

Moving from the English Major to the Early Career

The CLS staff are the real experts on this! Currently, the wonderful Destini Ross is the associate director of the Arts, Media & Communications Career Community. The following ideas, in part, summarize things I have learned from Destini and in a workshop led by David Harrison, Mark Peltz, and Joyce Stern.

Preparation: Informational Interviews

Packet contents: "Informational Interviews" from the CLS

- You might not like the idea of “networking,” but you like learning!
- Use informational interviews to learn from people, with sincere curiosity about their working lives.
- Ask them what they value—or what especially impresses them—when a new colleague comes into their organization.
- After the conversation, consider how your own job materials do or don’t convey the things that your interviewee finds valuable and impressive in a new colleague.

Written Job Materials: Career Competencies

Packet contents: "Transferable Skills for Liberal Arts Students" from the CLS, NACE "Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce"

- The materials from the CLS and NACE outline the key skills that employers (and other humans) are often looking for when they seek new people to work with. The skills themselves will not be surprising: communication, critical thinking, and so forth.
- The CLS document, especially, offers good advice for articulating the ways you have acquired and practiced those skills in college.
- Often, you will find that the pedagogical structures and assignments at Grinnell have given you practice that you may not have thought about in terms of these competencies, but you can translate your experience into that language in your job materials.

The Interview Stage: Telling Anecdotes

- When you move to the interview stage, have stories to tell about competencies. How have you been a leader, in or out of class? A researcher? A designer?
- The point here is telling the story that animates the skill, not saying the line from your résumé.

Two Additional Resources Recommended by Destini Ross

- Informational interview guide from The Strategic Student:
<https://www.thestrategicstudent.com/strategy-guides/informational-interview-guide>
- The STAR interview method: <https://resources.biginterview.com/behavioral-interviews/star-interview-method/>

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

One important tool to developing your career, a unique blend of personal, professional, and civic aspirations, will be to have conversations with others about their journey. Informational interviews provide an excellent way to gather more information about your particular areas of interest. You might learn from the mistakes of others or identify with their stories so much that you want to explore those avenues for yourself!

Informational interviews are designed:

- To clarify your personal, professional, and civic goals and explore post-graduate options
- To expand your network and learn from others who have been in your shoes
- To build confidence for interviews of all kinds (e.g., internships, jobs, leadership boards, roommates)
- To access the most up-to-date information about how to prepare and enter your chosen pathways
- To identify your professional strengths, interests, values, and opportunities for growth

Informational interviews give you the opportunity to ask people with experience any questions you might have about their professional, personal, or civic interests, as well as their advice about how you might become similarly engaged. Remember that people want to help and often find satisfaction in passing along knowledge they've learned over the years. Additionally, people are often proud of their work and would love to share it with others.

Preparation for the Informational Interview

- You should always remember that while this meeting is for informational purposes, you are still on display. You will be scrutinized; therefore, you are in a position to make an important and positive impression. You may wish to apply to that same company later as a serious job applicant. This conversation might lead to volunteering opportunities at the organization. The person you're speaking with may refer you to others in their network. Informational interviews are an opportunity to leave a very positive impression without the pressure of an actual interview.
- Informational interviews can be very relaxed affairs, and can be used to find out about certain industries, organizations, lifestyles, the future of a certain type of industry, degrees or training required to do various activities, and how comfortable you feel in certain environments — in short, almost anything you wish to learn. Of course, you need to know what information you are searching for, and you must be brief. Ask questions that can be easily understood, using open-ended sentences (i.e., "Please describe..." "Please tell me about..." "How would you..."). Be specific in what you are asking. "Please tell me about your industry" is too vague. "Please tell me what you like most about your industry" is more specific.

Track What You've Learned

Immediately after the informational interview, record all your impressions and any facts acquired during the interview. Go back over your notes to make sure the information is clear. Make note of any impressions you have from the conversation.

Ask yourself:

- What did I learn from this interview (both positive and negative impressions)?
- How does what I learned fit with my own interests, abilities, goals, values, etc.?
- What more would be helpful to know?
- What plan of action may I take?

ALWAYS thank the interviewer and follow-up with an email or handwritten thank-you note!

