

Graduate Student Career Guide

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Opportunities for Graduate Students

As you embark on your graduate studies, it's important that you continue to build expertise and relevant experience in your field of interest. Below is a list of opportunities that can help you in this process.

Types of Opportunities

Research Grants: Applying for a research grant typically consists of a competitive application process in which your research proposal may be selected for funding. The grants can vary from small award amounts to covering a full year or multi-year research project.

Fellowships: Short-term learning opportunities, that typically last a few months to two years, that are granted to master's or doctoral students based on academic merit to work in a specific field.

Types of Fieldwork: Fieldwork allows students to gain experience and improve their skills by working in real-life settings, under the supervision of faculty and/or onsite supervisor. There are two types of fieldwork:

- Internships: Relevant experience in your field of interest, can be either part-time or full-time, where your workload and performance will be managed by a supervisor.
- Practicum: On-site, part-time field experience where you get to observe and practice tasks under the supervision of an on-site professional and/or professor.

Industry Experience: Part-time or full-time job in your field of interest that allows you to further develop and/or gain skills relevant to your field.

How to Find Opportunities

Below are some key resources for an academic and non-academic job search.

Academic Job Search:

- [Chronicle Vitae](#): jobs in higher education, career resources, and advice from The Chronicle of Higher Education.

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- [SJSU Research Foundation](#): supports faculty through each step in the research proposal process from planning a project, identifying sources of funding, to developing a grant proposal, and submitting proposals to sponsoring agencies.
- Faculty: connect with faculty to learn about potential opportunities in research or academia.
- Think Tank: research institute, center, or organization that conducts interdisciplinary research focused on topics such as politics, economics, technology, etc.
 - [U.S. Think Tanks](#)
 - [Non-U.S. Think Tanks by Region](#)

Non-Academic Job Search:

- Jobs/internships on [SJSU Handshake](#)
- Opportunities in other countries on [GoinGlobal](#)
- Connect with professional associations/groups:
 - [LinkedIn](#)
 - [List of Professional Associations & Organizations by Industry](#)
- Career Interest Area Job Boards:
 - [Arts, Communication, and Entertainment](#)
 - [Business, Financial Services, and Logistics](#)
 - [Education and Public & Human Services](#)
 - [Health and Nutrition](#)
 - [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math](#)
- Other Job Boards:
 - [Indeed](#)
 - [Glassdoor](#)

For additional support with your job/internship search, email carrie.mcknight@sjsu.edu to schedule an appointment.

Online Networking

Spend time actively building and updating your online presence to be more successful during your SJSU graduate studies and your professional career. Connect with people on social platforms, join forums and discussions to stay updated on industry trends, and follow companies of interest.

Utilizing LinkedIn

About 80% of recruiters use LinkedIn to evaluate candidates when hiring (Jobvite, 2016). Connect with alumni and professionals in the field, research companies, and identify who in your network is connected to the company.

Building Your Profile

Make your profile stand out by showcasing your experience and skills. Here are some tips to develop a strong LinkedIn profile:

- Create a headline and summary to highlight your key skills, experience, and goals.

Here is a sample of a headline and summary for a career in academia:

Headline: *Ed.D. Student. Lecturer at San Jose State University.*

Summary: *I am a dedicated educator with 8+ years of teaching experience. I have worked in a K-5 district that primarily serves culturally diverse students from disadvantaged backgrounds. My research interests lie in finding best practices and strategies to improve educational equity and access to address the needs of underrepresented minorities. I am passionate and committed to improving the learning environment of the students I serve to help bridge the achievement gap.*

Here is a sample of a headline and summary for a career in non-academia:

Headline: *Business Operations Analyst, MBA Student*

Summary: *I am a highly motivated professional with 4+ years of experience in business operations. I have reduced operational costs at small and large sized companies by assessing budgets from different angles and making appropriate recommendations. I would like to apply and further develop my skills in business operations at a multinational corporation.*

- Add any research experience, publications, presentations, and grants awarded. If you're in the field of research, having your work published is a great way to further market yourself.
- Post articles, pictures, or updates related to your industry. For example, post a picture of you at a professional event and briefly mention what you learned and enjoyed the most.
- Ask for recommendations from supervisors or colleagues to include on your LinkedIn profile. Having others praise your work and skills adds further credibility to your profile.
- Stay active on LinkedIn and define your goal. Do you want to expand your network by connecting with professionals in the field? Are you searching for a new opportunity? Are you keeping up with industry trends and posting articles? Determine your purpose and what level of activity makes sense.

Making Connections

Connect with alumni and professionals in your industry by sending them a personalized message to invite them to your network and to ask about setting up an informational interview.

Sample of personalized message for a professional in academia:

Dear Dr. _____, my name is Sammy Spartan. I'm currently pursuing my Ph.D in _____ and I noticed that your research experience is in _____. I would appreciate the opportunity to connect with you to learn more about your research.

