



# Your Career Prep Timeline: A Year-by-Year Guide

## 1st Year (Freshmen Equivalent): IGNITING INTEREST

### Fall Semester

- Create a Master Resume File
- Join New Organizations

### Spring Semester

- Attend Job/Career Fairs
- Plan Informational Interviews, Job Shadowing, and/or Relevant Summer Work Experience

## 2nd Year (Sophomore Equivalent): EXPLORING PATHWAYS

### Fall or Spring Semester

- Explore Careers through a Skill-Based Lens

### Fall Semester

- Update Your Resumé
- Attend More Recruiting and Career-Related Events

### Spring Semester

- Secure Summer Experience

## 3rd Year (Junior Equivalent): ACCELERATING GROWTH

### Fall or Spring Semester

- Join external clubs and organizations
- Build Skills through Certification Programs

### Fall Semester

- Apply for Internships

## 4th Year (Senior Equivalent): **PREPARE TO LAUNCH**

### Fall and Spring Semester

- Stand Out with Your Resumé and Interview Skills

### Fall Semester

- Begin Your Job Search

## 1ST YEAR (FRESHMEN EQUIVALENT)

### **IGNITING INTEREST**

With graduation still far off, freshman year is the perfect time to explore different career paths and gather information about various fields. It's a year for getting comfortable with college life, learning time management, and discovering how to balance your studies with other activities. Start getting familiar with the on-campus resources available to you.

### Fall Semester

#### **Create a Master Resume File**

- Don't have a resume? Now is the time. For now, just include any and all accomplishments on a "master resume template". Don't worry about conforming the resume to a specific job or career path.

#### **Join New Organizations**

- Most campuses have student organizations around the most common majors and career paths. By joining one of these organizations in your first year you'll get a feel for what to expect in that career as well as begin meeting people with similar interests (networking-light). You may well learn that this is actually not a career you want to pursue—future headaches avoided!
- Many companies value on-campus leadership experience, which can be gained in organizations like Student Government.

### Spring Semester

#### **Attend Job/Career Fairs**

- Even in your freshman year, it's never too early to get to know different companies and discover opportunities that may be a good fit for you. The more you get to know recruiters and company representatives, the better your chances are of landing the gig of your dreams! Making a great first impression can seem overwhelming, especially if you're not quite sure what you want to do later in life—here are a few ways that you can prepare:

- Note participating companies and do a bit of research to better understand their mission. The more you know, the better equipped you'll be in building a "top company" list and can eliminate the companies that don't align to your interests.
- Check available positions—even if you don't see a role that jumps out at you, but are excited about the company, consider including the company on your list of introductions
- Identify qualifications (major, GPA, experience).
- Make a personal connection with at least two recruiters at the event, preferably from a company or in an industry you're interested in. Get their contact information. Send them a thank you email afterward.
- Extra Credit: Ask for a 15-min virtual chat to learn more about the company.

### **Plan Informational Interviews, Job Shadowing, and/or Relevant Summer Work Experience**

- The most in-demand internships typically go to upperclassmen, but there's no reason not to carve your own path the summer after your first year.
- If you haven't picked a major, plan informational interviews with working professionals in careers that seem interesting to you.
- Find professionals in your area that fit that criteria, and send them a LinkedIn message asking if you could interview them about their career.
- If the interview goes well and the career sounds interesting, you can follow up and ask to shadow them for a day (or few days). Summer is often best for this, as businesses may be a bit slower than usual.
- If you already have a career in mind, try to find an entry-level job in the field you can work over the summer. If you get your foot in the door early, it may lead to a more robust internship or job in subsequent summers or semesters.

## 2ND YEAR (SOPHOMORE EQUIVALENT)

### **EXPLORING PATHWAYS**

Your second year in college is a great time to dig into potential career paths that match your skills and interests. Take this opportunity to discover what subjects really excite and motivate you, where your strengths lie, and the professional paths that could be a natural fit for you.

#### **Fall or Spring Semester**

### **Explore Careers through a Skill-Based Lens**

- A great way to discover your potential career path is to match the skills that you're learning in the classroom with the skills employers are looking for.
- A quick job search based on these skills may surface opportunities you haven't considered.
- For example, you may have taken a marketing or business analytics course and discover that you are the best candidate for a Tech Sales role.

