

Summer Jobs and Internships



Office of Career Development

Vassar College

The summer job search requires a strategic approach: The earlier you begin, the better your chances for obtaining an ideal position. Organizations with prestigious internship programs often begin looking for summer employees as early as November, and even camps and resort hotels begin hiring in January and February, so many of the more interesting and better-paying jobs are filled during the spring. The key to getting a fulfilling summer job is two words: plan ahead!

Your summer job can be a time to explore a career path, develop skills, make contacts within a specific field, decide upon a major, make money and/or just have fun. Be sure your goals are realistic.

How do you prepare for the summer employment search?

- Identify skills and develop summer job goals. If possible, learn new skills that can enhance your potential for employment. Knowing a spreadsheet software package, for example, is a big plus in many organizations.
- Define your geographic area. Consider the costs of housing and food as factors in your decision if you plan to live away from home.
- Evaluate your financial objectives and establish a

projected but realistic budget. Remember that cities such as Boston and New York, and countries such as Japan have a very high cost of living.

How do you figure out what type of job to seek?

Summers are a good time not only to make money, but to test out potential career fields. To determine what jobs and career areas suit you, you first must examine your interests, skills, and values. Meet with a staff member in the Career Development Office. They may suggest taking a career assessment. Additionally, the CDO library houses many books with useful chapters on how to identify personal traits and connect them with jobs.

How do you locate jobs and internships?

- Check Vassar's eRecruiting database (Vassar.erecruiting.com) for internships posted directly to Vassar.
- Ask friends, family, former employers and professors for suggestions; search the V-NET alumnae/i database for people who can provide leads. This is called networking. Make sure to thank everyone who helps you!
- Check departmental bulletin boards.

- Explore Internet resources at <http://careers.vassar.edu>
- Read the CDO's weekly email.
- Use resources such as Chambers of Commerce directories to find employers in your geographic area.
- Hoover's, accessible through the CDO website, contains extensive directory information by location and industry.
- Explore the possibility of volunteering, either full-time or during your off-hours. You can learn new skills and make contacts whether or not your work is paid.
- Search bulletin boards at local college placement and financial aid offices, industrial sites, supermarkets, and libraries.
- Check out temporary employment services such as Kelly, Manpower, and Help Unlimited. Often a temporary job can lead to a permanent summer job.
- Attend the Summer Experiences That Make A Difference presentation in late January to learn about URSI, Community Fellows, and other Vassar-sponsored opportunities. Use print resources at the Career Library.

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What about the application and hiring processes?

A resume and cover letter are often your first introduction to an employer. These documents speak for you and can mean the difference between being asked or not asked for an interview. Writing a good resume demands considerable time and effort. It is a marketing tool promoting you. A cover letter reflects your interest in a specific job, demonstrates your writing ability, and should make an employer want to read your resume. Mass produced cover letters are not recommended. Make every effort to identify and write to a specific individual within each organization. Unless indicated in a job posting, do not send your materials to the human resources department.

Either pick up the Career Development Office handouts on Resume Writing and Job Search Correspondence, or attend one of our workshops. After you've written rough drafts, bring them to a Career Assistant or staff member for comments.

If you have enough time, informational interviews are an excellent way to understand the scope of an occupational field and determine the likelihood of summer jobs. Names and contact information for Vassar grads in a variety of career areas are listed in our V-NET database. Also see our Career Brief *"Informational Interviewing."*

Very few students receive job offers without a face-to-face meeting or phone interview.

Whenever possible, arrange to meet employers in person instead of over the phone. You'll have their full attention and be harder to ignore. Be careful of your appearance -- first impressions are vital. Carry additional resumes and information you'll need for filling out applications (proof of birth, social security number, reference names and numbers, etc.) If you sense a potential opening, be persistent. For interviewing help, pick up the Career Brief *"All About Interviewing,"* schedule a mock interview, or attend one of our workshops.

What resources are most helpful?

eRecruiting is a good place for information on current internships, as well the internships section of our website at careers.vassar.edu. The Career Development Office also has Alumnae/i contacts V-NET and employment/internship directories available for your use. Most directories are updated annually; some are organized geographically and others focus on a specific field, such as theatre or banking.

For a list of some of our online resources arranged by interest area, review the Career Brief *"Internship Resource Directory."*