Sample of personalized message for a professional in non-academia:

Dear _____, my name is Sammy Spartan. I'm currently pursuing my MBA at SJSU and noticed you're currently working as a project manager at Cisco. I have a high interest in project management and I would like to connect with you as a fellow Spartan and learn more about your role.

Follow companies and organizations of interest to learn about new initiatives, job opportunities, product launches, and to expand your network by connecting with employees. Join professional organizations, industry groups, and your alumni association(s).

For information on how to build your LinkedIn profile, make connections, and set up an informational interview, review the LinkedIn section in our [Job/Internship Search Guide](#).

SJSU Handshake

Handshake is the SJSU Career Center's job and internship database for currently enrolled students. Handshake uses cutting edge technology to help students connect with employers, source jobs and internships, register for employer information sessions, and view upcoming on- and off-campus career-focused events. Employers who post internships and jobs on Handshake are focused on recruiting SJSU students, which is the key reason to create your profile!

Building Your Profile

Get started on SJSU's job and internship database!

- Log in with your **SJSUOne ID** and **password**.
- Fill out your career interests completely for customized events, articles, and opportunities.
- Set up and complete your profile to maximize your search efforts and be found by employers who are looking for SJSU talent.
- Utilize the different search filters including job type, industry, job function, and location.
- Upload your resume and any other relevant documents to better market yourself to employers.
- Download the Handshake app for easy access!

Making Connections

Message and connect with graduate students from SJSU and other universities in your field of study with questions on career-related topics such as:

- Professional experience
- Education recommendations
- Resume advice
- Interview advice
- Inside information about a company and/or position
- Q&A or other career-related topics

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In-Person Networking

You may already be submitting your resume for opportunities, and your LinkedIn and Handshake profiles are getting viewed by recruiters and employers. However, that's only part of the process to get an internship or job in a competitive and constantly changing job market. Therefore, your networking needs to go beyond your online presence.

Why Live Networking is Important

1. As many as 70 - 85% of people have ended up in their current position thanks to networking ([Payscale, 2017](#)).
2. Referrals are the leading source of candidates for over 80% of employers ([Forbes, 2019](#))
3. Opportunity to gain inside knowledge of the hiring process and work culture
4. Connect to people who are influencers and stay current in your field
5. Networking can positively build and extend your professional reputation

Networking On-Campus

Here are some ways to build your SJSU network:

- Join a [student organization](#)
- Attend [employer events](#) and other [SJSU events](#)
- Ask your college professors and academic advisors for ideas
- Check with your department about other opportunities
- Email carrie.mcknight@sjsu.edu to schedule an appointment for additional support on networking strategies

Networking Off-Campus

Here are some ways to further develop your network:

- Ask your classmates, friends, colleagues where they network and socialize
- Check social media: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
- Log in to [SJSU² Mentoring & Meetups](#) using your SJSU One ID and password. Access Quick Connections, to view profiles of alumni and other industry professional mentors from a diverse range of fields who can help you achieve career success
- Search for events on networking sites such as [Meetup](#) and [Eventbrite](#)
- Become an active member of a professional organization in your field of study; consider joining their board and/or committee to get further involved
- Attend conferences in your field; offer to volunteer or be a presenter to gain more visibility and build your network
- Set up informational interviews with SJSU alumni and professionals working at target companies/ industries

How to Start a Conversation

Preparing a conversation starter helps you introduce yourself to a new contact or potential employer with confidence. Take time to develop a pitch to highlight your graduate studies, professional experience, career goals, and any relevant activities.

Here is an example of how you would introduce yourself to a STEM employer at an industry event:

“Hi, my name is _____. I’m working on my Masters in Electrical Engineering at SJSU, and will graduate in May 20xx. I have 2 years of work experience working for a tech company in India after completing my Bachelor’s in Engineering., and my key technical skills are electrical design and Python. I am an active student member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, and attend Bay Area technical conferences. I’m here to learn more about your current Mechanical Engineering position at (company name).”

Here is an example of how you would introduce yourself to a professor to express interest in a teaching position:

Hello Dr.____, My name is ____ and I recently completed my MS in Biological Sciences at SJSU. I have 2 years of experience as a Graduate Teacher Assistant at ____ where I taught sections in the following subjects: microbiology, physiology, and molecular biology. I assisted professors with developing curriculum, lab materials, and facilitating study groups. I am committed to helping students learn by applying different teaching methodologies that will address students’ unique learning styles.

What NOT To Do When Networking

There is more to networking than just showing up at a professional event. Here is a list of what **not to do** when meeting other attendees or employers:

- Ask the question “Are you hiring?” The employer doesn’t know you and this can come off too aggressive. Remember the key is to first build a relationship.
- Take longer than 30 seconds to introduce yourself.
- Fail to do research ahead of time on the event (speakers/employers, topics/opportunities, etc.)
- Ask for a business card without an introduction or follow-up.
- Discuss religion, politics, personal issues, or other controversial topics.
- Dress inappropriately; you want to give a good first impression!