Types of Questions You Might Ask in an Informational Interview

This is not an exhaustive list. You are encouraged to think about additional questions that may be more appropriate to your field of interest. Know what you're going to ask ahead of time, and be sure to take notes during the interview.

Culture and Environment

- How would you outline or describe a typical day doing this type of work?
- How much flexibility are you allowed in terms of dress, hours, vacation, etc.?
- What portion of the job involves interacting with others, such as coworkers, volunteers, or the public?
- What do you like or dislike about the work or the industry in general?
- What is the role of social responsibility in this environment?
- Is it possible to do this work full-time and go to graduate school?
- How has your job affected your lifestyle? Your ability to be civically engaged?
- What kind of work/life blend are you able to have in this field?
- Is there a common code of ethics in this field?
- What are examples of things that would be considered unethical in this field?
- How diverse is your workplace? The field in general?

Personal Background and Experience

- What first interested you about this field?
- What did you major in and how does it apply to what you are doing now?
- What courses (requirements, electives) have been most helpful?
- What skills do you find most important to have in this field?
- Is special certification, licensing, or an advanced degree required for your job?
- Have you always been interested in this area of study?
- Did any of your co-curricular or civic experiences prepare you for this type of work?
- Did you have any practical experience or training in this field, other than college, prior to doing this work?
- What is the highest degree you've attained? Do you find this degree important in your work? How?
- How did you find your current job? If you had to do it over again, would you take the same route?
- If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be?

Outlook

- Are there opportunities for advancement in this field?
- What have you learned in this field that you can now apply to other areas of your life?
- What sorts of changes are occurring in this field?
- What is the current and future demand for people in this occupation?
- What are possible salary ranges and benefits for someone in your occupation? Now? In the long term?

Advice

- Are there any professional or civic groups that I, as an undergraduate, can join that would be beneficial?
- How may I gain experience in this field while I'm still in college?
- What do I need to explain to an employer or potential supervisor about coming from a liberal arts college?
- How might I work in a socially just way in this field/job?
- What skills might I learn in this field that will be useful in my civic or volunteer life?
- Do you know of specific websites, publications, or other sources that would post internships or entry-level positions in this field?
- What is a good starting point for this career path? Is any specific entry point more advantageous?
- What are the important keywords or buzzwords to include in a résumé or cover letter in the field?
- What are some specific skills I should be trying to obtain to succeed in this field?
- From your perspective, what are the challenges you see working in this field?
- What graduate school connections are important before and after having a career like yours?
- If I want to enter this field what should I look for in the organization?

Geographic Considerations

- Is it easier to do a global, nationwide, or a regional search for work in this field?
- What is the best way to find apartments to rent in your region?
- What are the costs of living in your region? What are the demographics in your region?
- What kinds of social justice opportunities are there in your region?
- What services do you find lacking in your region? Which services do you really appreciate?



TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

For Liberal Arts Students

Through your various work, volunteer, classroom, and extracurricular experiences, you have amassed a number of transferable skills that provide you the ability to be successful in other pursuits. Transferable skills are the foundation of how you market yourself for other opportunities. Indeed, applications are less about what experiences you have had and more about the skills you have gained through those experiences and how you will apply them.

Transferable skills can be labeled as "soft" or "hard." Soft skills are those that depend on interpersonal interactions and emotional intelligence, such as communication, adaptability, or problem solving. Hard skills are technical, industry-specific skills such as C++, lab equipment, operation, or grant writing.

INSTRUCTIONS:

This worksheet is designed to help or assist you determine the transferable skills you know you have and identify the skills you want to develop. 1) Make a check next to the skills you know you've gained through your past experiences. 2) Then, using the blank space below, make notes about where you acquired those skills. This can be helpful when writing or revising your résumé and cover letters. When you're done, take a look at the boxes that are unchecked. These are skills you may want to focus on to develop for your future endeavors.

