

Please make note of the following steps and resources for moving along in your search for a position in higher education administration.

- 1) Reflect on and document your practicum experience.
- 2) Explore and prioritize opportunities.
- 3) Build your network.
- 4) Tweak your resume and cover letter.
- 5) Take a thorough inventory of your experience.
- 6) Follow up.
- 7) Compile your recommendation letters or list of references.
- 8) Prepare for Interviews.

1) Reflect on and document your practicum experience. Whatever your practicum involves, it is vital that you take time to think about what you are learning along the way and how it impacts your goals for professional development. In addition, regular and thoughtful reflection will help you to:

- Elicit helpful feedback from your supervisors and peers.
- Foster self-awareness that will help you to develop as a professional and prepare more thoroughly for the job search process, especially cover letter writing and interviewing.

2) Explore and prioritize opportunities. What type of institution? What type of work? Any geographical preferences?

- Many resources for this exploration are available on our Higher Education webpage at: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/careerfields/higheredadmin.php>
- Take the time to consider what appeals to you about a given college or university. Clues may be found by searching the institution's website for the mission statement, core values, curricular/research/campus priorities, current/upcoming projects and initiatives.
- Of course, you'll want to look at job listings on particular college or university websites, but also consider general higher education job boards such as www.chronicle.com or www.higheredjobs.com
- Be sure to update your career interests and check job listings on [Handshake](#) as well.

3) Build your network. Connecting with others in your profession can provide insight into what it's like to work at a particular college/university as well as how to market yourself effectively in the job search. Informational interviewing is a great way to gather advice and build your network, though it's important to remember that the purpose of this type of meeting is to gather information and advice, not ask for a job or job interview. Here are some resources to get started:

- QuakerNet (Penn's Alumni Online Community): <http://www.myquakernet.com>
- Penn Alumni LinkedIn Groups: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/networking/linkedin.php>
- Professional Associations are also a good resource for networking.
<http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/careerfields/higheredadmin.php#associations>

4) Tweak your resume and cover letter. Career Services can provide critiques during appointments (call 215-898-4381 on weekdays between 9am and 5pm to schedule), GSE walk-ins (Tuesdays, 1:30-2:30) or via e-mail. Keep in mind that the turnaround for e-mail critiques during busy seasons can be up to one week. Therefore, it is best to use the following online resources to tweak your resume format as much as possible before a critique with a counselor.

- Resume Guide: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/resumeguide.php>
- Higher Education Resume Samples:
<http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/files/HigherEdResumes.pdf>
- Cover Letter Guide: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/coverletterguide.php>
- Cover Letter Samples: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/gradstud/coverlettersamples.php>

5) Take a thorough inventory of your experience. This is an especially important step for those who have relatively little work experience (in the conventional sense) between their undergraduate study and graduate study. If a job description lists years of experience as a qualification that seems a bit out of your league, ask yourself some questions: *Does this position really seem like a great fit for me? Do I have a track record that indicates that I would excel at the work?* If you can answer “yes” to these questions, apply for the position and make sure to take the following into account:

- **Graduate Assistantship:** Your GA position provides a full academic year of experience in higher education. Make sure that you are intentional about describing your accomplishments and responsibilities in the GA role on your resume.
- **Student Leadership Experience:** If you were an undergraduate (or graduate) student leader who invested significant time in a student organization or activity, make note of it on your resume. Often, many skills developed in a student leader role are transferable to higher education careers. For example, successful student leaders generally have a track record in motivating other students, an ability that one can continue applying in a full-time position in student services.
- **Internship Experience:** While you were an intern, you likely worked on projects that required some of the same skills you would need in higher education.
- **Volunteer Experience:** An experience does not have to be paid to be relevant or significant. Once again, you likely developed and applied skills that are transferable to a full-time higher education position.
- **Other Work Experience:** You may have had a work-study job doing clerical work or worked in food service or retail to help pay for your undergraduate education. This would likely point to a level of maturity as well as the ability to pay attention to detail or to interact with people from all walks of life.

As you reflect on your experiences, focus on how they relate to the responsibilities listed on the job description. Help the hiring managers to connect the dots between what needs to be done and what you have done, whether as a full-time employee, graduate assistant, intern, volunteer, or student leader.

6) Follow up. One of the advantages about seeking jobs in higher education administration is that if the appropriate contacts are not already listed on the job description, it is relatively easy to track them down on the institution’s website. If you are instructed to apply for a position on the website, by all means do so, but also try to follow up with an e-mail message indicating that you have applied but want to reiterate your interest in the position. Don’t repeat your entire cover letter in the e-mail; rather, briefly mention some of the most relevant highlights from your background and attach your resume and cover letter for easy access.

7) Compile your recommendation letters (or list of references). Request references or recommendation letters from supervisors and faculty who know you well and can speak to your qualities and strengths in specific ways. Typically, employers will only need contact information from recommenders for phone references. When that occurs, be sure to inquire with your potential recommenders before listing them on an application. If letters are needed, give your recommenders sufficient time to write the letters and make sure you are clear on how each employer wants to receive the letters.

8) Prepare for Interviews. The key to successful interviewing is thorough and thoughtful presentation. It is crucial that you prepare answers that reflect concrete examples of your experience.

- desire to work at a given college/university
- desire/qualifications to work in a particular department and/or role.
- highlights from previous experience (e.g., practicum, campus involvement as a student, other relevant work)
- experiences in collaboration, which is a key skill in higher education administration
- strengths/weaknesses

It is also extremely useful to practice interviewing. Career Services offers mock interviews as well as other tips and resources that can be found at: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/interviewingadvice/>

