of industries for professional development and finding qualified candidates for open positions. With LinkedIn you can:

- Manage your professional image online.
- Connect to professionals and alumni in your field.
- Stay up to date with industry news.
- Find job and internship opportunities.
- Earn and showcase digital badges to help market your abilities.

### Communicating with Other Alumni or Peers:

Alumni are some of the most impactful connections you can make on LinkedIn. You can find them by searching for UWF's LinkedIn page and looking for the "Alumni" tab. You can then search by degree to find alumni in your field.

## SAMPLE LINKEDIN COLD CONTACT MESSAGE

Hello Ms. Jones, I'm a current UWF student and was impressed by your profile. I'm a communication student, always looking to connect with others in my field. Would you be interested in a quick phone conversation sometime soon? Thanks for considering my request.

— Jill Smith, 2025

### LinkedIn Quick Tips

To help you get the most out of your LinkedIn account, review and apply some of the following approaches to establish a successful LinkedIn presence.

- Include a professional headshot in your profile.
- Develop a short list of skills and industry-specific keywords to highlight in your summary section.
- Reach out to employers and connections for endorsements.
- Use the profiles of people you admire in your field as an example.
- Customize the URL for your profile to make it easier to share with others or include in the header of your resume.

***UWF Alumni interested in professional headshots done by CDCE can make an appointment on Handshake, accessed via MyUWF.***

### Best Practices for Online Presence Management Tactics

- Demonstrate your professional strengths through meaningful status updates (e.g., volunteer work, research papers, industry-related posts, etc.).
- Find and engage with professional organizations in your field (e.g., SHRM for human resources job seekers).
- Utilize LinkedIn's job search tool.
- Follow companies or organizations with whom you might be interested in working.
- Send targeted, individualized messages when making connections.

### Things to Avoid Online

- Refrain from speaking negatively about work experiences.
- Abstain from posting excessively about potentially controversial topics (e.g., alcohol, politics, etc.).
- Don't post inappropriate photos of yourself or others.

# Interviews

---

## INTERVIEW PROCESS AND TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

**Traditional Interviews** focus on your resume. The questions will focus on your attitudes, professional or management styles, interactions with others and reactions to hypothetical situations.

**Behavioral Interviews** focus on actions and behaviors rather than hypothetical situations. Instead of concentrating on how you would handle a situation, the interview focuses on how you did handle the situation. The hiring official/committee will want to hear details, not generalizations concerning events. Utilizing the STAR Technique is a great practice to ensure that you completely answer behavioral questions.

### STAR TECHNIQUE

**Situation:** Define the situation and “set the stage.”

- “Last year, my student organization sponsored a fundraising project for a local afterschool program.”

**Task:** Identify the task or the problem that needs action.

- “I was asked to organize the project.”

**Action:** Describe the action that was taken, illustrating the skills you used.

- “I recruited and chaired a committee of eight to accomplish our goal under a tight deadline, which was successfully met. I led the committee in developing a fundraising plan, which included a budget. I then initiated the proposal of the plan to the Student Activities Board in order to seek approval.”

**Result:** Summarize the outcome of the situation.

- “The plan was approved and the campaign generated more than \$3,000 for the afterschool program. Because the plan worked so well, I was asked to become a member of the Campus Activity Board the following semester.”

*Development Dimensions International, Inc. of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, claims the STAR technique as their “Copyrighted Intellectual Property.” Interviewing information adapted with permission from Claremont University.*

### Interview Tips

- **Always answer the question directly and concisely:** If the interviewer asks you how you feel about an issue in the workplace, be sure to give a clear and concise answer to the question.
- **Have your one-minute commercial ready:** Many times, an interviewer will ask you to describe yourself. By using a one-minute commercial, you can summarize your abilities, skills, goals, and interests. Some items to highlight in your commercial are:
  - Your major
  - Type of position you are seeking
  - Work experience
  - Class projects
  - How can you tie yourself to the company and the position
- **Provide examples:** Even if the interviewer does not ask you for specific examples of situations, try to give clear, concise answers that include examples that are appropriate to the question.

