

# JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

The job search process might seem overwhelming, but you can stay on top of it by being organized and following a set plan of action. The best way to succeed is to put time and energy into your job search—we recommend that you set aside, at a minimum, a few hours a week for your search. Treat it as a fourth class, and begin early, as many employers will recruit for summer internships and full-time employment starting as early as September. As you follow the steps below, set small goals and deadlines for yourself in terms of how many companies you research, how many job applications you submit weekly, how much networking and informational interviewing you conduct, and how much time you devote to following up with companies and opportunities.

## Getting Organized

### What do you have to offer?

Before you begin your job search, take inventory of what you have to offer an employer. Start by reviewing your resume. Consider the following:

- **Skills gained from classes, projects, or summer internships:** Think about skills in terms of software, programming languages, equipment, laboratory techniques, foreign languages, or any other skill that you could envision using on a job.
- **Project and coursework experience:** How could you apply this knowledge and experience in a job? What classes, labs, and projects did you enjoy the most? What roles did you play?
- **Clubs/organizations and leadership roles:** These activities show that you can lead and motivate a group, conduct meetings, understand or manage budgets, and are a team player.

### What type of position do you want?

Until now, you might have only thought about your major in broad career-related terms. Now is

the time to take a more focused view by thinking about specific functions you would like to perform. Is there a functionality or department you believe would be the best place to draw out your talents, skills, and passions? Departments include research and development, design, manufacturing, quality testing, laboratory work, sales, marketing, business analysis, finance, and more.

Take these steps to help define what roles best fit your skills and interests:

- Explore career portals on company websites by department and job function. Read job descriptions to learn what specific job titles really mean.
- Identify people on LinkedIn who have roles that interest you. Read their profiles to learn more about what they do day-to-day. Reference the **Networking and LinkedIn** tipsheet for details on how to utilize LinkedIn.
- Network and conduct informational interviews with WPI alumni and professionals to learn more about career paths related to different majors. Reference CDC tipsheets on **Networking and LinkedIn** and **Informational Interviews**.



- If you are still unsure about options or want to learn more about career paths, make a career counseling appointment with a CDC staff member. Appointments are scheduled in your **Handshake** account.
- Do you want to work in a specific geographical area?
- What lifestyle qualities are important to you?

### Getting Started: Identifying Industries and Companies

The first step in your job search is to develop a list of target companies by deciding in what industries you are interested and for which types of companies you would like to work.

#### What Industry? Targeting Your Search

An industry is a general term used to describe a group of businesses that do similar things and provide the same product or service to the economy. Popular industries for WPI students include manufacturing, technology, research centers, consultants, business services, healthcare, biotechnology, and many more. CareerShift (located in the Resources section of **Handshake**) and Hoover's Database (accessible through the **Gordon Library website**) provide lists of industries.

#### What Kind of Company? Targeting Your Search

Think about what type of company you want to work for:

- Are you interested in working for a publicly held or privately held company?
- Is it important for you to work for a company that focuses on sustainability and green initiatives?

Try to broaden your job search beyond your immediate region as much as possible. Even if you want to stay local, think beyond just Worcester or Boston by exploring the entire state of Massachusetts, and checking out nearby Providence and Hartford.

If you are willing to relocate, you will find many additional job opportunities. Research the fastest growing cities, places that are hubs for your favorite extracurricular activities, or major metropolitan areas. The location of your first job will not necessarily be your final destination, so try to be open to many possibilities.

You should also consider what size company would be suitable for you. Corporate size can be measured by the number of total employees, number of employees in a specific branch or location, or total corporate revenue. There are many differences between working at a small company and working at a large international company, both culturally and financially. If you have not had the opportunity to explore this facet of your job search, you should take some time to talk to professionals who work in a variety of settings, perhaps by conducting informational interviews.

#### Building Your List of Target Companies

Do your research on industries and companies to find out what companies exist and which ones might be a good fit for you. There are literally billions of companies around the world, so take your time and research extensively. As



you investigate, develop two lists of companies to explore further: an **A List** that includes 25-35 companies that really interest you, and a **B List** of 25 - 35 companies that includes similar companies or places that might interest you. Use these resources to help build your lists:

### Company Listings in Handshake

**Handshake** is a web-based system accessible to WPI students and alumni only. It houses job opportunities (full-time, summer internships, co-op, part-time), On-Campus Interviewing, CareerShift, Going Global, Focus2, and Tipsheets. Handshake has great **tutorials** on how to best use this resource, make sure to check them out!

