Many graduate students wish to remain in an academic setting following degree completion but don’t wish to become faculty members. There are ample opportunities for master’s and doctoral degree holders to contribute to the mission of universities without directly teaching students in the classroom or conducting academic research.

INTERESTING OPPORTUNITIES

Individuals with graduate degrees are recruited for a number of diverse roles on college campuses.

- Student advising – academic, career, activities, admissions, financial aid, study abroad, honors, housing, experiential learning, international students
- Classroom support – educational consulting, academic technology, tutoring
- Writing & editing – university press, campus publications, writing centers, communication directors
- Research support – policy centers, human subjects boards, technology transfer offices, assessment and evaluation centers
- Administrative – grants administration, financial management, human resources, facilities management, compliance and risk management
- Other – development, alumni relations, special programs coordinator, diversity outreach, organizational training, libraries, museums, real estate, capitol projects, space planning

ADVANTAGES

Working as a university staff member has a number of advantages.

- Myriad of benefits associated with working in an academic setting
  - Intellectually stimulating environment
  - Work with students and colleagues who are engaged in interesting and important issues
  - Beautiful surroundings
  - Theatre productions, museums, libraries, sporting events, speakers, recreational facilities
  - Student protests, pranks, and all kinds of interesting phenomena
- Opportunity to promote the education and development of young people – directly or indirectly – and/or to contribute to cutting-edge research discoveries
- Staff members often have more predictable schedules and greater opportunity for better work/family balance than faculty members
- Positions have good benefits such as health insurance
- Employment at public universities ensures state government benefits
- Staff are not subjected to “publish or perish” situations
- Grading of student papers and tests usually not required
- Ability to move around to different positions within the university system
- Some staff areas have clear pathways for advancement
- Entry-level pay in some fields is higher than starting faculty salaries
DOWNSIDES

As with any work environment, staff employment within universities has its drawbacks.

- Some positions have low pay, compared to faculty and corporate salaries
- It’s often difficult to get your foot in the door
- Staff members are often the implementers – the people who “get things done” – but they don’t always receive the status or respect typically given to faculty members
- Although positions are relatively secure, tenure is generally not offered
- Little time is available to pursue personal research interests
- Money to pursue professional development is not plentiful
- Some staff positions entail more meetings than do teaching positions
- Many positions involve management responsibilities, which don’t appeal to everyone
- Fewer vacation days are available
- Structured 8-5 schedule takes some getting used to after grad school

ANALYZE & STRATEGIZE

- Start downloading and analyzing interesting job descriptions to better understand what qualifications are being sought.
- Conduct informational interviews with individuals in interesting positions to get personal insights regarding the realities of different positions and the keys to job success.
- Take steps to learn skills you’ll need in your career path of choice – take elective classes, enroll in a certificate program, or attend specialized training classes.
- Get relevant experience through internships, volunteer positions, committee work, leadership roles, temporary positions, etc. The importance of relevant experience cannot be overstated.
- Engage with institutions of interest – read their website, subscribe to newsletters, attend campus events, and volunteer for committees.
- Get reading recommendations from people in fields of interest so you can learn the landscape.

SELF-REFLECT

- Spend time teasing apart the valuable skills you’re developing as a result of your teaching, research, service, leadership, and other roles.
  - Learn more from the Preparing for the Job Search handout available at - http://careers.washington.edu/GradStudents/Beyond-Academia
  - Show the broader skills you have gained by using relevant synonyms for experiences like lesson-planning, grading, teaching, conducting experiments, and defending the dissertation.
- Practice writing and speaking about yourself in a confident, positive, concise manner.
- Be proud of your career goals!
DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS

- Develop and utilize a network of contacts at institutions of interest to you. Having an insider act as an advocate for your application is important.
- Find a mentor – perhaps somebody with a graduate degree who works in university administration and supports your goal to work in an academic staff role.
- Select and cultivate references that have seen you function in administrative or leadership roles, preferably in your field of interest.
- Join relevant listserves and professional associations.

RESUMES

- Look for sample resumes in your field of interest.
- In most cases, submit a 2-4 page comprehensive resume (rather than a CV).
- Use a reverse chronological, functional, or combination style to show your match with the position.
- Carefully analyze each job description for specific key / skill words.
- Whenever possible, tailor your resume for each position and incorporate the key words from the job description (assuming, of course, you possess the attributes being sought).
- Consider having a Summary of Qualifications section near the top of your resume, in which you describe your skills that are relevant to the job at hand using language from the job posting.
- Organize your resume so your most related assets are near the top. Do not assume that your degree is your most compelling selling point.
- Don’t use acronyms and jargon that may not be understood by people outside your discipline – when in doubt, spell it out.
- If the position doesn’t require research, consider condensing or eliminating your publication and/or presentation record.

COVER LETTERS

- Always submit a cover letter unless specifically told not to do so.
- Tailor your cover letter each time you submit an application. This is especially critical when the application system does not allow you to submit a tailored resume.
- Describe how your skills, experience, and education are a good fit for the open position. Don’t assume your application will stand out simply because you have an advanced degree.
- Discuss how the position is a logical next step in your career path.
- Focus on the value you will bring to the organization, rather than what you want from the position.
- Refrain from giving a description of your thesis unless your topic is directly relevant to the position for which you’re applying.
- Directly express interest in and enthusiasm for the organization and the open position.
- Be concise and to the point – cover letters are typically 1 to 1.5 pages.
INTERVIEWS & BEYOND

- Ask mentors in your field to share sample interview questions.
- Be ready to tell concrete examples of times you’ve demonstrated skills critical to the position for which you’re interviewing.
- Be prepared to discuss the positive reasons why you’re seeking a staff position rather than the negative reasons why you’re not seeking a faculty position – and be sure to convey enthusiasm rather than resignation about your career choice.
- Express enthusiasm for the institution, department, and position.
- Call the departments to which you apply to show interest, professionalism, and follow-through.

JOBS BOARDS

- http://www.academic360.com/
- http://www.higheredjobs.com/
- http://www.univjobs.com/
- http://www.theplacementexchange.org/
- http://placement.myacpa.org/ongoing/
- Check the Employment / HR / Jobs / Career webpage of institutions at which you want to work
- Check the professional association websites for specific job areas of interest to you

INFORMATION & ADVICE

- Switching Sides – Parts 1 & 2
- Online Resources for Careers in Academic Administration
- When You Want to Stay on Campus (and You Don’t Want to Teach)
- Careers in Research Support
  - http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_development/previous_issues/articles/2008_08_01/caredit_a0800116
- Guest Speaker Discussion Archives
  - http://www.studentaffairs.duke.edu/career/wrk4us
- Graduate-level Resume Samples
  - http://careers.washington.edu/GradStudents/Beyond-Academia
- Resume Tips for Individuals Applying to the UW
  - http://www.washington.edu/admin/hr/jobs/apl/resume-tips.html