# Interview: Best Practices

---

## INTERVIEW DO'S

- Brainstorm before the interview. You should have 5 concrete examples of strong communication, leadership, and teamwork skills.
- Know the exact time, location, and how long it takes to get to the interview.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes early and have the interviewer's phone number on hand in case you encounter any problems or delays.
- Treat everyone in the office with respect. You never know whose opinion may be solicited during the hiring process.
- Make eye contact, offer a firm handshake, and have a friendly expression when you greet the interviewer.
- Listen to the interviewer's name and pronunciation. Always address the interviewer by their title (e.g., Ms., Mrs., Mr., or Dr.) and last name unless you are invited to do otherwise.
- Be thorough in your responses, concise in your wording, and maintain good eye contact and posture throughout the interview.
- Provide detailed examples when asked and if you do not understand a question, politely ask for clarification.
- Be honest about yourself and your abilities. If you are dishonest and the interviewer discovers it, your job offer may be withdrawn — or worse, you may be fired after receiving the job.
- Research the company and prepare questions that you did not find in your research. This will show the interviewer you have taken the initiative to find out about the details of the company.
- Know about the next steps in the hiring process; know whom you expect to hear from next and when.
- When the interview is complete, make sure to offer a firm handshake to the interviewer, and thank them for considering you for the position.
- Remember to ask for business cards from each person who is interviewing you. You will want to write them each thank you notes for their time and consideration of you for the open position.
- For virtual or phone interviews, be sure to set up in a space free of distractions (excess noise, messy background, other people around, etc.).

## INTERVIEW DON'TS

- Don't make negative remarks about past employers or companies.
- Don't make excuses about your behaviors or actions. Take responsibility for your decisions.
- Don't lie on the application or answers to interview questions.
- Don't repeat the information from your resume. Elaborate further on your varied experiences that relate to the position.
- Don't focus excessively on others' contributions when discussing your own skills and experiences.
- Don't treat the interview casually. You are wasting the interviewer's and company's time.
- Don't give the impression that you are only interested in the position's salary. Don't ask about the salary or benefits until the interviewer brings up the subject. (But be prepared to talk about salary at any time, and be ready to have talking points in order to negotiate.)
- Don't ask about promotions until after an offer is formally extended.
- Don't chew gum or smell like smoke.
- Don't answer your cell phone during the interview. If you have a cell phone, turn it off before the interview begins.
- Don't act like you are desperate for employment or that you would take any job offered to you.
- Don't be unprepared for typical interview questions. You might not be asked all of the questions, but being unprepared looks foolish.
- Don't exhibit frustrations or negative attitudes in the interview process.
- Don't fidget, slouch, or use excessive hand gesturing.
- Don't read your answers to questions in phone or video interviews; interviewers can tell.
- Don't forget to test your equipment/software ahead of time for video interviews to avoid technical issues.

*Interviewing Do's and Don'ts adapted with permission from Virginia Tech University.*

# Interview: Sample Questions and Scenarios

---



## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

### **Questions Asked by Employers**

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your long-range and short-range goals?
- What is your greatest strength/weakness?
- Why should I hire you?
- What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful in this career?
- What is your perceived role when working as part of a team? Tell me about a time when a co-worker/group member did not fulfill their responsibilities. How did you react?
- Tell me about a time when you felt you were in conflict with a supervisor or co-worker. How did you react? How was it resolved?
- What interests you most about this position and/or company?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- What questions do you have for me?

### **Questions to Ask Employers**

- What type of training does your organization offer?
- What types of assignments might I expect during the first 6 months?
- What is the organization's plan for the next 5 years, and what is the department's role?
- Describe the team/project assignments and the mix of people involved.
- What is the management philosophy of this organization?
- How would you describe the company culture?
- What is the largest single challenge facing your staff or department right now?
- How do you feel about creativity and individuality?
- Do you have plans for expansion?
- What is the next course of action? When should I expect to hear from you, or should I contact you?

*NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list of possible interview questions.*





## SAMPLE SCENARIOS

### Understanding Illegal or Unethical Interview Questions

Potential employers are supposed to ask you questions that are related to the job you are seeking. Those questions should be related only to facts that are relevant to whether you can perform the functions of the job. Some types of questions are protected from being asked by law, such as those that are based on race, color, sex, marital status, number and/or ages of children or dependants, religion, and national origin (unless disclosure of this information is required to meet the job description). Other questions regarding age, sexual orientation, and disability are also prohibited if they are used solely to discriminate against a prospective candidate.

