



# UNIVERSITY OF MONTEVALLO Career Development Center

## COLLEGE TO CAREER



### COLLEGE AS PREPARATION

Your time in college provides you an excellent opportunity to lay the groundwork for your career. College students are strongly urged to begin early preparing for their transition into the job market. It is recommended that you begin the process in your Freshman year and continue it throughout your college tenure. To help ensure success after graduation, by the time a student completes his or her Senior year, he or she should have accomplished some, if not all, of the following worthwhile activities:

- Take a career test to assess how your personality matches your choice of major and career
- Explore career options by learning about various occupations
- Read books, publications, articles, on-line material, and other resources to learn about various occupations
- Meet with a career counselor
- Participate in mentor programs and job shadowing programs
- Join a campus club or organization
- Join a professional organization or society
- Learn how to write a resume, prepare for an interview, and plan a job search
- Attend job market strategies workshops
- Learn effective networking techniques
- Attend career fairs and other career-related events
- Obtain a part time job related to your field
- Obtain an internship related to your field
- Participate in a volunteer community service project in which your function uses relevant skills
- Attend a professional convention or conference
- Assume a leadership position

### EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Employers continually express a strong preference for candidates with experience that extends beyond academic credentials. With more and more college graduates entering today's competitive job market, it becomes necessary for candidates to demonstrate how their college experience yielded more than just a degree and how they applied their classroom training in real world settings. Employers seek candidates who gained additional or co-curricular experience during their college tenure through involvement in campus organizations, internships, community service projects, and part time jobs.



### UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES

College students have available to them a wealth of on-campus opportunities related to their professional and personal growth. Most universities offer numerous services, resources, and activities that might be beneficial to students' development. Students should take advantage of the many social, cultural, and recreational activities that take place on campus, including concerts, art shows, guest speakers, plays, and sporting events. A variety of support services, including tutoring, counseling, advising, special training, and assessments, await the student who realizes the intrinsic value of these offerings.

Also available throughout the school year are career fairs, career information expos, employment conferences, career issues forums, job skills workshops, and graduate school fairs. Career counseling and career testing are available. The extent to which students take advantage of the resources offered for their development will be reflected in their level of preparedness and employability upon graduation.

**"Campus experiences outside the classroom enhance and expand the education a student receives while in college. Extracurricular activities allows students to apply knowledge, build skills, and gain experience and credibility. They are an extension of one's college education over and above the pursuit of a degree and clearly make the student more valuable and marketable upon graduation. Additionally, students who possess the two critical ingredients—focus and experience—will easily make themselves into the best candidates in a competitive job market."**

-MICHAEL LEBEAU / Career Counselor



## TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Through active participation in campus clubs, organizations, and other extracurricular activities, students are provided an opportunity to use and develop their skills in leadership, supervision, organization, instruction, interpersonal relations, event planning, project management, fund raising, finance, and a variety of other skills that can easily transfer to the workplace.

Students learn collaborative skills and teamwork while working in groups. They learn discipline and determination through athletic involvement. They learn creative and communication skills through artistic and theatrical projects. They learn analytical skills through research projects.

Volunteer activities also offer students a chance to gain valuable experience through a wide range of community service projects and philanthropic efforts.

**"The total university experience is far more than the opportunity to pursue one's career goals in the classroom. It also offers the unique opportunity to serve and to lead. An essential part of your education is linked to the opportunity to participate in student organizations and activities. Leadership, character development and socialization of an individual are enhanced when one chooses to affiliate and participate actively in one of our campus student organizations."**

-FREDA SHIVERS / Student Affairs Professional

## PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Practical experience in a risk-free environment can be gained through internships, research projects, on-campus programs, part time jobs, temporary jobs, or seasonal jobs. In addition to acquiring career-related knowledge and skills, students are able to make important personal contacts within their field of interest. It is a chance for them to "get their foot in the door." Moreover, candidates with experience have more credibility and maturity and a better chance in the job market than candidates without experience.

