

Student FAQs

Common questions that students ask faculty and staff

Job Applications

I have applied to a hundred positions with no response; what am I doing wrong?

There is more to a successful job search than submitting lots of applications. It is most important to ensure that students are applying to positions that align with their skills, qualifications and experience.

As they move forward in any search, there are a few key things to remember:

- Students should follow up after they apply, as it is important to indicate interest in the position.
- Building connections with alumni and employers through networking and career events is also important. This can be done prior to applying as well as while going through the application process.
- Students can plan their search process and efforts with their career consultant, so scheduling a meeting with a career consultant is a good next step. For the meeting, students should be prepared to share their resume(s) and a few sample positions to which they recently applied.
- Career consultants can help students evaluate their resumes for these positions and discuss their career plans to ensure that they are applying to the right jobs at the right time.

What is my job/internship search timeline; when should I apply?

Timelines depend on when students are graduating (for full-time jobs) or when they will be completing an internship, as well as within what industry they are searching. Career consultants can assist students in developing a customized timeline based on their career interests.

For most majors/industries, we encourage students to start searching one or two semesters before they graduate/will intern. For many larger employers, the fall semester tends to be a busier recruiting time; and so, if possible, students should start their searches in the fall by, at minimum, attending career fairs and applying to positions in Handshake. Smaller companies and employers for specific industries may recruit closer to when students will actually be hired, so students may find more success in their searches during the semester in which they will graduate or the semester before their desired internship.

Networking

How/Why do I network? I don't know anyone at any companies where I'd like to work.

Networking is a great way to increase your chances of moving along in the hiring process and includes many facets that are quite different in approach. For example, when networking with a recruiter, students will directly introduce themselves as a candidate for specific positions, whereas when students network with CMU alumni, they will focus on information sharing and getting to know them and their work.

Often we think of networking as a way to get a recruiter to read a candidate's resume so that it is not just one of hundreds in a recruitment database. Networking, however, is really all about making connections with people, from those students already know such as family, faculty, advisors, and classmates, to CMU alumni. These connections may in turn lead to assistance or referrals in their job/internship searches.

LinkedIn allows students to connect with people they may already know, as well as CMU alumni and new professional connections. Students can view CMU alumni by location, employer and even by what the CMU alum majored in while at school. CMU LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/school/carnegie-mellon-university/>

CMUniverse is another resource that allows students to connect with alumni mentors and ask for advice on a variety of career-related topics. Since 80% of professionals credit networking for their career success, CMUniverse is just one of the ways to enhance and foster professional connections for students. Learn more and register for a CMUniverse account at <https://cmuniverse.peoplegrove.com>

When students network, they should not ask contacts directly to help them to secure a job/interview. Rather, they should focus on seeking information that may help them determine the best way to apply to a particular company, and in doing so, build connections that may assist them in furthering their applications.

How do I get an employee referral for a job/internship?

Employee referrals are a great resource for recruiters and hiring managers, and are often sought by job/internship candidates to elevate their profile within a company. Networking with alumni and other professionals is a great way to build relationships that may naturally lead to a referral for a job or internship.

Students should never reach out to a new or unknown contact asking for help or a referral without first building a relationship. The better a contact can speak about a student and their abilities at an individual level in their referral, the more value a hiring manager/recruiter will place on the referral. Once a student builds a positive relationship with a professional contact (through informational interviews, speaking at events, etc.), they may then ask for assistance in the job/internship search process including asking for an employee referral.

FAST FACT

The CPDC engaged with 639 unique employers for the 2019-2020 academic year via on-campus interviews, career fairs, info sessions, and other career events.

INTERACTING WITH EMPLOYERS: Career Fairs & Interviews

How do I prepare for a career fair?

First, students should update/write their resumes, utilize VMock (the CPDC's virtual resume review platform) to improve their resumes and have it reviewed by their career consultant or attend a resume lab.

Next, students should review in Handshake employers who will be attending the career fair. Students then should determine a list of up to 20 companies of interest, and prioritize their top 10 that they would like to work for and with whom they would be a good fit for positions.

Prior to the fair, students should prepare and practice their elevator pitch/self-introduction. This is a 30-second summary of their skills, strengths, experiences and what they are interested in speaking with that employer about (job/internship, type of role, how their skills match, etc.). Students should not memorize their introductions, but instead should practice it aloud so they are comfortable with the main points they would like to make.

Students should be prepared to ask a few questions of each employer about their job openings and project opportunities.

Finally, students must know every detail of their resumes and be ready to explain anything they have listed using positive and specific wording.

Helpful resources, including VMock, are located here:

<https://www.cmu.edu/career/students-and-alumni/browse-resources/index.html>

I am getting interviews but never seem to get any offers. What am I doing wrong?

If students are receiving interviews but not offers, we recommend they examine their interviewing skills. To do this, students can schedule a meeting with their career consultant to discuss their skills and complete a mock interview. Career consultants can help students evaluate their interactions with interviewers and potential areas for improvement.

Students can also use a resource called Big Interview located within the Career Center section of Handshake, in Resources. This will allow them to conduct a recorded mock interview to evaluate their interview question responses.

Some things for the student to evaluate:

- Do their answers clearly respond to the question asked?
- Are they giving their answers using the STAR method (situation-task-action-results), clearly stating what they did, how they did it, and the outcome?
- Are they selecting responses that are high in scope and complexity, and which highlight themselves at their best?
- Are their answers between 1-3 minutes long?
- Are their answers spoken in a smooth manner, with not many um's or uh's?

FAST FACT

Over 5050 interviews for internships and jobs were conducted in the 2019-2020 academic year from First-Years to Doctorate students.

Job Offers

How do I decide which job/internship will be the best fit for me? Which job/internship offer should I accept?

To make these decisions, we suggest students evaluate their options using several different methods. One is a pro/con list. Another is a rating system that they create, evaluating aspects of the decision such as location, job responsibilities, supervisor, colleagues, salary, fit with their major, fit with their desired dream job, etc. Once they rate each piece of each offer on a scale of 1 to 10, then they will have a way of comparing the offers in a logical way. In addition, evaluating their offers using their intuition can be an important aspect of this process.

Finally, discussing their thought process with their advisor, career consultant, faculty and mentors can help to solidify their ultimate decision. Remember, most of the time there is no one right answer. Each offer has a unique advantage and so no matter what the decision, their career journey will continue to move forward in a positive way. Though students may receive guidance or input from many people throughout this process, only the students can make the final choice based on what is best for their individual situation.

FAST FACT

The CPDC achieved a Post-Graduation Survey knowledge rate of over 91% for Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorate students.