### Inappropriate Interview Questions and How to Handle Them

- **Rephrase the question.** For example, you may encounter an employer who states, “This job requires a lot of travel; would your spouse object to you being away from home often?” You could answer, “Are you asking me if I will be able to travel for the job? If so, yes, I can assure you I can travel as needed.”
- **Answer the question.** If you answer the question directly, you may jeopardize your chances of being hired. Although there may be legal recourse available to you, this is not the preferred outcome for most job applicants.
- **Refuse to answer the question.** If you refuse to answer, you still run the risk of appearing uncooperative/ confrontational and lose the job. There may be legal recourse, but that is hardly a perfect situation.
- **Examine the question for its intent and respond with an answer as it might apply to the job.** For example, if an employer asks you, “What kind of child care arrangements have you made?” Your answer could be, “I can meet the work schedule that this job requires.”

*Adapted and copied with permission from The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).*

# Interview Attire

---

## WHAT YOUR CLOTHES SAY ABOUT YOU

Appropriate attire supports your image as a person who takes the interview process seriously and understands the nature of the industry you are interviewing for. Even if it is not an interview, dress professionally for any interaction with an employer. Your attire should be appropriate and well-fitting, but it should not take center stage.

Dressing nicely and appropriately is a compliment to the person you meet. If in doubt, err on the side of dressing better than what may be expected. Even if you know an organization's employees dress casually on the job, you should still plan to dress professionally for the interview unless you are specifically told otherwise by the employer. Examples of inappropriate and appropriate attires are available on page 19.

### Essential Interview Attire

- Suit jacket or vest (e.g., navy, gray, khaki)
- Long-sleeved button-up shirt or blouse (light solids or conservative stripes)
- Dress shoes or heels (heels should be no higher than 3 inches)
- Suit pants, slacks, or a skirt
- Belt and tie (when appropriate)

### Other Important Tips

- Ensure that your hair is well groomed
- Use cologne/perfume sparingly
- If you choose to wear jewelry, be conservative
- Stick to conservative colors and patterns

The above descriptions work for traditional masculine, traditional feminine, and gender non-conforming expressions. Attire is a highly individualized decision. Utilize resources such as the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index at [thehrfoundation.org](http://thehrfoundation.org), to evaluate the employer or organization's policies and practices regarding gender identity and expression.

## HOW MUCH WILL THIS COST?

You are not expected to give up your life savings for interview attire. However, you should invest in quality attire that will look appropriate during your first two to three years on the job. One good quality suit is sufficient for a job search.

Check out the available financial assistance options on campus, including the UWF Scholarship Portal on [my.uwf.edu](http://my.uwf.edu), the CDCE Professional Development Fund, and the HIP Scholarship. Reach out to our office at [career@uwf.edu](mailto:career@uwf.edu) or **850.474.2254** to learn more about application requirements and deadlines.

*UWF students and alumni have an opportunity to shop for professional attire at a discounted rate with **Argos Suit Up!**, a program to help students build their professional wardrobe for job/graduate school interviews and future employment. For more information, visit [uwf.edu/SuitUp](http://uwf.edu/SuitUp).*

## EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW ATTIRE



### Casual

This type of dress is not appropriate for an interview.



### Business Casual

While this attire may fit better for daily wear or for social events, it is still not appropriate for an interview.



### Professional Wear

These outfits meet the criteria for making a good impression in a job interview.

# Dining Etiquette

---

Job interviews over dinner require a less aggressive sell than an office interview. The company usually believes you can do the job at this point and would like to evaluate your social skills.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Focus on the interviewer even if the restaurant is noisy and full of distractions.
- Avoid discussing religion, politics, or anything else that might be controversial.
- Although the setting might be casual, do not become too familiar with the interviewer; remain professional.
- Try your best to remain relaxed and stay confident; remember the company often believes you can do the job.

## DINING ETIQUETTE TIPS

Use excellent table manners and follow these dining etiquette tips at the table:

### DINING DO'S

- When in doubt of the proper procedures, observe your host and follow good examples.
- If more than 1 person is interviewing you, allow everyone to sit, and then put your napkin in your lap.
- Order something that is easy to eat; if in doubt, order what the interviewer is eating.
- Wait for everyone at your table to be served before beginning the meal.
- Transport food to your mouth, not your mouth to your food.
- Sit up straight at the table.
- If you are asked to pass the pepper or the salt, do it as a set.
- When you are not eating, keep your hands on your lap or resting on the table (with wrists on the edge of the table).