## Fall Semester

### Update Your Resumé

- Remember that resume template you created last year? Dust it off and add your most recent experiences.
- Be sure to highlight measurable accomplishments, not just job responsibilities.
- Remember that employers value special projects or experiences that you've completed—include those, too!

### Attend *More Recruiting and Career-Related Events*

- By now you may have a better indication of what major or career you want to pursue. Continue to explore these options by attending career and job fairs following the same playbook as above.
- As you interface with recruiters and employers, provide them with a business card that includes your contact information (a professional looking email address, your LinkedIn handle, and phone number at a minimum).
- Be sure to get their contact information so you can follow up with a thank you.
- Remember that many of the companies hoping to hire in the summer are meeting potential candidates in the preceding fall.

## Spring Semester

### Secure Summer Experience

- If you've followed the playbook above, you've probably met some companies that excite you. Some students around this time paid attention to companies that align with their major or interests, but others selected companies that they are less familiar with or are outside their comfort zone. Wherever you are in this journey, Spring semester is a time to apply for internships and experiences for the summer.
- If you haven't quite figured out where to apply, remember that volunteer opportunities are great resume builders and offer incredible experience that will grow your skills.
  - Volunteer opportunities if can't secure job in your area of interest:
    - <https://www.catchafire.org/volunteers>
    - <https://www.unv.org/become-online-volunteer>
    - <https://www.dosomething.org/us>

## ACCELERATING GROWTH

By junior year, you've likely narrowed down your interests from your sophomore explorations. Along the way, you may have ruled out certain options or discovered exciting new possibilities. Now is the perfect time to intentionally seek out experiences and opportunities that will set you up for success after graduation.

### Fall or Spring Semester

#### Join external clubs and organizations

- Find and join external clubs and organizations that align with career / subject matter. Examples of these include the National Association of Black Accountants (NABA) or the National Center for Women in Technology (NCWIT).
- Organizations are an organic way to grow a professional network with similar career interests.

#### Build Skills through Certification Programs

- While your diploma is important for many employers, gaining certifications will give you even more experience in your major/intended career and will demonstrate to future employers the depth of your knowledge. When many college students are applying for jobs and internships around the same time, having certifications will make you better equipped to stand out.
- The Global Career Accelerator provides an opportunity to gain Certifications and Skill Badges on in-demand skills while you're in school.

### Fall Semester

#### Apply for Internships

- Most competitive internships begin interviewing early
- Use the fall semester to research and apply to paid internships for the upcoming spring semester and summer.
- Before you apply, do a full review of all your social media accounts—it's time to 'professionalize' them. It's important that your accounts show the real you, but clean up any embarrassing photos or posts that may not paint you in the best light.
- Ensure that your LinkedIn profile is updated to show the latest, and full breath, of your skills and experience.



## 4TH YEAR (SENIOR EQUIVALENT)

### **PREPARE TO LAUNCH**

By senior year, graduation is just around the corner, and the pressure to have a plan can feel overwhelming. Take a moment to acknowledge the diverse skills you've developed through your coursework and activities. Now is the time to start honing how you'll present those skills to potential employers.

#### **Fall and Spring Semester**

##### **Stand Out with Your Resumé and Interview Skills**

- Resumé and interview coaching.
  - If you're interested in a variety of different roles, draft a cover letter specifically for each, which highlights relevant skills and experience for that role.
  - Similarly, take your resume template and customize it for different job types, focusing on the most pertinent information for each role.
  - Sign up for mock interview opportunities at your university or through The Global Career Accelerator. Increasing your effectiveness at interviewing is a trained muscle and mock interviews are one of the best ways to build up that skillset.
- Consider professional help for personalized coaching.

#### **Fall Semester**

##### **Begin Your Job Search**

- Start job search early to reduce stress later.
- Create a consistent block each week in your calendar dedicated to researching and applying for roles.
- Organize relevant coursework and projects into a portfolio that you can send to employers along with a resume and cover letter. Portfolios (for every major/career path) will help your application stick out and will demonstrate your experience and mastery of the subject matter.

By following this timeline, you'll be better prepared to jump into a career after college.