



Higher Education Recruitment Consortium

HOW TO APPLY FOR  
**HIGHER  
EDUCATION  
CAREERS**



## Forward

Congratulations!

By downloading this ebook, you're on your way to a fulfilling career in higher education.

Maybe you're looking for a mentor and opportunities to advance your career. Perhaps you're searching for a work environment that offers great benefits, work-life balance, and a collaborative culture. Maybe you'd like to influence and inspire the next generation of leaders.

Whatever your reason for transitioning into higher education, HERC is here to help!

Please visit our website, [hercjobs.org](http://hercjobs.org), for additional resources to advance your career.

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# Drafting a Career-Change Resume

The average person will have 12 jobs in his or her lifetime—and, in many cases, at least a few of those positions constitute true career changes. In fact, 75 percent of Generation Xers say they'll likely return to school at some point in their careers—with their sights set on changing roles—and 80 percent of workers in their 20s want to change careers.

But, while a career change puts you in good company, positioning yourself and your prior experience can be challenging. The more competitive the market, the tougher it may be to cut through the clutter and ensure your resume is noticed—especially in a stack of CVs or resumes that seem to be 100 percent in-step with the specific role and responsibilities.

The simplest and most effective solution is to unpack your soft skills and other transferable skills—proficiencies that easily translate from industry to industry and are just as highly sought in your new potential field. By telling your professional story and organically weaving in these critical traits and experiences, you'll create instant relevance in a hiring manager's mind and better position yourself to get an interview—and possibly the job.

### Some Great Steps for Getting Started

**First, Research.** Every industry is different. Even if you're shifting niches within the same general area, be sure to do your homework regarding the required skills, training, certifications, and in-demand experiences. A quick search on HERC Jobs or a specific institution's job board should give you a cursory sense. Jot down the key points and requirements—you'll need to have those on-hand as you start drafting your resume.

**Second, Compare and Contrast.** Armed with your list of industry must-haves, the next step is to determine how your background compares and contrasts. For example, an analyst may be well-versed in distilling complex research findings into simple, actionable trends, and that's also an important skill for a teacher or someone in a sales or marketing role to have.

As you work through your list of required skills and experiences, chances are that you'll spot more than a few that connect your current career path to your new trajectory. Make note of each—these will be central to your updated resume and, more specifically, used to fill in the SKILLS/STRENGTHS section of your resume.

**Third, Determine Your Objective.** A solid career-change resume starts with a clear-cut objective: a short statement at the top of your resume that definitively states why you're applying for the job.

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Some examples include:

- To transition into an executive-level position in graduate admissions that, specifically, leverages my experience in diversity initiatives and staff training.
- To bring my decade-plus of experience working with students, educators, and high-level donors and alumni/ae to a student-affairs role.
- To shift from a research-focused position to a classroom-based teaching role, enabling me to bring my experience, insights, and unique presentation approach to graduate students.

Each of these statements weaves in why the candidate is right for the position, without overtly saying it, and hints at his or her skills and qualifications. Done right, a strong objective should drive hiring managers to lean in and read on—exactly what you want.

**Fourth, Draft Your Resume.** Many people who are making career changes opt to use a functional resume. While most resumes are chronological—listing your most current experiences first and continuing backward—a functional resume brings your skills and experiences to the forefront. By pulling your best skills forward as they relate to the job for which you're applying, you can better highlight why you make sense for the role.

For example, a functional resume might showcase your research

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and presentation skills from all previous roles as well as your training, academic work, and supporting pursuits.

For a functional resume, the format would be:

### **OBJECTIVE**

**SKILLS/STRENGTHS** *(Include relevant skills and experiences as they relate to the role.)*

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES** *(Break down critical experiences and skills into a few relevant buckets. Under each header, bullet out related experiences from previous roles. See examples below.)*

Educational Work Related Experience

Project Management Related Experience

Managerial Experience Related Experience

Technology & Administrative Support Related Experience

**WORK HISTORY** *(List the positions in which you acquired the bulleted experiences above. Because you've already explained your experiences above, there's no need to elaborate here.)*

Associate Professor, University of San Jose, San Jose, CA

(2011–2017)

Assistant Professor, Colorado College of Engineering, Boulder, CO

(2003–2011)

Graduate Assistant, University of Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids, MI

(2000–2003)

**EDUCATION & TRAINING** *(Conclude with your education and any relevant training or certifications.)*

**Finally, Send With Confidence.** The final step is to send your resume—with confidence—to prospective employers. Many hiring managers and human resource (HR) leaders are searching for candidates who are good cultural fits for an organization or institution. Beyond that, they want engaged, active doers who are ready to dive in and learn. Often, a candidate who's making a career change can check those boxes.

Additionally, candidates from other backgrounds and industries may be positive forces for change by bringing unique perspectives to the departments or divisions. It's easy to become caught up in the status quo when you're surrounded by like-minded professionals. An outside hire can shake things up for the better, pushing everyone to consider new perspectives and think differently—often, bringing about exciting innovations and new ways of looking at old problems. Be that person, and you'll be in-demand—no matter what your desired next step.

# Curriculum Vitae or Resume: What are the Differences?

If you are applying for a job with a college or university, you might be hearing a lot about the curriculum vitae (CV). Most faculty positions at these institutions require a CV. If you are applying for staff positions, you will likely be asked to submit a resume. However, some staff positions also require a CV.

If a staff position is in your future, create a full CV (a compendium of all your experiences and accomplishments) to use as your “master resume.” Then, when applying for specific jobs, you will have everything you need in one document. Previous articles offer tips for writing your resume, while other articles focus on the CV. The major differences, however, are in academic orientation and page length.