Experience does not need to be in the form of a paid or fulltime job in order to be relevant. Valuable experience might be gained in any number of part time, freelance, or voluntary settings. Some of the best experience students gain take place on the college campus and perhaps for no pay.



## JOB PERFORMANCE

What skills do employers value? What attitudes, traits and characteristics would most employers like their employees to have?

- Competence - Ability to do the job well
- Initiative - Working without constant direction or supervision
- Dependability - Being there when needed
- Reliability - Getting the job done
- Efficiency - Being accurate and capable
- Loyalty - Being trustworthy and honest
- Maturity - Behaving as an adult, being stable and even-tempered, and maintaining composure
- Communication - Ability to express oneself clearly and concisely through speaking and writing
- Problem-Solving - Ability to address issues, generate options, settle uncertainties and make decisions
- Cheerfulness - Pleasant, optimistic, agreeable
- Helpfulness - Willing to pitch in, serve or assist with a sense of urgency
- Teamwork - Working together with others, being cooperative and unselfish
- Perseverance - Determination and patience in carrying on with a tedious project
- Responsibility - Taking care of duties, being accountable
- Creativity - Original, resourceful, imaginative, innovative
- Enthusiasm - Energetic, positive, self-motivated
- Adaptability - Adjusting to new situations, being flexible

**"Start with a solid education. And then specialize in something. There won't be much demand for generalists with no particular skills, nothing special to offer. At the same time, be flexible. Be open to change. Also, communication skills are a must, getting ideas across clearly... Education will be a lifetime process. More emphasis will be placed on entrepreneurship. Pay will be tied more to performance."**

-KIPLINGER WASHINGTON LETTER

**"The new economy favors people with qualities like self-motivation, initiative, flexibility, ability to work with a team, and the capacity to learn and adapt to change."**

-LAURENCE BOLDT

## PRACTICAL ABILITIES

What intellectual and practical abilities are desired by employers? According to Hart Research Associates, employers identified the following traits:

- Ability to communicate effectively, orally and in writing (89%)
- Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills (81%)
- Ability to analyze and solve complex problems (75%)
- Teamwork skills and the ability to collaborate with others in diverse group settings (71%)
- Ability to innovate and be creative (70%)
- Ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources (68%)
- Ability to work with numbers and understand statistics (63%)

(Source: *Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Turndown*)



## WORKPLACE COMPETENCIES

The changing workplace demands a change in the skills workers will now need to develop. A new set of expectations are now associated with the new world of work... Learning skills... Writing and speaking skills... Computation skills, Cognitive reasoning skills... Interpersonal skills... Critical thinking and problem solving skills... Leadership skills... Computer and technical skills. Also, the demands of the new workplace will require a greater multicultural understanding and competency in working with diverse populations.



## EMPLOYER FEEDBACK

When asked to rate what is most important in the traits possessed by candidates applying for professional positions, one typical employer provided this feedback. On a scale of 1 to 10, the following items were evaluated:

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| -Work Ethic           | 10 |
| -Ability to Learn     | 8  |
| -Maturity             | 8  |
| -Communication Skills | 7  |
| -Skills and Knowledge | 6  |
| -Grades               | 5  |

## NEW ATTITUDE

New employees, fresh out of college, can either rebel or they can attempt to understand and adjust to the demands of the new work environment. The following tips will give you some insight into the mindset of the typical manager and help you relate to your new boss more effectively, plus give you the perspective you need to succeed in the workplace.

*Be Patient With Your Progress....* You've grown up with speed and you're used to getting what you want quickly. Consequently, you may expect raises and promotions to come equally fast. While it's true that too much patience leads to exploitation, your version of patience may differ from your manager's. You may not be able to come right out of school and jump straight up to the top. There are dues to pay in any profession, and you may have to spend some time in the minor leagues before advancing to the majors. Companies are seeking new hires who are more content with slower upward progress.