Critical Thinking Skills	Leadership & Administration Skills	Decision-Making & Assessing Value Skills
☐ Identify the primary issues for making a decision or solving a problem quickly and accurately ☐ Define the parameters of a problem ☐ Find and identify a principle that explains experiences or factual data ☐ Take premises and reasoning to a logical conclusion ☐ Adapt concepts and behaviors to changing conventions and norms ☐ Create innovative solutions to complex problems ☐ Analyze interrelationships of events and ideas from several perspectives	☐ Analyze tasks and set priorities ☐ Include others who will contribute to the solution of a problem or task ☐ Identify resources and materials useful in the solution of a problem ☐ Delegate responsibility for the completion of a task ☐ Motivate and lead others ☐ Organize people and tasks to achieve specific goals ☐ Lead groups of diverse people ☐ Create environments for fostering growth	☐ Make decisions that will maximize both individual and collective good ☐ Assess a course of action in terms of long range effects ☐ Appreciate the contributions of art, music, literature and science to contemporary society ☐ Identify one's own values ☐ Assess one's values in relation to important life decisions ☐ Recognize when to stop a project due to diminishing returns

How and when did you develop these skills?

Research & Investigation Skills	Design & Planning Skills	Information Management Skills
☐ Identify problems and needs ☐ Use a variety of sources for information and evaluate validity of sources ☐ Design an experiment, plan or model to define a problem ☐ Apply a variety of methods to test validity of data ☐ Formulate questions relevant for clarification	☐ Assess needs ☐ Identify alternatives ☐ Set goals and prioritize ☐ Follow through ☐ Predict future patterns ☐ Accommodate multiple demands for time, energy and resources	☐ Sort data and objects ☐ Compile and rank information ☐ Apply information creatively ☐ Synthesize facts, concepts and principles ☐ Understand and use organizing principles ☐ Evaluate information against appropriate standards

How and when did you develop these skills?

Interpersonal Skills	Communication Skills	Personal Skills
☐ Keep group on track toward a common goal ☐ Maintain group cooperation and support ☐ Interact effectively with peers, supervisors and supervisees ☐ Express feelings appropriately ☐ Respect the feelings of others ☐ Make a commitment to others and follow through ☐ Take appropriate risks ☐ Teach a skill, concept or principle to others ☐ Analyze behavior of self and others in group situations ☐ Demonstrate effective behavior in multiple situations ☐ Display appreciation for diversity	☐ Listen with objectivity ☐ Paraphrase content ☐ Use various forms and styles of written communication ☐ Speak effectively to individuals and groups ☐ Use a variety of media formats to present information ☐ Express needs, wants, opinions and preferences without violating the rights of others ☐ Identify and communicate value judgments effectively ☐ Describe objects or events neutrally and factually ☐ Convey a positive outlook to others ☐ Communicate a multicultural understanding	☐ Identify strengths and weaknesses ☐ Analyze and learn from experience ☐ Transfer skills developed in one environment to other ☐ Match personal characteristics and skills to information about jobs and careers ☐ Develop personal growth goals that motivate action ☐ Accept and learn from criticism ☐ Generate trust and confidence in others ☐ Take risks ☐ Accept the consequences of actions ☐ Identify own cultures, beliefs and values

How and when did you develop these skills?

CAREER READINESS

Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce

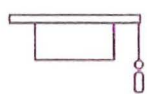
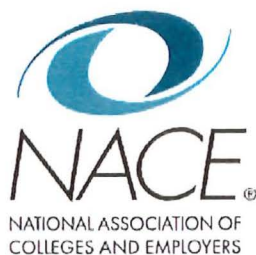
Career Readiness Competencies

There are **eight career readiness competencies**, each of which can be demonstrated in a variety of ways.



What Is Career Readiness?

Career readiness is a foundation from which to demonstrate requisite core competencies that broadly prepare the college educated for success in the workplace and lifelong career management.



Career & Self-Development

Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one's organization.

Sample Behaviors

- Show an awareness of own strengths and areas for development.
- Identify areas for continual growth while pursuing and applying feedback.
- Develop plans and goals for one's future career.
- Professionally advocate for oneself and others.
- Display curiosity; seek out opportunities to learn.
- Assume duties or positions that will help one progress professionally.
- Establish, maintain, and/or leverage relationships with people who can help one professionally.
- Seek and embrace development opportunities.
- Voluntarily participate in further education, training, or other events to support one's career.



