

NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE

# Career Services Student Handbook



Career planning doesn't start at the end of  
college, it starts at the beginning...

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# We're here for you!

Having difficulty choosing a career path? Need to learn the best strategies to explore career options? Want to develop goals and plans to pursue career opportunities? Ready to prepare for employment? If so, the NOVA Career Counseling Team is here to help!

Our Career Counselors offer both in-person and virtual appointments for NOVA students. If interested, you can request an appointment with a Career Counselor on Career Connection or scan the QR code below.



**Schedule a Career  
Counseling Appointment**



**Read the career counseling  
appointment guide**

## **Our Career Counselors:**

**Alexandria - Mr. Trevor Blair**

**Annandale - Mrs. Vicky White**

**Loudoun - Mrs. Stephanie Allen**

**Manassas - Ms. Andrea Johns**

**Medical Education - Mr. Kyle Bumgarner**

**Woodbridge - Ms. Kimberly Blue**

***NOVA Career Services website:***

***<https://www.nvcc.edu/career-services/index.html>***

# Office Information

Before you schedule your appointment, be sure to review the chart below to determine which career counseling service best fits your current needs. If you ever have any questions, contact us at [novacareerservices@nvcc.edu](mailto:novacareerservices@nvcc.edu)!

## Career Counseling Services Explained:

### Understanding Self

- Identify your interests, personality, skills, and values through career assessments.
- Discuss career assessment results with a career counselor to identify potential careers.

### Exploring Careers & Majors

- Learn how to research information on academic majors, job salaries, job outlook, required skills, educational requirements, and work duties.
- Learn how to analyze job announcements and labor market information (LMI) to determine the “best fit” for your career pathway.

### Decide & Plan

- Learn about the career decision making process to better understand how both you and external influences impact your decisions.
- Identify S.M.A.R.T. goals to prepare you to pursue your career choice(s).
- Learn how to create action plans.
- Learn how to research ways to secure relevant career opportunities.

### Employment Preparation

- Prepare for employment through resume development, create job search strategies, and gain interview tips.
- Learn about informational interviewing.
- Learn how to network to find internships and jobs.



# Career Exploration

# Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce Definitions

## 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.



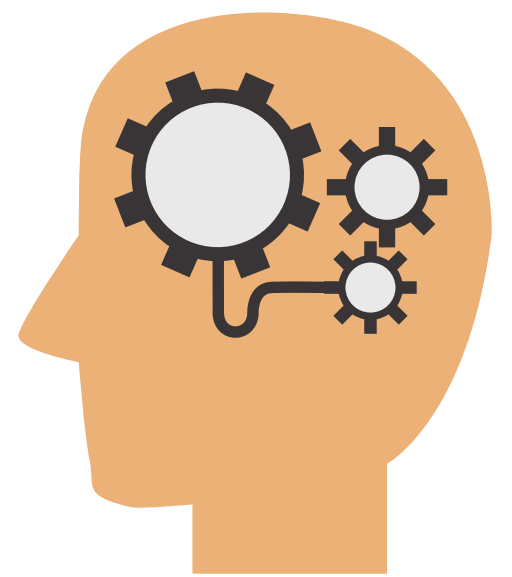
## Communication

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



## Critical Thinking

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



## Equity & Inclusion

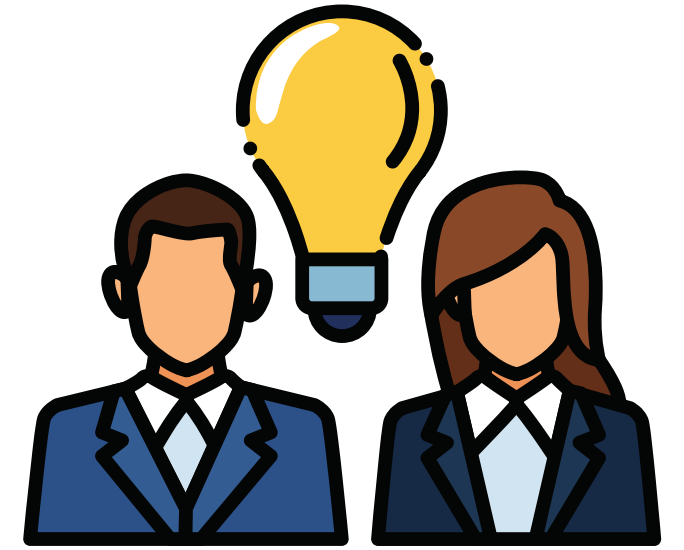
Demonstrate the awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills required to equitably engage and include people from different local and global cultures. Engage in anti-racist practices that actively challenge the systems, structures, and policies of racism.



