
Career and Internship Guidelines
How to Stay on Top of Career Development

1. When should students start preparing or planning for internship or job interviews?

It's never too early to start preparing for interviews! But don't be scared - you may already be preparing right now without knowing. Many interviews will test technical knowledge and comprehension which are furthered by staying attentive in class and sharpening your skills outside of the classroom.

The best way to avoid stressful or rushed preparation for an interview is by working at it in small steps well before landing such an interview. First-Year students shouldn't worry until they have contact with a company that has a possible opportunity. As a Sophomore one should plan further ahead because of the increased workload faced throughout the semester, and by Junior year you should have had a few interviews or at least a few practice ones with the Career Center.

2. How should students prepare or plan for these interviews?

Working on projects that contain work within the scope of your field is one of the best ways to prepare for these interviews. You will be able to point to something tangible outside of the classroom that demonstrates your passion for and thorough understanding of material. Going beyond studying material for an exam and actually putting it to practical use will help you cover the small details that may be harped upon during an interview as well.

Reading sections of interview books that cover technical details as you learn the same technical details in class will help solidify topics. For example, building a linked-list for an assignment in C++ may be of no use to you in an interview if they ask to work in a different language and you don't understand the underlying motives of creating a linked-list. Understanding syntax is important, but understanding concepts is imperative - some companies may even give you a command set for a language they created in order to test your ability to adapt and learn.

3. What resources should students consider? Books? Career Services? Student groups?

This will vary for each situation:

Student groups are the best long-term solution to being prepared for a technical interview. The knowledge you gain through applied experiences will outweigh cramming an interview book in the long run.

If you are not familiar with the setup of an interview a mock interview at the Career Center will be very helpful. Meeting with someone who can give concrete feedback on your performance during the interview can help give you direction on further preparation. After doing well in this setting, students are more likely to improve by honing in on particular topics using interview books.

These books are most helpful for improving upon specific topics and reviewing in a general sense in the weeks and days immediately before an interview. You should not be seeing the information in these books for the first time - a solid base in the classroom and experience through groups or clubs will give you first exposure in a much more meaningful way.

4. What extracurricular activities should students consider?

Anything related to a specific type of job you would like to be a part of in the future should be your highest priority - for example, a game development club if you are seeking employment in the entertainment or gaming sector. If no such relevant club exists for your interests, consider starting one yourself with a few fellow students, or take on a role in another club where you can best apply those relevant skills.

Be careful to not let the time commitment of a club or activity to dominate your school experience though - learning in the classroom should be the priority.

Interdisciplinary clubs that draw from multiple majors will be more beneficial for networking with other people! Sometimes getting your foot in the door for an interview with a company can stem from something as simple as knowing another club member who has a connection, or can speak to your abilities.

5. How can students take advantage of networking and alumni relationships?

Connect with upperclassman in your dorm and in your major in order to start building your network. These students have more experience and have likely built up connections which they can share with you.

The career center has an alumni networking tool that acts as a searchable database to list contact info of graduates. Filtering by companies of interest, field of study, even graduating class or dorm is a powerful way to find receptive alumni with which you have things in common.

If a few alumni do not respond, don't hesitate to reach out to more or send a friendly reminder at a later date.

Attending on campus recruiting opportunities for companies will help you get in touch with graduates who represent their employer and can help you bridge the gap between school and full-time jobs.

6. How should students approach negotiations or contracts? Are there any pitfalls they should look out for?

Negotiating a contract may seem like a daunting task, but when approached conservatively is a very useful method for making sure you receive the best possible offer. It is always a good idea to politely show employers a competitors offer if you are interested in having it matched. Only do such a thing once a full-time offer has been extended, and do so graciously

and respectfully. Many employers will happily match another offer in order to retain you or at least further incentivize you to join their company.

7. Anything else you wish you knew before you went through the whole process!

Don't be afraid to reach out to professors!

Some of the most fruitful internship advice and connections I have had to date came from having healthy relationships with professors. If a topic or class interests you, let the professor know, and see if they have any points of contact in industry or in research areas to which you can contribute.

Also, you will hear many 'No's, so don't be discouraged and keep on applying!