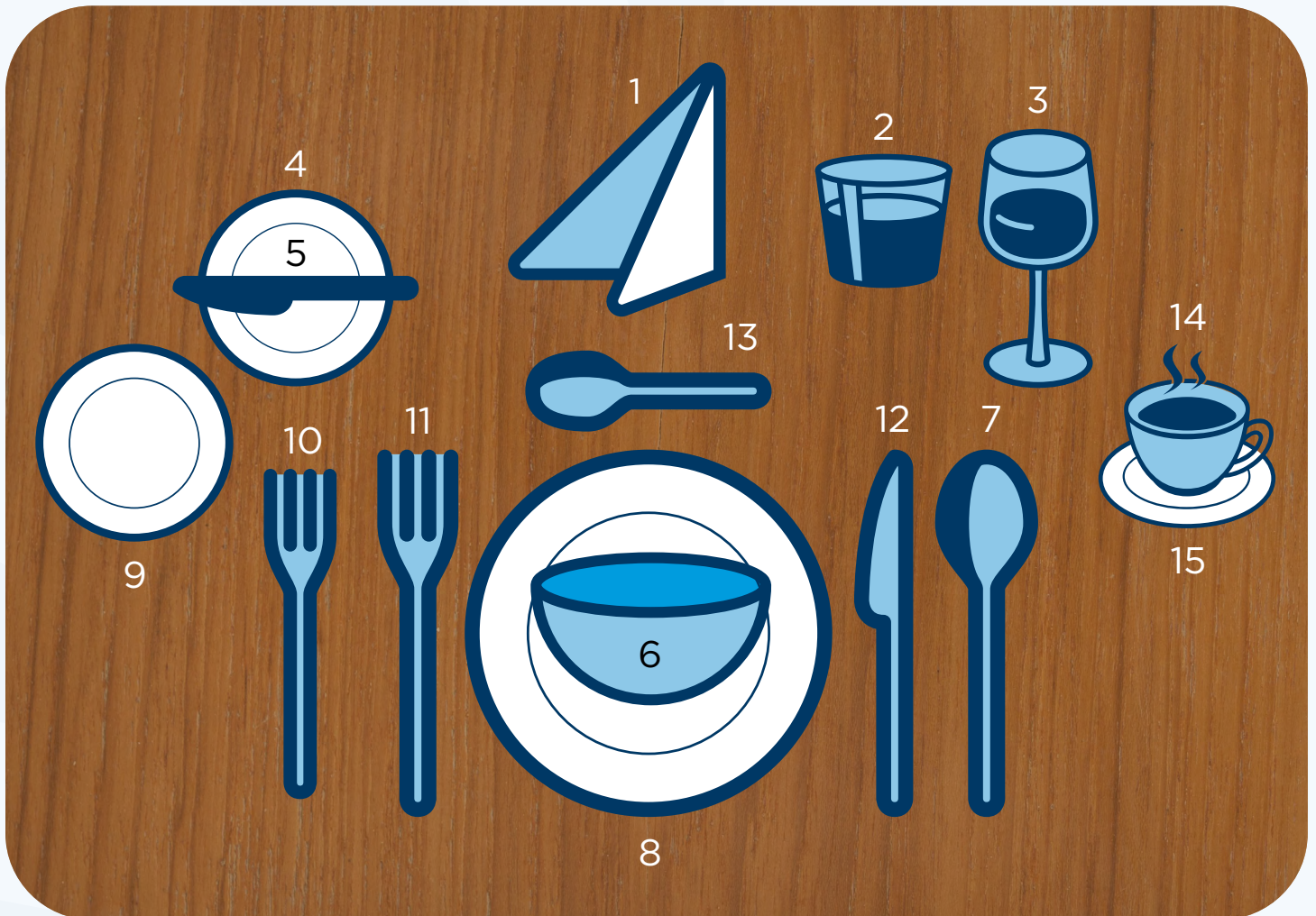
### DINING DON'TS

- Never spit an inedible object into your napkin (remove food from your mouth with an inconspicuous motion using a dining utensil and discreetly place on plate).
- Never put silverware on the table after it has been used (rest it on the plate instead).
- Never chew with your mouth open or speak with your mouth full.
- Don't slurp from a spoon.
- Don't apply cosmetics at the table.
- Never have gum at the dinner table.
- Don't ask for seconds or ask the server to take your food back.
- Do not order alcohol (unless the employer does or offers, then 1 glass would be appropriate with the meal).