# Competencies for a Career-Ready Workforce Definitions Continued

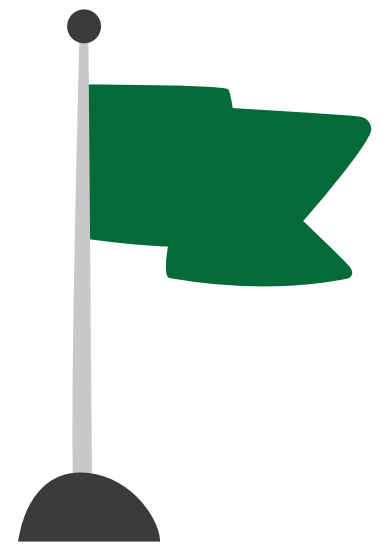
## Professionalism

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



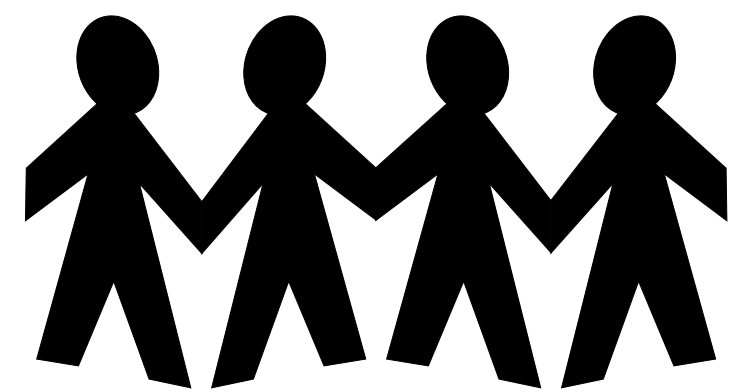
## Leadership

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



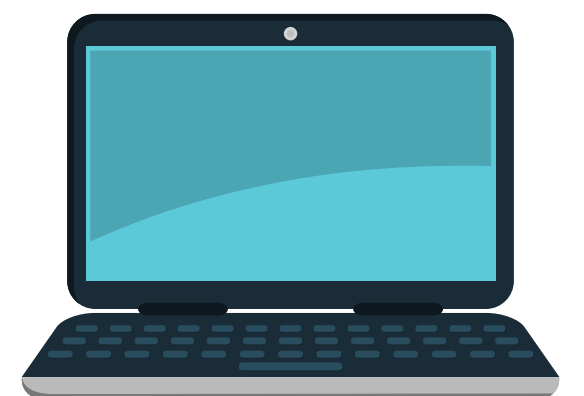
## Teamwork

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



## Technology

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



# Career Research

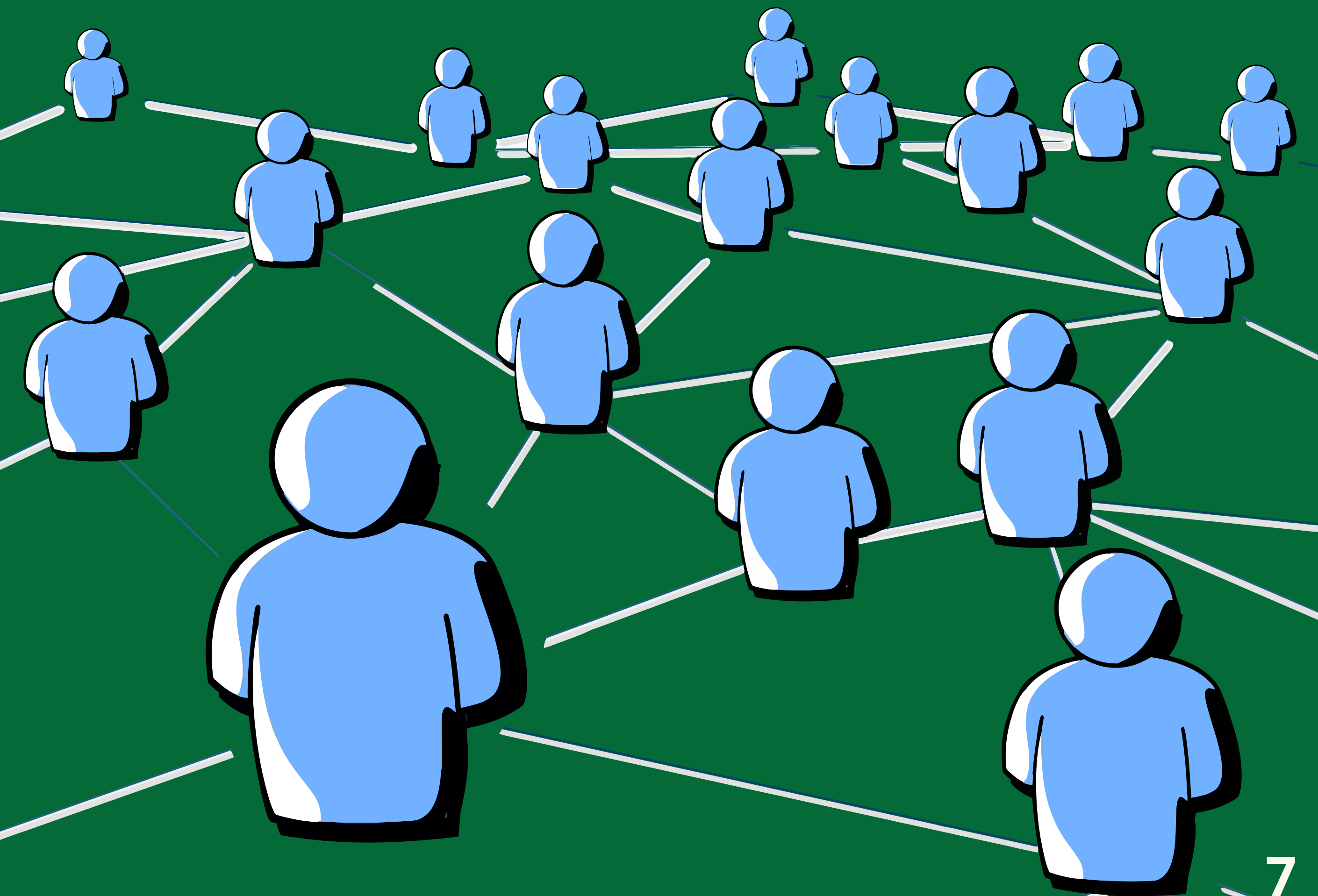
Here are some important facts you can find as you research careers and consider your options:

- Job tasks and duties
- Education/training requirements
- Licensing/certification requirements
- Salary (entry level, median and experienced workers)
- Job outlook
- Future trends
- Related occupation
- College major





# SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS





***Don't limit your social media use to just entertainment! It's also a great TOOL to market yourself and find jobs!***



- Follow companies that interest you to learn more about their culture, job openings, and values.
- Join groups and participate in meaningful discussions!
- Keep your Experience section updated.



- Keep your About section updated with your current location, education, and employment status.
- Join groups and participate in meaningful discussions!



- Utilize hashtags for tracking job postings and discussion topics.
- Retweet industry-related content, thoughts, and articles.
- Follow organizations and recruiters for updates and news.




- Follow companies and organizations you're interested in and engage with their posts and instastories.
- Post images and content on your page that represent your personal interests and brand.

# The Don'ts of Social Media

A critical component of becoming a professional or continuing your professional career is to thoroughly research companies and organizations before applying. But you're not the only person researching. As social media's presence and importance have grown, companies use it as a tool to learn more about their applicants.