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Communication

Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.

Sample Behaviors

- Understand the importance of and demonstrate verbal, written, and non-verbal/body language, abilities.
- Employ active listening, persuasion, and influencing skills.
- Communicate in a clear and organized manner so that others can effectively understand.
- Frame communication with respect to diversity of learning styles, varied individual communication abilities, and cultural differences.
- Ask appropriate questions for specific information from supervisors, specialists, and others.
- Promptly inform relevant others when needing guidance with assigned tasks.

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Critical Thinking

Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.

Sample Behaviors

- Make decisions and solve problems using sound, inclusive reasoning and judgment.
- Gather and analyze information from a diverse set of sources and individuals to fully understand a problem.
- Proactively anticipate needs and prioritize action steps.
- Accurately summarize and interpret data with an awareness of personal biases that may impact outcomes.
- Effectively communicate actions and rationale, recognizing the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of stakeholders.
- Multi-task well in a fast-paced environment.



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Equity & Inclusion

Equity and Inclusion Competency: Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different cultures and backgrounds. Engage in anti-oppressive practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism and inequity.

Sample Behaviors

- Solicit and use feedback from multiple cultural perspectives to make inclusive and equity-minded decisions.
- Actively contribute to inclusive and equitable practices that influence individual and systemic change.
- Advocate for inclusion, equitable practices, justice, and empowerment for historically marginalized communities.
- Seek global cross-cultural interactions and experiences that enhance one's understanding of people from different demographic groups and that leads to personal growth.
- Keep an open mind to diverse ideas and new ways of thinking.
- Identify resources and eliminate barriers resulting from individual and systemic racism, inequities, and biases.
- Demonstrate flexibility by adapting to diverse environments.
- Address systems of privilege that limit opportunities for members of historically marginalized communities.

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Leadership

Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.

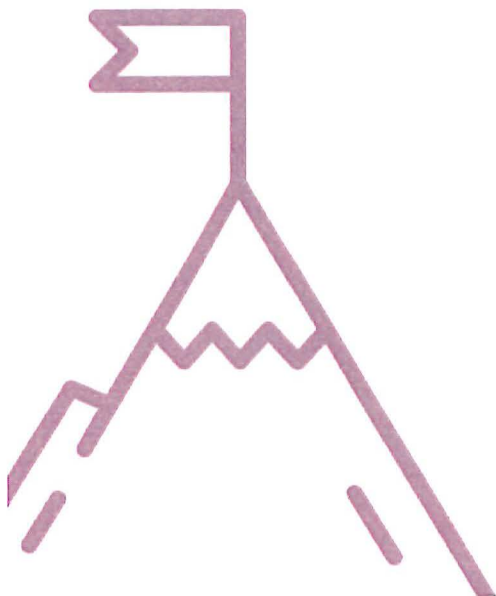
Sample Behaviors

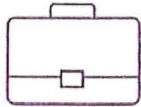
- Inspire, persuade, and motivate self and others under a shared vision.
- Seek out and leverage diverse resources and feedback from others to inform direction.
- Use innovative thinking to go beyond traditional methods.
- Serve as a role model to others by approaching tasks with confidence and a positive attitude.
- Motivate and inspire others by encouraging them and by building mutual trust.
- Plan, initiate, manage, complete, and evaluate projects.



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Professionalism

Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace.

Sample Behaviors

- Act equitably with integrity and accountability to self, others, and the organization.
- Maintain a positive personal brand in alignment with organization and personal career values.
- Be present and prepared.
- Demonstrate dependability (e.g., report consistently for work or meetings).
- Prioritize and complete tasks to accomplish organizational goals.
- Consistently meet or exceed goals and expectations.
- Have an attention to detail, resulting in few if any errors in their work.
- Show a high level of dedication toward doing a good job.

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Teamwork

Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

Sample Behaviors

- Listen carefully to others, taking time to understand and ask appropriate questions without interrupting.
- Effectively manage conflict, interact with and respect diverse personalities, and meet ambiguity with resilience.
- Be accountable for individual and team responsibilities and deliverables.
- Employ personal strengths, knowledge, and talents to complement those of others.
- Exercise the ability to compromise and be agile.
- Collaborate with others to achieve common goals.
- Build strong, positive working relationships with supervisor and team members/coworkers.