### After the Meal

- Be sure to thank your host(s) for the meal.
- Ask for business card(s) from your host(s) if you have not already requested one.
- Leave on a positive note by expressing your interest in the job.
- Write the host(s) "thank you" notes.

## FORMAL TABLE SETTINGS



### Formal Table Setting Navigation

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Napkin       | 9. Salad Plate    |
| 2. Water Glass  | 10. Salad Fork    |
| 3. Wine Glass   | 11. Dinner Fork   |
| 4. Bread Plate  | 12. Dinner Knife  |
| 5. Bread Knife  | 13. Dessert Spoon |
| 6. Soup Bowl    | 14. Coffee Cup    |
| 7. Soup Spoon   | 15. Saucer        |
| 8. Dinner Plate |                   |

# Thank You Letters

---

## MAKING A GOOD IMPRESSION

Make sure you write a thank you letter after your interview(s). Use every opportunity possible to reinforce your interest and qualifications for this position. Your thank you letter should be sent within 48 hours of the interview.

### A well-written thank you letter accomplishes three things:

1. It reminds the employer of your interview and expresses your sincere appreciation.
2. It reemphasizes your strongest qualifications (connecting you to the job description).
3. It reiterates your interest in the position and gives you the opportunity to highlight anything you didn't get to mention during the interview.

Many students ask if it is acceptable to email a thank you letter. Sending an email is appropriate if you have primarily communicated with the employer by email or phone. Otherwise, a handwritten thank you letter is almost always appreciated.

Make sure you obtain the correct spelling, proper title, and address for the recruiter(s) who interviewed you. A great way to ensure this information is correct is by collecting business cards from the recruiters who performed your interview. If multiple people interview you, be sure to send them each a separate note.



*Thank You*

Dear Mr. Jones,

Thank you for taking the time to interview me for the Marketing internship available in the Career Development and Community Engagement office at the University of West Florida. I especially enjoyed learning more about your department and your commitment to students.

Based on our conversation, I am confident that with my education and prior work experiences, I could make a considerable contribution to your department and the University as a whole. In addition to the strengths we discussed yesterday, I also want to let you know that I have a strong background using Adobe InDesign for the creation of the monthly newsletter for my sorority.

I look forward to hearing from you regarding the next step in the interview process. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need additional information about my qualifications.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Sincerely,

(signed name)

# The Job Offer

---

## EVALUATING A JOB OFFER

You are down to your final semester; there is one research paper between you and graduation; you just had a successful interview with your dream employer, and they made you an offer. The salary is phenomenal, but so is the cost of living in the new city. The big question becomes whether you can afford to take the job. So many things come into play when weighing a job offer, and it can be challenging to know where to begin.

### Decide on the merits of the position

- Is my new workplace culture one where I can thrive and be happy?
- Will it offer me challenges that will keep me interested and motivated?
- What incentives does the company offer outside of salary?
- Is there potential for advancement?
- Is the location somewhere that I want to stay?
- Are all my accessibility needs being met?
- Is there an option to work remotely?
- How does sick leave and vacation time work for the company?

### Think about the salary compared to your cost of living

- How much is housing in the area?
- What insurance coverage will I need?
- Will I have a car payment?
- Will I be able to start paying my student loans?
- How much are utilities in the area (electric, water, trash, etc.)?
- What will my monthly payment be for other essentials (internet, phone, television, etc.)?
- Will I have enough left over to save?
- Does my employer have a retirement plan?

There is a lot to consider before accepting or negotiating a job offer and you will need to research or talk with your potential employer about these things. If all of these considerations align, and that quality of living sounds comfortable, you are well on your way to the job of your dreams!

On the other hand, if you decide the position is not a great fit for you, it is essential to communicate that in a professional manner to the employer. Not responding to an employer's offer is unprofessional and can actually burn bridges for future opportunities.

### Salary Considerations

While large-figure salaries can be very enticing, they may not be enough to make ends meet in some of the larger cities around the world. Fortunately, there are many resources that can help you learn more about the cost of living inside and outside of the United States.