 **Don't use language that is vulgar, offensive, discriminatory, etc., on ANY platforms. Companies do pay attention!**

 **Don't post photos displaying drugs, weapons, alcohol, or nudity. (Delete the old pictures that are no longer representative of you and/or your brand.)**

 **Don't overshare personal information.**

 **Don't feel like you must post constantly**

# Leveraging LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social media platform specifically designed for **professional** networking and career development. Here you can learn about careers and companies, search for internships and jobs, and network with other professionals!

**What makes a great LinkedIn profile?**

**We're so glad you asked!**

## **A great LinkedIn profile includes:**

- ✓ **Profile Picture:** High-quality professional headshot/photo with a complementary banner image.
- ✓ **Headline:** A relevant headline that includes intended career goals or accomplishments.
- ✓ **About Section:** A detailed summary describing current status, relevant skills, and competencies validated through experience.
- ✓ **Education:** Provide relevant, up-to-date educational information and (activities).
- ✓ **Experience:** Complete employment information including a detailed description of tasks, accomplishment, and skills.
- ✓ **Additional Sections:** Relevant information such as volunteer experience, accomplishments, recommendations, interests, certifications/licenses.

# INTERNSHIPS



# Internships

**Internship** - a form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional setting.  
(National Association of Colleges and Employers [NACE], 2019).

## ● ● ● Benefits of an Internship ● ● ●

Provides a valuable hands-on experience

Enables you to apply skills learned in the classroom in a work setting

Allows you to meet and network with professionals

Positions you well for the job market

May positively affect base salary

In some cases, helps you identify what you DON'T want to do for a career

Helps you narrow down your career choices



# The Successful Intern

- 💡 Gets to work on time
- 💡 Is professional and dependable
- 💡 Does what is expected
- 💡 Goes above and beyond
- 💡 Is humble and eager to learn
- 💡 Asks good questions
- 💡 Offers to help others when workload is slow
- 💡 Is proactive





# Job Searching





# JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

Long gone are the days when you search and apply for anything when you're looking for a job. It is imperative that you strategically approach your job search, so that you land a job that will give you the experience, work environment, and satisfaction you desire.

## Thoughtful Job Searching

When searching for a job, use keywords that match your interests and the location you desire to work.

## Customize Your Resume & Cover Letter

While it may seem like extra work, you should take the time to customize your resume and cover letter to each job you apply for, so that they specifically link your qualifications to the hiring criteria of the jobs you're applying for. On average, employers spend less than 30 seconds going over a resume. You need to stand out!

## Utilize Nova's Career Connection Platform

Career Connection is a free online career services management system that every NOVA student enrolled in classes has free access to! On Career Connection, you can find hundreds of jobs (and internships) at companies that are specifically interested in employing NOVA students!

## Utilize Your Network

Did you know that a large percentage of jobs **aren't** advertised? That's why it's so important to not cancel out your network when job searching. Connect with friends, professors, advisors, former co-workers, etc. to learn of any jobs openings that may be of interest to you. You never know the power of just one connection!

# Job Search Platforms

Here are some great job search platforms to use when you're looking to secure the job that's right for you.

**NOVA's Career Connection:** Search and apply to jobs & internships, view and participate in career development workshops, career fairs, employer information sessions, and access resources such as the Resume Builder and Mock Interview practice tool.

**Indeed:** Find jobs, look at company reviews, find salaries, and explore the Indeed Career Guide.

**LinkedIn:** Professional networking social media site that's great for learning about companies and careers.

**USA Jobs:** Search Federal Government job postings and create resumes.

**LinkUp:** Pulls job postings directly from small, medium, and large company websites.

**SimplyHired:** Searches job sites, company websites, and classifieds all in one search.

**Career Builder:** Jobs, resumes, and career advice.

# Career Connection

Career Connection is NOVA's college-wide career services management system. This is where the Employer and Career Services Team posts jobs, internships, events, and more to support students' career development. All

NOVA students are automatically signed up for a Career Connection account upon enrolling in the College. Current students will log in using their myNOVA credentials and maintain access while enrolled at NOVA.

## Log Into Career Connection

Every student has a premade Career Connection account and can log in using their myNOVA username (section of VCCS email before @) and their myNOVA password.

## Complete Your Profile

Completing your profile with your education, experience, projects, skills, and awards will allow you to better promote yourself during your job search process.

