

Your MBA Career: An Introduction

The first step of your MBA career path is to relax. Most students enter the program with some degree of anxiety—worried they’re not really MBA material, unsure of their career goals, concerned about making the transition back into an academic environment. Although these feelings aren’t out of the ordinary, be confident that you were admitted to the program for a reason. Your particular background, skills and interests are all assets that enrich the Foster MBA experience for you and for your classmates.

In fact, who you are and what you’ve accomplished form the core of your MBA career, giving your degree substance and meaning. The time you spend in the MBA Program will serve as a bridge from your past to a new career that makes the most of your MBA skill set. Some students seek advancement on their pre-MBA career path, while others are ready to head in new directions altogether. However small or radical the change you hope to make, you will draw on your background to build a solid foundation for professional transformation. To be successful, it is essential to start your MBA career search with a deep understanding of who you are: your strengths and weaknesses, values and goals.

The MBA career search requires more than passive introspection. You should take advantage of the many chances presented by the program to challenge your self-understanding through practical experience. The Mentor Program, networking, informational interviews, your summer internship, and various projects over the course of the year all provide different ways for you to test new career directions as you learn more about yourself and what you want to do.

MBA Career Services is committed to helping you develop the career search skills that will help you take control of your career for the rest of your life. More than anything else, the MBA offers you

an opportunity for intensive professional growth. How you respond to this opportunity will determine the impact the MBA has on your career path. The more ambitious your goals, the more energy you need to put into career. Our coaches will help you identify your strengths and weaknesses, and your transferable skills. We will help you understand what the market place is seeking and how to build your experience to be attractive to employers. From resume prep, through networking and interviewing and negotiation advice, we will help you market yourself. The key to your lifetime career search success will be to follow this outline: **Know yourself, Know your market, (and we will help you) Market yourself.**

Using the BCC Resource Guide

This guide provides you with an overview of your MBA career search. The intent isn’t to provide you with all the information you might need at one time, but rather to illustrate how each aspect of your career search relates to the others.

You may want to keep a printed copy of this guide to organize your notes and other career-related documents. We hope that the modular nature of the sections presented will provide you with a personalized resource you can refer to over the next two years and throughout your career.

Over the course of the year, career coaches will give you supplementary material that is relevant to specific issues you are working on. We recommend that you print this material and add it to the appropriate section for reference.

Working with the BCC

Perhaps at no other time in your life will you have so many people dedicated to your professional success. No matter where you are in your career search, the MBA Career Services staff at the Business Connections Center (BCC) is prepared to help.

Because the Foster MBA Program attracts a diverse group of students, our approach to career services is highly personalized. We recognize that no matter what your goals might be, every student's career path is unique, with its own challenges and rewards.

We encourage you to start building relationships with our career coaches as early as possible. They can help you evaluate your interests and experi-

ence, as well as help you clarify your career goals and develop a strategy to achieve them. Along the way, they can also be a sounding board and support network, connecting you to the right resources as you need them.

Through one-on-one coaching, workshops, events and special programs, we do more than help you land an internship and that first MBA job. We give you the opportunity to build a strong network and professional skills that will serve you throughout your career.

Some of the key skill areas we address are:

- Resume & Cover letters
- Networking & Elevator pitch
- Interviewing
- Salary negotiations

Types of Events Sponsored by the BCC:

Workshops:

Throughout the year, we offer a number of workshops on various aspects of your career search, including resumes, cover letters, networking, interviewing and salary negotiations. We also offer information sessions on special interest topics, such as work authorization for international students and investment banking.

Meet-the-Firm Events:

During these lunchtime presentations, companies tell students more about their business and career opportunities. These events are often used to set the stage for on-campus recruiting.

Fireside Chats:

Fireside Chats are evening events held on Tuesday or Thursday from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Typically about five company representatives—often Foster alumni—come on campus and are interviewed as a panel. The discussion covers topics such as company culture, job activities and industry trends. These events also allow for more informal networking before and after the panel discussion.

Road Shows:

Road Shows are aimed at furthering Foster MBA placement with top employers in major metropolitan areas outside Seattle. Through these visits, MBA students and BCC staff seek to learn more about employers' recruiting plans and create a closer relationship with the Foster School. Typically, a group of between five and 20 current MBA students visit two to four companies each day to explore the job opportunities for MBA graduates. The company visit agenda is usually comprised of a presentation given by company representatives (often including alumni) and an opportunity for extensive Q & A. Previous focus areas have included tech companies in Silicon Valley, investment banks in New York City, and retail headquarters in San Francisco. Road shows often culminate in a networking reception planned in conjunction with UW Alumni Relations or independently by MBA Career Services.

MBA Forums:

We hold two annual career fairs — one in the fall and another in the spring. More than just a job fair, these events are a good opportunity to network with representatives from a wide variety of companies.

It's Your Career—You Manage It

Although we offer you extensive support, never forget: it's your career. Your success depends largely on how much energy you apply toward it. We can't compensate for what you don't put into your job or internship search, but we can complement your efforts. The key is to stay in touch: let us know of your progress and how we can help you overcome specific challenges.

The BCC is just one of many resources available to you. By using as many different resources as possible, you'll maximize your options, progress faster and have a better sense of where you want to go professionally.

Time Management

As a student, you'll always have more obligations than time. Between the immediate demands of coursework and club activities, projects and social activities, it can be tempting to put your career search on the back burner. But if you expect to land a job you can be passionate about, you'll

Making Appointments with a Career Coach

Although you're always free to drop by the BCC to see a career coach, keep in mind that schedules are generally quite full and a coach may not be available.

It's usually best to schedule an appointment in advance. During peak times of the year, you may have to schedule your appointment one or two weeks ahead of time.

To make an appointment with a career coach at the BCC, contact the front desk by phone or email:

206.685.2410
bcc@u.washington.edu

Be sure to suggest a couple times when you would be available, and have your calendar ready in case you need to find alternatives.

If for any reason you need to reschedule or otherwise cancel your appointment, please contact the front desk as early as possible. Your classmates would be happy to take your slot.

need to exercise effective project management skills from the first quarter on:

- **Prioritize.** When deciding what is most important to do and when, consider how it will help you reach your goals. Always keep the big picture in mind.
- **Establish short- and medium-range goals.** Breaking your career search into manageable segments will help you stay on track.
- **Make it routine.** Set aside time each week for career research, informational interviews, and networking.
- **Find time, find opportunities.** However easy it might be, don't limit your career search to on-campus recruiting and events, as valuable as those are. It takes extra time and effort to go out into the community, but that's where the most opportunities are—including opportunities you didn't know existed.

Professionalism

When interacting with potential employers and members of the business community, always remember that you represent not only yourself, but also the Foster MBA Program. Moreover, your conduct has a strong impact on the perceived value of your degree. If you want to be regarded as a leader, you need to act like one.

- **Thank the people who help you.** After informational or job interviews, mentor meetings, etc., always send a prompt email thanking the person for their time, their advice and any connections they may have made for you.
- **Treat others with respect.** Whether you're dealing with hiring managers or their secretaries, alumni or classmates, be courteous and conscientious.
- **Dress appropriately.** Even in the casual Northwest, you should take care to present a professional image. This often means dressing a bit better than those you meet with. During interviews, always wear a suit.