How to Develop Skills Sought By Employers

Year after year, regardless of job market conditions, employers have a similar wish list for candidates’ skills and qualities. Below is a list distilled from employer surveys published by eminent national associations, universities and research groups. Listed below each skill are some opportunities to explore and develop that particular skill or behavior. Use these suggestions to create your own powerful set of skills while at UNCW— in and out of the classroom. These career readiness competencies will increase your marketability for internships, jobs and graduate school.

The number one way to develop any of these skills is through becoming a student leader or peer educator on campus!

1. Communication Skills - oral & written
   - Write stories, advertisements, press releases or newsletters for Student Media, or a campus or community organization
   - Enroll in an academic class that is writing intensive, or includes presentations or speeches
   - Work in a campus office; i.e. at an information desk, or in an operations or program assistant position
   - Improve the way you listen to others; use empathy and self-control when diffusing disagreements
   - Refine your job search materials (resume, cover letter, interview preparation) at the Career Center
   - Act with a theater group, film or broadcast production
   - Do fundraising for charities or nonprofit events; volunteer to work on a political campaign
   - Help in a literacy or conversational English program

2. Interpersonal Skills - relates well to others, self-confident, tactful, friendly, outgoing, sense of humor
   - Engage in discussions with people different from you
   - Participate as an active team member in class, a campus organization, or at a job
   - Live in a group living environment (on or off campus)
   - Conduct interviews with people to gather information for a class project, organization or personal goal
   - Volunteer for a telephone hotline, women's shelter, after school program, hospital, nursing home, etc.
   - Work as a tutor, coach, camp counselor, mentor, literacy or conversation partner, or teacher
   - Work as wait staff, info desk assistant, office or retail staff, recreation assistant, customer service staff, etc.
   - Become a personal assistant for an individual with disabilities
   - Develop interpersonal skills in classes that emphasize human relationships or intercultural issues

3. Teamwork Skills - works well with others, flexible, adaptable, collaborative
   - Lead a project team or committee in class, a student organization or job
   - Use an internship, study group, class or research project to help turn a group of people into a team with common goals
   - Help a new team develop through the stages of forming, storming, norming and performing
   - Join a musical group or act in a play
   - Participate on intramural team or sports club, coach Little League, become a summer camp counselor or recreational leader
   - Contribute as a valuable member of a team focusing on team goals more than personal goals
4. Initiative- strong work ethic, professional, risk-taker, work ethically and with integrity, entrepreneur

- Identify a campus or community need and proactively find and implement solutions
- Select a skill which you would like to improve, and seek out experiences which help you achieve that goal
- Appropriately balance academics, co-curricular activities and employment
- Solicit strong instructor/supervisor references from academic, co-curricular or employment activity
- Take pride in your work
- Study abroad; interact with other cultures
- Start your own business while in college

5. Critical Thinking Skills- analytical, problem-solver, detail-oriented, organized, creative, strategic planner

- Participate in undergraduate research with a faculty member
- Work as a lab assistant with computers, science or language
- Organize a campus event, including volunteer staff, budget, publicity, etc.
- Seek opportunities to evaluate data to support decision making
- Manage your time well; meet deadlines
- Take a topic you are passionate about, and research the opposing view
- Read an article in an academic area different from your own and develop implications for your area
- Develop a decision tree for an upcoming purchase, researching all relevant information (brand, model, size, etc.)
- Develop a three-year strategic plan for a student organization
- When considering a difficult decision, appraise your choices realistically and seek professional advice when appropriate

6. Leadership Skills- communicate vision, action orientated, influence/motivate others, enthusiastic

- Gain leadership education and experience through the Office of Student Leadership & Engagement, the Cameron School of Business or a Leadership Studies minor
- Run a campaign for student government or campus issue; or get involved in local or state politics
- Be an active officer or committee chair of a campus organization
- Identify a campus or community need and proactively find and implement solutions
- Facilitate group discussions in class or in a campus organization
- Organize and manage an intramural sports team, camp or recreation group
- Lead children's programs, tutor kids in a local school, or coach a children's sports team
- Get an internship in an area of career interest; consult with the Career Center and your department's internship coordinator
- Train new campus organization members or employees at your job

7. Technical Skills- utilize computer software & hardware, web and financial resources

- Work as a student network or computer lab consultant with Residence Life or ITS
- Design or maintain web sites for a student or community organization, campus office or yourself
- Design a brochure, advertisement or newsletter using desktop publishing software
- Assist community agencies with databases, statistical analyses, financial or service reports
- Keep budgets or financial records for campus or community organizations, or work in a billing office
- Design PowerPoint presentation for class or a campus organization
- Work as a tech or projectionist in Campus Life
- Sell computer hardware or software, or start a web-based business
- Work in the studio or control room of a radio or TV station
- Learn computer and technical skills in classes and workshops that focus on software programs and applying technology


Campus leadership and peer educator positions include Resident Assistant, Orientation Leader, Ambassador, Seahawk Link, ACE, Fraternity & Sorority Life, SGA/GSA, Office of Student Leadership & Engagement, CARE, Crossroads, Health Promotion and the University Learning Center.

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Student Organizations http://uncw.edu/studentorgs/
Jobs & Internships www.myseawork.com