## Create a Resume

Using the Resume Builder in Career Connection, create your resume from one of our templates. Before submitting it to an employer, have it reviewed for content and any errors.

## Search for Jobs and Internships

When searching for jobs and internships, utilize the search filters and favorite the jobs that interest you so you can apply later.

## Research Employers

With over 4,000 employers registered in Career Connection, explore our Employer Directory and favorite employers of interest to be notified of their jobs and events.

## Attend a Career Event

New Career Events are added daily, so check out a wide range of Workshops, Career Fairs and Employer Recruitment Events both here at NOVA and in the community.

## Attend a Career Event

During your time at NOVA, don't miss the opportunity to meet with a Career Counselor through Career Connection to discuss your career development process.

# Career Services Events

The Employer and Career Services Team is always busy connecting with employers and other community members to develop a wide range of events for students. Currently, we offer three types of career events—Career Fairs & Virtual Employer Lobbies, Employer Recruitment Events, and Workshops & Programs. Within our Workshops & Programs listing, you'll also find a variety of Career Counseling workshops hosted by our Career Counselors. You can find all of these events and information on how to register in Career Connection.

**Career Fairs & Virtual Employer Lobbies:** Students meet directly with hiring employers, either in a group setting or through one-on-one meetings. These events are held either in person or online. All fairs and lobbies are hosted by Northern Virginia Community College.

**Employer Recruitment Events:** Employer Recruitment Events connect students directly to employers, so students expand their professional network, hear about specific companies, and learn more about a given industry. One example is our Employer Office Hours, which provide current students with the opportunity to meet one-on-one with employer representatives for pre-scheduled appointments. In addition to networking, students receive career advice, industry information, and resume critiques.

**Workshops & Programs:** Workshops & Programs are held across the College and include career development events, such as resume workshops, panels, and career exploration events. This section also features external career events hosted within the community (not hosted by Northern Virginia Community College). For example, you'll find public community job fairs in this section.

# RESUMES



# Resume Tips

- Schedule a resume review appointment with a NOVA Career Counselor via **Career Connection!**
- Tailor your resume to each job that you apply for. Look for keywords in the job description and be sure to include them
- Review resume examples for your industry of interest.
- Use chronological resume format.
- Leave out unnecessary information and/or work history. All of your work/volunteer experience may not be relevant to the position you're applying to and that's ok!
- Focus on your accomplishments and include metrics.
- Your resume should be clear, concise, and relevant to the position you are applying for. Set a goal to have your resume be 1 full page, unless your relevant work history is extensive. In that case, adjust your resume length goal to 2 pages.
- Always proofread your resume before submission. Spelling and grammar errors could negatively impact how employers view you.
- Write a cover letter. Cover letters aren't always required for a job application, but they provide an additional opportunity to set you apart from other applicants.

# COVER LETTERS



# All About Cover Letters

**Definition:** A written document commonly submitted with a job application outlining the applicant's credentials and interest in the open position.

**Purpose:** Demonstrate your fit for a particular position and **expand** upon your resume. Merely repeating what is on your resume is **not** for a cover letter. Your cover letter should be **customized** to fit **every** unique job you apply to!

## Tips for writing your cover letter:

- **Watch the length of your letter.** Your cover letter should be 3/4 of a page to a full page long. Your writing should be clear and concise.
- **Explain why you want the job.** State why you're excited about the position and how it fits your career goals.
- **Expand upon your resume.** Do not reiterate your resume. Provide specific examples and details regarding the skills you've developed and how they're a good fit for the position.
- **Describe the ways you will contribute.** Clearly identify at least two competencies you possess and how they will complement the position and enable you to do your job well.
- **Research the company.** State what you know and like about the company to demonstrate your sincere interest in joining the organization.
- **Proofread and edit.** Mistakes on your cover letter, even if small, will negatively impact your application. Take the time to read over all application materials before submitting them.