*Pay Your Dues....* Don't think of paying dues as suffering. Think of paying dues as developing appreciation while learning the ropes. Manager's believe that you not only need the skills but the seasoning before being promoted. To veterans, there's no substitute for time and experience. Maintain a good attitude about learning new things and be willing to invest the time it takes to become proficient. You'll also learn to appreciate what it takes to do a job well and to make better decisions.

*Be More Achievement-Oriented...* Complete every assignment you're given, regardless of whether it leads to more pay or promotion. Be more results-oriented. Display a sense of urgency. Finish what you begin. Don't procrastinate. Strive to achieve all your goals all the time in a first job. Even with routine tasks, never let work stack up and never postpone a project.

*Stop Watching The Clock....* Nothing bugs managers more than knowing employees want to leave exactly at quitting time. If you never arrive a minute early or never leave a minute late and complain about cutting short a lunch hour or working an occasional evening or weekend, you'll be branded a slacker. Even taking all your sick days, although you may be entitled to them, is another sign that you are not serious about work.

*Fun Isn't Everything....* While many young employees believe that work should be fun, many daily assignments can in fact be routine and boring. In reality, no job is 100% fun, and fun shouldn't be the sole measure of a job's value. You have to start somewhere, sometimes doing things that may be unpleasant. Veteran managers believe the career fitness philosophy: no pain, no gain. Ask anyone to name a meaningful accomplishment and they'll likely identify a tough, rather than a fun endeavor.

## **CAREER SUCCESS**

Consider these comments from Bradley Richardson, author of *JobSmarts for Twentysomethings*:

What separates the winners from the losers? What will it take for you to stand above the rest and succeed in your career? Do you think that your degree, limited work experience, and charm will make you the most desirable employee in the world? The days of just getting by on your degree are over. You need a lot more than good grades, experience, and an impressive resume to make it. There are certain skills that you won't find in class. You won't find them in the syllabus of life, and you must have them to make it today.

C+ doesn't cut it in the real world. The days of doing only what it takes to get by, or doing things less than 100 percent, are gone. Think of business as a giant pass/fail class. You must be exceptional. Doing just enough to get by or only what is asked of you is a major reflection on your work. Keep that up and you won't get very far. You must go above and beyond. You cannot afford to turn in late, incomplete, or sloppy work. You cannot afford to not return phone calls promptly. And you definitely can't afford to make excuses.

The self-motivated individual looks for projects on their own, and doesn't always have to be told what to do. These individuals are recognized first and viewed as exceptional.

Average performers don't stay around very long. There are millions of young, educated, talented, and hungry people who need work. And if you think you are secure by only doing enough to get by and collecting a paycheck, you are sadly mistaken. Everyone is expendable.

There's no place is your career for mediocrity, procrastination, sloppiness, or not paying attention to details. The competition is too tough. What makes an A+ performance? Doing more than is asked of you. Making the extra effort and seeing that the job is completed thoroughly. Taking the initiative and not waiting for someone to tell you what to do. And, most of all, doing it with a smile.

Become a Renaissance person. The most successful people are those who are well-rounded and know a little bit about a lot of things. Having interest in or knowledge of a wide range of subjects makes you a more marketable and interesting person.

Success in business revolves around communication. The better you communicate, the more success you will achieve. Polish your grammar. Make a conscious effort to clean up your speech and communicate more clearly. Improve your vocabulary.

## **BEYOND KNOWLEDGE & SKILL**

In rating potential employees, employers generally point to three key areas: Knowledge, Skill, Attitude.

Knowledge comes from education and training. And candidates who have had the opportunity to apply their knowledge in a real world setting, and gain some experience, have developed some level of skill.

But, the most important factor is attitude. Attitude is rare and innate. It is about work ethic, dedication, dependability, responsibility, a sense of initiative, and a collection of traits related to effective interpersonal skills. A positive work attitude includes flexibility, adaptability, cooperation, teamwork, and a service orientation. The mindset of the candidate who possesses a positive attitude is one that seeks to go beyond the call of duty and performs above expectations.