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Technology

Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

Sample Behaviors

- Navigate change and be open to learning new technologies.
- Use technology to improve efficiency and productivity of their work.
- Identify appropriate technology for completing specific tasks.
- Manage technology to integrate information to support relevant, effective, and timely decision-making.
- Quickly adapt to new or unfamiliar technologies.
- Manipulate information, construct ideas, and use technology to achieve strategic goals.

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**National Association
of Colleges and Employers**
Advancing college talent together

Established in 1956, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is the leading source of information on the employment of the college educated.

In carrying out its mission — to empower the community of talent acquisition and higher education professionals focused on the development and employment of college-educated talent by advancing equitable, evidence-based practices; creating leading content, research, and professional development opportunities; and enabling robust professional networks, while serving as the voice for the profession — NACE connects nearly 17,000 college career services professionals, university relations and recruiting professionals, and the business solution providers that serve this community.

For more information on how NACE supports the career services and college recruiting field, **visit www.naceweb.org/membership.**



**For more information on this initiative,
visit naceweb.org/career-readiness-competencies.**

INTERVIEW PREPARATION WITH CAREER-READINESS COMPETENCIES

Career & Self-Development

Proactively develop oneself and one's career through continual personal and professional learning, awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses, navigation of career opportunities, and networking to build relationships within and without one's organization.

1. What have you recently learned about yourself that has shaped your professional goals?
2. How do you approach connecting and building relationships with those in your career field of interest?
3. What do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses?
4. Describe an issue or topic you're passionate about and how that passion has impacted your future aspirations.

Communication

Clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization.

1. Describe a recent presentation or facilitation you led that went well. How do you know it was successful?
2. How would you explain a complex issue to someone learning about a topic for the first time?
3. How do you best provide and receive feedback?
4. Share a time when you had a conflict due to miscommunication. How did you handle the situation?

Critical Thinking

Identify and respond to needs based upon an understanding of situational context and logical analysis of relevant information.

1. Tell me about a recent decision you had to make. What was your thought process?
2. How do you navigate situations when a solution you've proposed isn't working as expected?
3. Describe an experience where you had to innovate and seek creative solutions to reach a goal.
4. How would you ensure its success if you were given a project with very little guidance?

Equity & Inclusion

Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different cultures and backgrounds. Engage in anti-oppressive practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism and inequity.

1. What does diversity mean to you, and why is it essential to an organization's success?
2. What experiences have you had in relating with people whose backgrounds differ from yours?
3. How have you created a culture of inclusion in your prior experiences?
4. How do you stay educated on topics related to diversity and inclusion, and how do you incorporate this knowledge into your work?

Leadership

Recognize and capitalize on personal and team strengths to achieve organizational goals.

1. Provide an example of when you took the initiative on a project. Describe the actions and the results.
2. Describe an experience when you implemented change. What was the outcome?
3. Tell me about a time when you helped a team member develop and grow in their role.
4. How do you balance your team's goals with the organization's objectives when making decisions?

Professionalism

Knowing work environments differ greatly, understand and demonstrate effective work habits, and act in the interest of the larger community and workplace.

1. Explain how you prioritize and manage your time, especially when you have conflicting responsibilities.
2. How would your co-workers or classmates describe your work style?
3. Think about a time when you made a mistake. What happened, and what did you learn from it?
4. Share a time when you felt particularly successful in your work. What made it a success?

Teamwork

Build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities.

1. What role do you typically assume when working in a group? Please provide an example.
2. What do you think makes a team function successfully?
3. Describe a prior experience in which you fostered positive team dynamics.
4. How would you engage with a difficult or uncooperative team member?

Technology

Understand and leverage technologies ethically to enhance efficiencies, complete tasks, and accomplish goals.

1. Share a recent challenge you had when solving a technical issue. How did you navigate troubleshooting?
2. Describe an experience when you had to change your work by adapting to new software or technology.
3. How have you sought to develop your digital literacy skills?
4. How do you ensure ethical usage when using various platforms and data?