Job Search Strategies

OVERVIEW....
The most important element in conducting an effective search is the research you do. First, you need to know yourself - what are you good at? What are you interested in? What will be important to you in your first job? How does that all fit with your field? Second, research your field - Where are the jobs? How will you need to market yourself? Put yourself in the employer’s shoes - What methods do they use to find candidates? Your prioritization of time and effort in your job search should be in tune with what an employer is doing to identify candidates.

STRATEGIES....
Networking
Networking is a strategy that you can start early. Get to know faculty and managers on campus. Talk with them about your career goals. Take advantage of opportunities to hear speakers who come to campus. Attend Alumni in the Spotlight programs. Research whether there is a student chapter or student membership rate for a professional association in your field of interest. Create a LinkedIn profile and join the Muhlenberg Student Alumni Networking group and the Muhlenberg Career Center group. Take a look at your circle of friends, family and other contacts who may know someone who knows someone in your field. Some of the best contacts may come from what you may think are unlikely places - your hair stylist, the dry cleaner, your uncle’s next door neighbor. Begin to cultivate these important relationships early. In this guide, there is more information on networking.

Targeted Applications
Employers seek focused candidates. The one who is serious shows interest in the organization by mentioning relevant information - information they uncovered in researching the organization. The candidate who is serious provides supporting evidence in their letter that is targeted. See the cover letter article in this guide.

Responding to Job Postings
When one thinks of searching for a job, the first thing that typically comes to mind is the job board on monster.com or the local newspaper. Responding to job advertisements is the most well-known and pursued job search strategy. It can be a viable option - people do get jobs through the want ads, but consider again how employers seek candidates. Job postings may not be the best strategy for all fields or all employers. Also, these ads are typically placed when there is an immediate hiring need, a strategy referred to as “just-in-time hiring.” Other strategies we mention will be most helpful if you are planning ahead, as we strongly recommend.

If you are responding to advertisements, do so within the first few days of seeing the ad. If a contact name and title were not given, do your best to uncover that information before you send your cover letter and resume. Everyone is more interested in mail that comes addressed to them personally.

Career Center Programs
Attend workshops throughout the year that will assist you in preparing for a job search and help you connect with alumni and employers to develop your network of contacts. Check your mailbox for the semester’s schedule of events or check the Career Connections calendar for information and updates. Meet with a Career Counselor to develop your plan.

Job Fairs and Career Fairs
Employers’ motivations for attending fairs vary - to meet several potential candidates within a specified timeframe, to increase awareness of their organization, to collect resumes and to conduct initial screening interviews, or some combination of these reasons.

For you as a candidate, job and career fairs are excellent places to connect with potential employers, learn about their organizations, and make an initial impression.

Most fairs do not require a fee for job seekers to attend. Refer to the article in this guide for information on how to make the most of job fairs.

Campus Recruiting Program
The Career Center helps graduating seniors, juniors and sophomores connect with employers who are interested in recruiting Muhlenberg talent through on-campus interviews, information sessions, and resume collections. In this guide, there is information that provides more details on the Recruiting Program.

Websites
Refer to www.muhlenberg.edu/main/aboutus/careercenter/students/job/ on The Career Center website for sites that we have identified as helpful. Search the web for others related to your specific field of interest as well. If you’re not sure where to begin, sites like Career Insider (link on the Career Center website), monstertrak.com, wetfeet.com, and indeed.com are especially designed for college students conducting career research and looking for entry-level jobs. In addition, there are many industry specific databases online. Try entering your field of interest, such as “art therapy” and “jobs” or “careers” into an Internet search engine such as Google or Yahoo.

Employment Agencies
When dealing with a third party recruiter, such as an employment agency, be sure you understand how they operate - you only want to deal with a firm that is employer paid (not paid by you). Find out as much as you can about their reputation - Who are their clients? How long have they been in business? How does the agency earn their commission? Find out as much as you can about the organization with which the agency wants you to interview. Working with an agency can be a great way to gain exposure to opportunities; but only accept a position that truly interests you.

FOLLOWING UP...
Regardless of how you identify leads, your follow-up in your job search can make the difference between getting an interview and not getting one. A proactive approach of contacting organizations by phone to follow-up on the letter and application you have sent can demonstrate your sincere interest in the organization. Say something like “I am calling to check on my status for the XYZ position and let you know I am still very interested.”