THANK YOU

&

FOLLOW-UP



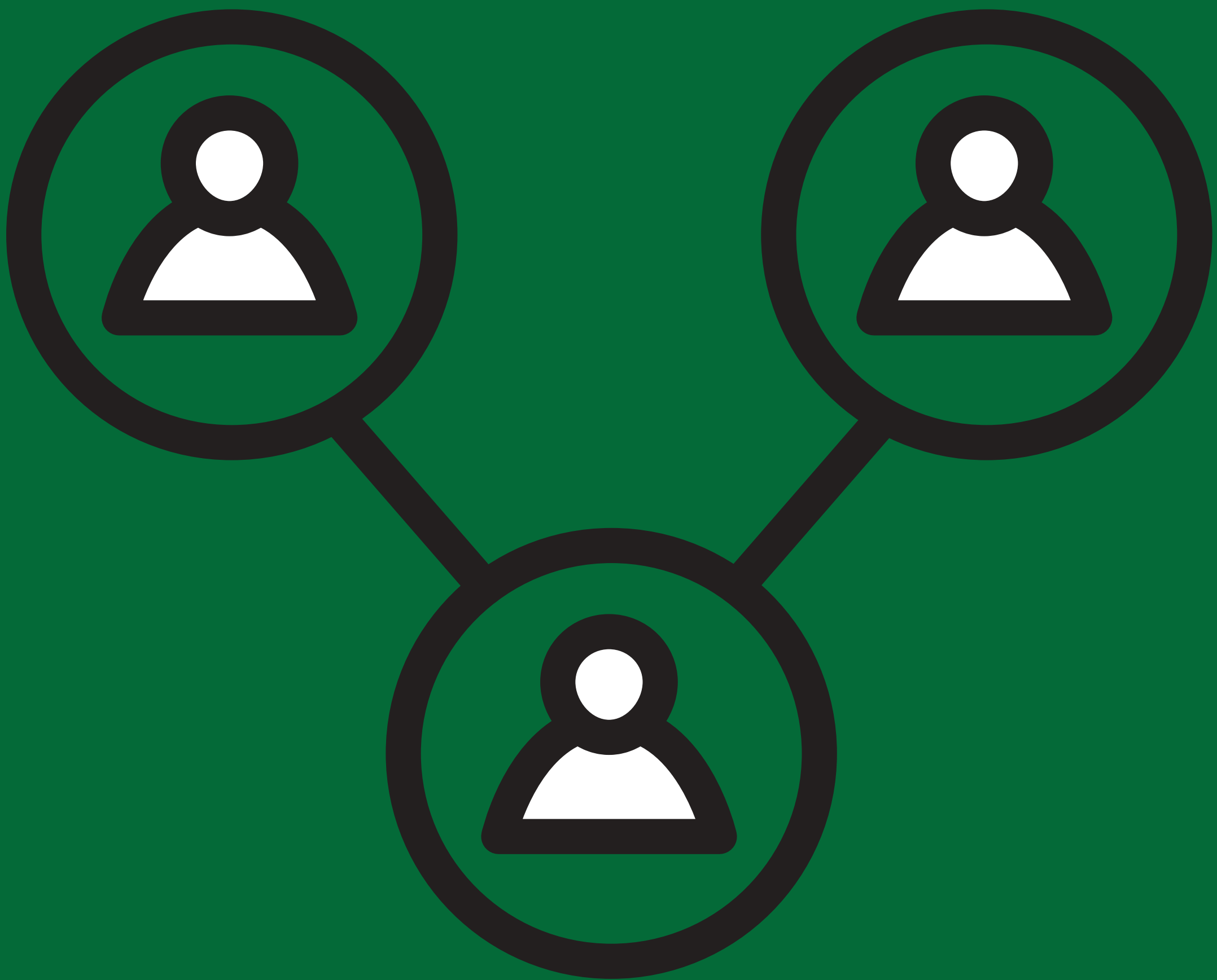


It is proper etiquette to send thank you letters/emails **anytime** you meet with someone regarding career opportunities. A thank you note can set you apart, and provide another opportunity to remind the interviewer who you are and why you are the ideal candidate!