### **Academic Orientation and Page Length**

If you plan to work in a faculty position in higher education, you will need a CV. Curriculum vitae is Latin for “course of life,” and that is an apt description of what is included. A CV emphasizes educational and academic accomplishments and grows over the course of an academic’s life. There is no real page limit, although it is expected that a junior faculty member will have a shorter CV than a well-published professor emeritus/a. In some fields, it is not



uncommon to see a CV upwards of 20 pages long.

Very few other occupations use CVs, even within higher education. For example, most staff positions in higher education and many community colleges use a resume, which is shorter than a CV yet long enough to show a community college instructor's teaching experience. A resume will usually not contain an exhaustive list of a person's working life. Resume is French for "summary", and it is just that—a summary of qualifications and skills geared toward a specific occupation. Even with years of experience, your resume should be no longer than two pages.

### **Which One Should I Submit?**

Of course, there are many similarities between a CV and a resume. Both provide a review of qualifications and both summarize education. Both also should be created with attention to detail, as they serve as the calling card you will need to achieve the career of your dreams.

Most job descriptions will specifically ask for either a resume or a CV. If you are applying for a position at a large research university and the posting does not specify which to send, it is perfectly acceptable to ask. If you are applying at any other type of institution within the U.S., it is likely that you will be sending a resume, but again, ask if you are unsure.

# Can Your Resume Pass the 10-Second Test?

I read a survey recently that concluded that employers can decide in under ten seconds whether to put a resume in the dismiss or save pile. Admirable! Clearly ten seconds isn't sufficient time to adequately assess whether a candidate can actually perform the job advertised. However, employers are looking for specific ticket items, and if your resume does not address these items, your resume just may land in the dismiss pile. Here are five resume tips to help you succeed.

### **1. Keep it Short; Keep it Sweet**

In more than five years as a career counselor, I have seen hundreds of resumes. Most college student resumes I've seen are multiple pages. That is because students tend to treat the resume like it is another college application in which they must tell their entire life story. Far from it, the resume is simply an opportunity to make the case for your hiring in a succinct manner that highlights relevant skills, not everything you have ever done. An employer is simply not going to spend the time reading more than one page from a college student.

### **2. Relevancy is Key**

The traditional resume is written in reverse chronological order. Tradition is good, but in the case of a college resume, it is important that you make the job of the recruiter easy by putting the most relevant experiences where recruiters can quickly find them: at the top of the resume. After education, include thematized or functional headings that demonstrate your key skills such as employment, leadership and mentoring. Relevancy also includes a discussion of your experience that specifically highlights key accomplishments. That is, avoid a laundry list of things you have done and really hone in on your ability to meet project deadlines and deliver results consistently.

### **3. Make it Pretty**

Spending time on how your resume looks will pay off in large dividends in the end. Employers have a mix of subjective and objective requirements. Therefore, in addition to the objective relevant skills, the resume needs to be pleasing to the eye. Typically, this means one-inch margins all around, a nice balance of white space, a 12-inch type (depending on font) and consistent bullets or markers throughout.

### **4. Do You Speak Resume?**

Stick with short, bursts of action verbs that strongly and succinctly describe your key accomplishments. Avoid using pronouns and avoid verbs that refer to you in the third person. For example, don't say "conducts research" or "organizes bake sales." It sounds weird to the reader's ear and should to yours as well!

### **5. Objective or Summary Statements**

If you're a college student, you can reclaim space on your resume by omitting this statement. Until you have gained substantive experience after graduation, you can continue to omit this statement.

So, while ten seconds isn't a long time, it's certainly long enough for an employer to decide whether you have ticked off these five (5) things on your resume. Pull out your resume and give it to a friend. See how quickly he or she can spot what you are really good at!

## 10 Second Resume Test

	Points
1. Is your resume more than two (2) pages?	Yes = 1    No = 0
2. Is your resume in reverse chronological order?	Yes = 1    No = 0
3. Are the margins on your resume less than 1"?	Yes = 1    No = 0
4. Are you using a font size less than 12pt?	Yes = 1    No = 0
5. Does your resume use bulleted lists?	Yes = 1    No = 0
6. Does your resume have any third person pronouns?	Yes = 1    No = 0
Total Points	

### 6 points

**Your resume may not pass the 10 second test.** Have a friend review it for exactly 10 seconds. They should be able to tell what you excel at in a few words.

### 4-5 points

**You may need to redraft.** If you are using 12pt font, consider rewording and editing. Remember to only include relevant experience.

### 2 - 3 points

**You're on the right track.** Go back through your resume and see where you can summarize in fewer words, increase margins, utilize white space and keep it to one page.

### 0-1 point

**10 second star!** It looks like your resume passes the 10 second test and follows our guidelines for applying for higher education careers!

## **SAMPLE RESUME**

## **JANE SMITH**

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**(123) 456-7890**

### **OBJECTIVE**

**SKILLS/STRENGTHS** *(Include relevant skills and experiences as they relate to the role.)*

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES** *(Break down critical experiences and skills into a few relevant buckets. Under each header, bullet out related experiences from previous roles. See examples below.)*

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**EDUCATION & TRAINING** *(Conclude with your education and any relevant training or certifications.)*



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## About HERC

The Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC) is a non-profit coalition of over 700 colleges, universities, hospitals, research labs, government agencies, and related non- and for-profit organizations, committed to diversifying the pipeline of faculty, staff, and executives in academia. HERC supports our member institutions in recruiting and retaining outstanding and diverse employees.