### CareerShift

CareerShift is accessible through your Handshake account in the Resources section. It nicely supplements Handshake by providing job postings from all over the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. It also provides contact information for professionals inside organizations and facilitates the process of finding contacts within companies to whom you should address cover letters or follow up on applications. In addition, it includes an organizational feature that allows you to track and store jobs you have applied for, contacts, follow up information, and more.

### GoinGlobal

GoinGlobal is also accessible through the Resources section in Handshake. It provides job and internship postings from all over the world and is an excellent tool for students who want to work in other countries. GoinGlobal provides information on 32 countries including job search

resources, non-profit and volunteer organizations, industry and employment trends, top companies, social networking, embassy listings, financial considerations, work permits/visas, resume guidelines, interviewing advice, and cultural advice.

GoinGlobal also provides resources about cities in the U.S. and Canada. In addition to the resources listed above, it provides information including a city overview, cost of living, chambers of commerce, telephone directories, H-1B companies, and work permits/visas.

### Hoover's Company Profiles

Hoover's Company Profiles provides information on companies and industries worldwide. You can access it through the **Gordon Library** website and use it to search for companies, industries, and contact people using a variety of criteria. You may also use it to identify contact names of professionals to

whom you can address your cover letter (look for a Hiring Manager or Human Resources professional).

### Do Your Research

Once you have identified a company that you would like to learn more about, go to the company's website. Read about their mission, values, and products and services. Google the company to find recent articles and press releases. Utilize Gordon Library's company information subject guides. The more research you do to familiarize yourself with the company, the easier it will be to determine if the company is right for you.

## Next Steps: Identifying Job Openings

Now that you have identified industries, companies, and roles that interest you, you should research current job openings in these areas. Use the resources below to find and apply to job openings:

### Handshake

It is extremely important that you use your **Handshake** account for your internship, co-op, full-time, or even part-time job search, as companies post jobs directly in Handshake specifically for WPI undergraduates and graduate students, as well as alumni. New job postings are added daily, so check your account regularly. Follow these steps to search job postings:

- Upload your resume. Stop by the CDC to have your resume critiqued before adding it to Handshake.

For additional assistance on using Handshake, please sign up for an Internship/Co-op/Job Search Appointment (in Handshake) or stop in for Drop Ins.

### Career Fairs

The CDC hosts **Career Fairs** each year that are open to all WPI undergraduate students, graduate students, and alumni: the Fall Career Fair in September, and the Spring Career Fair in February. We invite thousands of companies to attend, enabling you to network with key company contacts, identify potential job openings, and enhance your professional communication skills.

For detailed information on preparing for and attending career fairs, see the **How to Make a Career Fair Work for You** tipsheet.

### Company Information Sessions

Companies hold information sessions to get acquainted with WPI students in preparation for on-campus interviewing and recruiting. Many corporations will conduct their information sessions the night before their on-campus recruiting date.

It is extremely important that you attend information sessions if you are interested in working for a company, especially if you have been selected for an on-campus interview. The corporate representative leading the presentation is usually the person who will be interviewing you, and will expect to see you there—the session can even serve as the first stage of your interview.

If you were not selected for an on-campus interview, you should still attend the information session and introduce yourself to the company representative at the end. Companies may leave extra slots in their interview schedules for students who impress them at information sessions.

You should dress in business casual attire and be on your most professional behavior at corporate information sessions.

### On-Campus Interviewing

The On-Campus Interviewing Program (OCI) at WPI provides undergraduate and graduate students opportunities to interview with companies for summer, co-op, and full-time positions. Interviews take place in the CDC and are held throughout the academic year.

You can participate in the OCI Program through your Handshake account.