## Key Points to Writing Thank You Letters

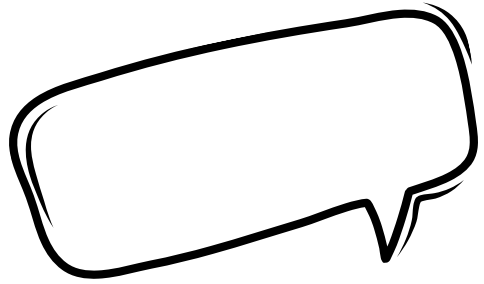
1. The thank you email/letter should be sent **within 24 hours** of the meeting/interview.
2. The thank you letter should be **short, simple, and specific** to the interview. A half page letter is sufficient.
3. Your letter should be sent to **all** who served on the interview committee.
4. Make sure your language is **professional** despite the simple nature of the letter.
5. Express your **continued interest**.

# NETWORKING



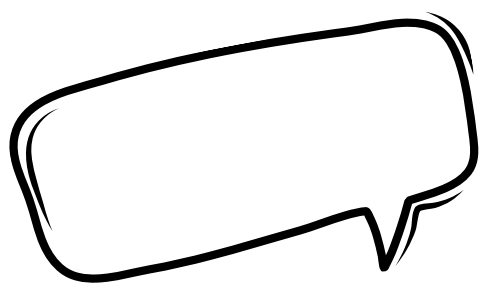
# Networking Q & A

? What is the **purpose** of professional networking?



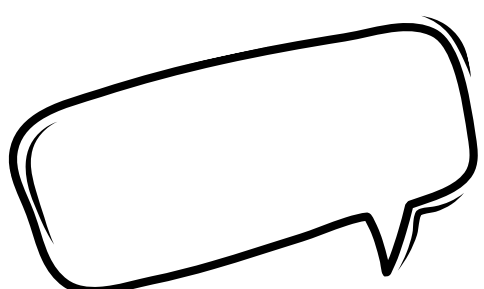
The purpose of professional networking is to build mutually beneficial relationships with other professionals to exchange information and build contacts.

? What are some **practical** ways to network?



Some practical ways to network are **1)** attend social/networking events; **2)** be active on your LinkedIn account; **3)** join alumni groups; and **4)** join a professional organization in your field(s) of interest.

? What are some easy **pointers** for networking?



- Don't be afraid to introduce yourself/ talk to people.
- Engage in the workshops and fairs that Career Services offers.
- Don't be dismissive. You never know what could come from a connection!

# Attire & Etiquette



# Dress for Success

People pay attention to your presentation! Having a resume and interviewing well is great, but dressing appropriately matters too. You do not have to compromise your style to dress professionally.

*Incorporate fun prints and patterns, pops of color, and jewelry as often as you'd like!*

Business Casual	Professional
<p><b>Tops:</b> Blouse, collard shirt, or polo shirt, sweater, blazer, cardigan, or vest. *Wearing a tie is optional.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dress</li></ul> <p><b>Bottoms:</b> Trousers, khaki pants or fingertip length skirt.</p> <p><b>Shoes:</b> Dress shoes, loafers, flats, or heels are acceptable.</p> <p><b>Accessories:</b> Belt and modest jewelry are acceptable. *Jewelry can be more unique.</p>	<p><b>Tops:</b> Dress shirt and tie, blouse, suit jacket.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skirt suit or dress</li></ul> <p><b>Bottoms:</b> Suit pants, slacks, or skirt past knee length. *Suit jacket should match pants.</p> <p><b>Shoes:</b> Dress shoes, heels, or flats are acceptable.</p> <p><b>Accessories:</b> A nice belt that matches shoes and modest jewelry is acceptable.</p>

## How to decide what to wear to your job:

- Review the employee handbook.
- Observe how your colleagues dress.
- Purchase basic pieces of professional clothing first as you build your professional wardrobe.
- When in doubt, opt to dress conservatively.

# Professional Etiquette

**Professional or business etiquette** is the type of behavior that team members are expected to follow in order to uphold the company's image and respect each other.