The local Chamber of Commerce is a great place to start. You can also visit sites like [cashcourse.org](https://www.cashcourse.org) to estimate and plan your budget or visit [onetonline.org](https://www.onetonline.org) and [flbog.edu/myfloridafuture](https://www.flbog.edu/myfloridafuture) to help identify average salaries within your career field to assist you in salary negotiation.

# Career Shifts

---



## **TRANSITIONING TO A NEW POSITION**

Starting a new job and adapting to a new workplace can be challenging. There's training, adjusting to a new schedule, learning new responsibilities, and navigating team dynamics. As you integrate, the biggest thing to remember is to be proactive. While in training, don't be afraid to ask others for help or seek additional opportunities that can help you to learn your new role. Not only will demonstrating such motivation help you to establish a positive reputation and cement you into that role, but it will also help you to master your job faster.

Additionally, you want to build a network within your new workplace. Having a friend or mentor at work is proven to help with job satisfaction and retention rates. While some places may assign you a mentor or "work buddy," don't be afraid to reach out to your supervisor or someone you admire to establish that relationship.

## **LEAVING A WORKPLACE**

Advancement is an important part of the career life cycle. Occasionally, this will take you to a new job with a new organization. While other times you might leave a position because it is not what you expected and continuing your career elsewhere is the best option. No matter why you choose to leave, you never want to burn bridges.

Many employers will call your previous employers to get a better idea of who you are professionally. If you leave unfavorably, that can reflect poorly on you. Additionally, quitting without reason or warning will cause many organizations to put you on a "do not hire" list, banning you from applying for future position with them or affiliated employers.

The best way to leave an employer on good terms is by giving at least two weeks' notice before vacating a position. Ideally, this gives you enough time to extract yourself from the workplace and your employer enough time to begin looking for candidates to fill your vacancy. You also want to make sure you have a plan after leaving your job. It is best if you already have another position lined up so you don't have to restart the job search without pay.



# CDCE Resources Made Easy

Above and beyond the appointments and events CDCE offers, there is a collection of on-demand resources available to help you as you prepare for your future. Sometimes, it takes work to know where to look or even what you are looking for. So we put together this guide to help simplify your search.

Resources	Services Available	How to Access
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an action plan, unique to your goals.</li> <li>• Achieve skills to earn badges that can help showcase your abilities to employers.</li> </ul>	<p>Website: <a href="http://uwf.edu/argo2pro">uwf.edu/argo2pro</a></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice and develop your interviewing skills on your own.</li> <li>• Research commonly asked questions and answers for them.</li> </ul>	<p>Website: <a href="http://uwf.biginterview.com">uwf.biginterview.com</a></p> <p>Can be accessed through MyUWF</p> <p>Access <a href="#">CDCE's Big Interview page</a></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help explore and identify career opportunities, in-demand jobs and more.</li> </ul>	<p>Website: <a href="http://employflorida.com">employflorida.com</a></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a personality assessment to find out what careers are best for you.</li> <li>• Explore what careers are connected to your major.</li> <li>• Learn how much money you can make in a certain career field.</li> </ul>	<p>Website: <a href="http://uwf.edu/focus2career">uwf.edu/focus2career</a></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find job listings from employers seeking college students and/or recent graduates.</li> <li>• Help you create or check over resumes and cover letters.</li> <li>• Explore upcoming career events and research employers.</li> </ul>	<p>Website: <a href="http://uwf.joinhandshake.com/edu">uwf.joinhandshake.com/edu</a></p> <p>Can be accessed through MyUWF</p> <p>Access <a href="http://uwf.edu/handshake">uwf.edu/handshake</a> for more information</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn how much money you can make with your chosen degree.</li> </ul>	<p>Website: <a href="http://flbog.edu/myfloridafuture">flbog.edu/myfloridafuture</a></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain professional experience and get paid without making a huge time commitment.</li> </ul>	<p>Website: <a href="http://info.parkerdewey.com/uwf">info.parkerdewey.com/uwf</a></p> <p>Access the <a href="#">Gain Relevant Experience page</a> for information on High-Impact Practices and Experiential Learning</p>



Career Development and  
Community Engagement

UNIVERSITY *of* WEST FLORIDA