### Card-Scan Database: Employers' Business Cards

You should always ask for contact information or business cards from company representatives you interact with at career fairs, information sessions, and recruiting events. However, if you neglect to write down this information or get a business card, you can check the Card-Scan Database, located on the two computers in the CDC lobby. It contains scanned-in business cards from company recruiters and corporate contacts and is searchable by name and event. The database is also a great resource for locating company contact names when writing thank you notes or cover letters. Remember, you can only access the database in the CDC lobby during office hours, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

### Internet Job Search

During your job search, we recommend that you spend no more than 20% of your time looking for jobs on Internet job boards—only 15% of open jobs are actually advertised, while 85% are hidden. You can learn about these hidden jobs by doing your research and networking. Try to find out which people in a company are the first to know about new job openings and check with your professional or personal contacts.

You might also find out about hidden jobs when you apply for other advertised positions. Once your resume is in a company's database, they might search for it, by using key word searches, when a hiring need arises.

### Job Boards

In addition to listing job opportunities on corporate websites, companies may post opportunities on job boards. These boards may be general or centered on certain professions, locations, industries, and job functions.

The CDC website lists some **job boards** including boards for general search, industry-specific jobs, internships, government jobs, working abroad, and green jobs. We also recommend **Indeed.com** as a good general databank, as it includes postings from other job boards. Take some time to explore various sites and bookmark the ones that you find helpful.

If you find a job that interests you on a job board, apply through the board and also check the company website to see if it has additional opportunities available. Also remember that job boards can help you discover new companies to put on your target list.

### Professional Associations

Every profession has one or several related professional associations, which are nonprofit organizations dedicated to providing information on industry best practices, resources, technology, news, and networking opportunities. Many professional associations offer career-related information, job posting boards, conferences and workshops, publications, and trend reports on where the profession is headed.

Professional associations often offer discounted membership to students, and many have their own student chapters. For a list of student chapters at WPI, visit the **Student Activities** website and search for Professional/Career

Development organizations and professional societies, or contact your department. You can also search for groups online based on a major, topic, theme, industry, or functionality. If possible, attend conferences and workshops to get better connected to the industry and professionals in your areas of interest.

### Networking

Networking is the process of developing and maintaining relationships with people who can give you information, advice, and referrals to increase your visibility in the job market. It allows you to market your skills and abilities to key contacts within your field or area of interest.

Networking also allows you to tap into the hidden job market. When job openings arise, companies often look to existing employees for referrals—one in seven employee referrals are hired, while only one in a hundred general candidates are hired (Source: Jobvite, 9/2/12). By building a strong network of contacts, you increase the likelihood of becoming one of these referrals.

Establishing key industry contacts will also help you keep up-to-date on current trends in your industry and can provide a firsthand view into occupations about which you'd like to learn more.

Below are some steps to consider as you build your network:

- Make a list of anyone you know or have a connection to (e.g, WPI alum) who might have information that will help your search.
- Set up informational interviews. Before you do, decide what you are going to say, such as explaining who referred you, noting your class year, and discussing your interests (e.g., hiring

trends, exploring career paths, names of others who might help you).

- Find out as much as you can about your contact and the company before you contact them.
- Always ask your contact if it is a convenient time to talk, or set up a meeting or conversation.
- Ask your contact to recommend other potential contacts.
- Approach the contact with the goal of acquiring advice, not getting a job.
- Join professional organizations where you can easily meet people in your industry.
- Send a thank you letter after every networking exchange, whether it was in person or over the telephone.
- Contact the person quarterly to report progress and ask for new leads.

For more information on how to Network effectively, see our **Networking and LinkedIn** tip sheet.

### Social Media Networking Resources: LinkedIn, Alumni Connect, Twitter, Facebook

Social media platforms have become key resources for building an online professional presence and creating strong networks of key contacts. First and foremost, if you do not already have a LinkedIn account, you should create one. LinkedIn operates the world's largest professional online network, with more than 277 million members in more than 200 countries and territories. It is a highly effective

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tool for career management, personal branding, resume development, business and professional relationship building, and job searching. You can use LinkedIn to:

- **Keep in touch** As you connect with people, LinkedIn can help you grow your network and stay connected to alumni, friends, professors, coworkers, and others.
- **Get recruited** Many companies use LinkedIn to recruit potential job candidates, so make sure your profile is complete and up-to-date. Many companies also post job openings on LinkedIn.
- **Follow up on in-person meetings** You can use LinkedIn to follow up or connect with people you meet at workshops, professional events, and meetings.
- **Join LinkedIn groups** LinkedIn has a vast number of groups for professional interests and affiliations. We encourage you to join and utilize groups to identify and connect with people who share your interests. Look for groups from professional associations, industries, and WPI (e.g., WPI Alumni groups).