## The 5 Basics of Professional Etiquette

1. **Be on time!** Whether you're attending an interview or a team meeting, being on time shows that you are respectful of everyone's schedule.
2. **Recognize your team.** Acknowledging others is proper business etiquette in casual and formal work environments. You should always greet a person when they enter a room or meeting, whether in-person or virtually.
3. **Dress appropriately!** Dressing appropriately will be subjective to the work environment you occupy, but it demonstrates your respect for the company's image and expectations.
4. **Respect shared spaces.** The way you treat shared spaces will reflect on you as a professional, so it is important to stay organized, be aware of your volume, and respect others who also use these spaces.
5. **Build your emotional intelligence.** Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, regulate, and understand emotions in yourself and in others. These skills can help you empathize with team members and overcome challenges.

# Interviewing





# Types of Interviews

## Traditional/Solo

A one-on-one with the interviewer, where you are asked a series of questions based on your experience.

The virtual version of the traditional interview facilitated via software like Zoom.

## Virtual/Video

## Behavioral

Asks questions to evaluate how you behaved in past situations as a predictor of future behavior.

Typically used for the first round of interviews and will be your first live interaction with the employer.

## Phone

## Recorded

You will receive a link to recorded questions that you must answer. Your responses are usually limited to 2-6 minutes long and must be submitted by a deadline.

# General Interviewing Tips

Have your resume with you to refer to.

Turn your cell phone off or on silent and make sure it isn't visible.

Take notes during your interview.

Dress professionally.

Arrive 10-15 minutes early!

Show enthusiasm for the position.

Be authentic & confident!

Speak clearly & concisely when answering questions.

Maintain eye contact while you're answering questions.

Ask thoughtful questions.

Use the mock interview tool on Career Connection.

Research the organization/company prior to your interview.

Send Thank You notes to the interview committee.

# **SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Tell me about yourself.**

**Why are you interested in this organization?**

**Describe a conflict you experienced at work and how you resolved it.**

**How would others describe you?**

**What do you anticipate to be your greatest challenges of this position?**

**Describe a time you went above and beyond at work.**

**Describe a time when you disagreed with your supervisor/boss.**

**What is your ideal working environment?**

**How do you manage working under pressure and meeting deadlines?**

**How would you describe your leadership style?**

**How well do you work with people? Do you prefer working independently or with a team?**

**What are your short-term and long-term career goals?  
How do you plan to achieve these goals?**

# Questions to Ask the Interviewer

**What would be the first project or initiative for the successful candidate?**

**What is your favorite thing about working for this organization?**

**What professional development opportunities would be available to the successful candidate?**

**How would the successful candidate be evaluated on their performance in this position? How often would their performance be measured?**

**How would you describe the company culture?**

**What are the characteristics of someone who would succeed in this role?**

**Can you elaborate on the day-to-day responsibilities this job entails?**

**What other functions or departments does this team work with most often?**

**What is the timeline of the hiring process?**

**What are the next steps in the hiring process?**

# Job Offers & Negotiations



# The Do's & Don'ts of Salary Negotiation

## Do:

- Research salary range/cost of living before interviewing.
- Consider the whole package (salary + benefits) to determine the value of the job offer.
- Be positive - always thank the employer for the offer, even if it is low.
- Use respectful, positive language.
- Ask if there is room to negotiate.
- Practice your negotiation conversation with a Career Counselor or mentor.
- Identify where you fit into the salary range and explain why based on your strengths, experience, and education.
- Get the final offer in writing or in an email.

## Don't:

- Discuss specifics during your initial interview.
- Raise salary questions until the employer brings it up.
- Enter into negotiations if you know that you won't accept any offer.
- Ask for more time and then never follow-up.
- Ask to negotiate if you lack leverage (relevant experience and education) for negotiating.
- Renege on an offer after you've already accepted it.

### Helpful websites:

[www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com); [www.salarylist.com](http://www.salarylist.com); [www.payscale.com](http://www.payscale.com); [www.glassdoor.com](http://www.glassdoor.com)

# Thank You

We hope that you've found this handbook helpful. As mentioned before, we're here for YOU! Don't hesitate to reach out to us for any of your career-related needs.

**NOVA Career Services Website:** <https://www.nvcc.edu/career-services/index.html>

**NOVA Career Services Email:** [novacareerservices@nvcc.edu](mailto:novacareerservices@nvcc.edu)

**NOVA Career Services Youtube:** [NOVA Career Services - YouTube](#)

**Career Connection:** [Student/Alumni Sign In \(symplicity.com\)](#)