To find out more about using LinkedIn, read our **Networking and LinkedIn** tip sheet.

Additional social media resources you can use:

- **WPI AlumniConnect:** If you are a senior or WPI alumnus, you can use AlumniConnect to stay up-to-date, connect, and access the Alumni Directory, where you can search for alumni by company, location, major, or job title. Activate your account through the **Office of Alumni Relations**.

- **Twitter:** This can be a great way to learn about current events related to companies of interest. Some professional associations or job boards also have Twitter feeds that list new opportunities. Hashtags are a great way to follow career opportunities or your field of interest on Twitter.
- **Facebook:** Liking company Facebook pages is a great way to stay up-to-date and find out more about a company's culture. However, you must remember to manage your online presence and set your Facebook privacy settings accordingly. Many recruiters will also search for a potential candidate's Facebook page, so be aware of what they can see—you don't want a Facebook post to affect your chances of getting that dream job.

## Additional Resources

### Gordon Library

You can access many resources for career planning at the Gordon Library. Some helpful resources include *The Occupational Outlook Handbook*, *Careers for Number Crunchers*, *Riley Guide*, *America's Career InfoNet*, *The Wall Street Journal's "Career Journal,"* and more.

### Federal Jobs

Students who are U.S. citizens are eligible for jobs with the U.S. federal government. Today, the government has such a broad mission it is looking for students in a wide variety of fields. Students majoring in engineering, business, computer science, IT, environmental sciences, physical sciences, and medical and public health are particularly in demand. The top career fields forecasted for federal government employment are security, enforcement and

compliance assistance, medical and public health, engineering and sciences, program management/administrative and accounting, budget, and business.

- **Go Government** ([gogovernment.org](http://gogovernment.org)) is an excellent website dedicated to helping college undergraduate and graduate students explore the federal government process.
- **USAJOBS** ([usajobs.gov](http://usajobs.gov)) lists many federal government opportunities. You should also visit specific agency websites to learn about opportunities, as not all agencies post on these websites.

Federal Agencies of particular interest to WPI students include Department of Defense, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Homeland Security, Department of the Interior, Department of Transportation, NASA, Environmental Protection Agency, Peace Corps, Department of Air Force, Department of Navy, Department of Army, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and more. *Note:* not all agencies post jobs to USAJOBS, so it is important to search agency websites for job postings.

With regards to job levels with the government, undergraduate students looking for a full-time job would seek a Grade Level of 5 or 7, graduate students would seek a Grade Level of 7, and PhD candidates would seek a Grade Level of 9 or 11. When applying to a federal job, it is important that you use a federal resume and follow all application instructions. Save or print the job posting so you can follow up on your application. The federal government has rolled out a new student employment program. For more information on federal jobs, make an appointment to talk to a CDC Counselor.

### Tips for International Students

International students conducting a job search should review the **Job Search Process for International Students** tip sheet and view the CDC webpage on **Tips for International Students**.

Another resource you should use is **GoInGlobal**. It is located in the Resources section of your Handshake account and provides a database of H-1B companies/employer petitions from the U.S. Department of Labor. These companies have hired international people within the past year and may be included in your A and B lists of desirable companies. The H-1B database allows for individual searches by job title, occupation, employer, wage, and other fields.

The CDC is always happy to help, but if you have any visa-specific questions, you should also visit the International House.

### Tips for LGBT+ Students

The CDC is a current Silver Level Partner with "Out for Work." Students can access the LGBT+ Career Center library at [www.outforwork.org/resources/career\\_center/library.asp](http://www.outforwork.org/resources/career_center/library.asp). Use the username: **outforwork** and the password: **cccp2013**. Other resources include [www.progayjobs.com](http://www.progayjobs.com) and [workplacediversity.com](http://workplacediversity.com). The CDC encourages LGBT+ students to make an appointment to discuss applications, interviewing, and job search and other questions and concerns. In addition, the CDC now has a **LGBTQ+ Job Search** Tipsheet.



### Tips for Students Who Work with the Office of Disability Services

The CDC supports students with documented physical, learning, sensory, psychological, developmental, and other disabilities. We encourage students to make one-on-one appointments with a CDC staff member so we can work closely with you as you seek advice on choosing a major and internship and job support. The CDC has a tipsheet on **Resources for Students with Disabilities**.

### Job Search Quick Action Plan

The checklist below will help you identify the next steps in your job search so that you can form an action plan:

- Define your job objective, what you want to do or what role you are targeting. Make sure this objective is reflected on your resume (you may have various versions of your resume to support different job objectives).
- Identify the industries and company types of interest to you—large or small, private or public, revenue level, sustainable initiatives, specific technology, etc.
- Identify work and lifestyle values that are important to you, e.g., a flexible work schedule, travel percentage, affordable living in the area, rural location vs. being near a city, working outside, spending most of your time at a desk, etc.
- Use Handshake, CareerShift, GoinGlobal, Hoover's Company Profiles, and the Internet to research companies of interest.
- Take inventory of the skills you have to

offer an employer and think about how you can highlight these skills in your resume, cover letter, networking conversations, and interviews.

- Use Handshake, Job Boards, Company websites, and professional organizations to find job openings that align with your interests and skills.
- Network—use LinkedIn.com and AlumniConnect to identify potential networking contacts. Reach out to these contacts to set up informational meetings or calls to learn more about their company role, and any guidance they can offer.
- Keep a record system of all job postings you have applied for and when. Use the job tracking sheet at the end of this tip sheet as a guide to stay organized and see your progress. You should be applying for multiple opportunities weekly, if not daily.
- Prepare for interviews. Reference the CDC tipsheet on **The Interview Process**. You may also set up an appointment with the CDC to discuss interview skills or conduct a mock interview. Think about the questions you would like to ask a potential employer if you receive an interview.

### Remember....

The CDC is here to help you through the job search process. Log in to your Handshake account and set up an internship, co-op, or job search strategy appointment with a CDC staff member. We can help you:

- Learn more about major, career, and industry specific resources



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- Create a unique job search strategy and highlight specific resources that match your interests
- Create an action plan for your personal job search integrating all of the available resources to help you find your dream internship, co-op, or full-time job

The CDC also maintains a Resource Library including books on interviewing, networking, and majors and careers, as well as industry-specific books, graduate school resources, and more. The library also contains “major binders” with information on careers, salary levels, professional associations, and more for each undergraduate major at WPI. There is also a section for students who want to work abroad or research companies that do business in both the United States and other countries.

Additionally, the CDC presents job search workshops every term throughout the academic year and works with departments to provide major- and career-specific programs such as job search workshops, career panels, and other targeted topics. Visit the **CDC Website** ([wpi.edu/+CDC](http://wpi.edu/+CDC)) to learn more about these programs and view a calendar of events.

### Job Tracking Sheet

Use the template on the following page or create one of your own to track your job application activities during your job search. Creating an Excel spreadsheet to track your job application process is recommended. It will help you remember to follow up on submitted applications, provide an easy reference for contact names and phone numbers, and keep you apprised of your job search activity.



### Job Tracking Sheet

Company	Contact Name	Contact Info	Job	Date Applied	Follow-up Date	Notes

**Career Development Center**  
 Project Center  
 508-831-5260 | [cdc@wpi.edu](mailto:cdc@wpi.edu)  
[wpi.edu/+cdc](http://wpi.edu/+cdc)

 [facebook.com/cdcatwpi](https://facebook.com/cdcatwpi)  
 [@cdcatwpi](https://twitter.com/cdcatwpi)  
 [wpi\\_cdc](https://www.instagram.com/wpi_cdc)

 [youtube.com/cdcatwpi](https://youtube.com/cdcatwpi)  
 [pinterest.com/wpi\\_cdc](https://pinterest.com/wpi_cdc)