CV vs. Resume

What is the difference between a CV and a resume?

A curriculum vitae, or CV, is a detailed record of your education, employment history, research experience, certifications, publications, professional affiliations, etc. It is often two or more pages and is used to apply for jobs in academia, research, and the medical fields.

See an example below:

SAMMY S. SPARTAN

San Jose, CA 95008

(888) 888-8888

sammyspartan@gmail.com

EDUCATION:

San Jose State University, San Jose CA

Bachelor of Arts Political Science, 3.85 GPA Spring 2017

Global Politics Concentration, Minor in Economics

Study Abroad, Barcelona, Spain Summer 2016

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:

Senior Project: Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, SJSU, Spring 2017

- Conducted a comparative case study analysis of the public policy implementation in Malawi, Kenya, and Ghana as a response to the 2015 Millennium Development Goals
- Compiled and synthesized research into a 25-page research paper and presented research in a campus-wide poster presentation to over 40 faculty members and political science students

Nuclear Disarmament in the Post-Cold War Era, SJSU, Fall 2015

- Researched the history and progress of nuclear disarmament and compiled over 30 primary sources into a 15-page research paper
- Created a PowerPoint presentation and presented research findings to a class of 30 students

Research Assistant, Professor X, SJSU, Fall 2016 - Spring 2017

- Developed a 20-page Literature Review Guide for Professor X's Senior Project students
- Assisted in Literature Review research for Dr. X's publications on World Food Politics

Research Assistant, Professor Y, SJSU, Fall 2015 - Spring 2016

- Conducted database research on comparative factors that influence democracy amongst nations

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant (Intro to International Relations), SJSU, Spring 2015

- Assisted professor in leading discussions and in classroom management, creating an inclusive and productive learning environment for students
- Graded over 50 midterms and final exams and provided constructive feedback to students to help them learn and improve in the course
- Held office hours for 2 hours weekly to answer student questions and provide guidance on assignments and developing research topics

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE:

Intern California Senate Caucus, Communications Department, Summer 2014

- Wrote press briefings and articles for the Caucus website on recent events and policy achievements
- Conducted research for California State Senators to inform their policy decisions
- Monitored social media accounts and made weekly posts to increase user base
- Collaborated with campaign team to do precinct walks and make phone calls to potential voters

Model United Nations, September 2014 - May 2015

- Served as the Kuwaiti delegate for the OPEC Oil Crisis Historical Committee at the 2015 UC Berkeley Model United Nations Conference
- Sponsored the passing resolution on cholera containment as the Venezuelan representative in the World Health Organization at the 2014 UC Berkeley Model United Nations Conference

Resident Advisor, San Jose State University Housing 2014-2015

- Developed a community of over 70 residents, serving as a role model and student leader in charge of student education, safety and well-being, resource referral, and social justice engagement
- Planned and facilitated weekly programming activities to increase student engagement and enhance the student experience

WORK EXPERIENCE

Waitress, Cheesecake Factory, San Jose, CA, 2016-2017

Barista, Starbucks Coffee, San Jose CA, 2013-2014

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

House Building in Tijuana, Mexico, Summer 2015

- Travelled with a group of 40 church members to assemble over 5 houses for low-income families

Food Pantry, SJSU, San Jose, CA, 2014-2016

- Volunteered bi-monthly to organize food donations and serve meals to the homeless

AFFILIATIONS

Member, American Political Science Association 2016-2017

Member, Pi Sigma Alpha, San Jose State University 2015-2017

Member, AIESEC, San Jose State University 2016-2017

CONFERENCES

Social Justice Conference, San Jose State University Spring 2016

Women in Leadership Conference, San Jose, CA Fall 2016

TRAININGS

Introduction to Stata, San Jose State University Fall 2015

Social Inclusion and Diversity Training, San Jose State University Fall 2014

Sexual Assault Advocate Training, San Jose State University Fall 2014

HONORS and AWARDS:

Outstanding Senior Award for San Jose State Political Science Department Spring 2017

RA of the year Spring 2015

XYZ Scholarship 2014-2015

SKILLS

Computer: Stata, SPSS, Microsoft Office, Google Drive, Wordpress, Adobe Illustrator

Language: Fluent in English, Intermediate speaking and writing ability in Spanish

RESEARCH INTERESTS

International Security/ Terrorism

International Development

Regions: Middle East/North Africa and Eastern Europe

Resume Example

A resume is a concise document, usually no longer than two pages. It highlights your education, experience, skills, projects, and accomplishments and should be customized for a specific position.

See an example on the next page:

Im A. Spartan

San Jose, CA 95192 | (408) 555-5555 | ima.spartan@gmail.com | [linkedin.com/in/imaspartan](https://www.linkedin.com/in/imaspartan)

OBJECTIVE: Seeking Sr. Marketing position at The Devcich Group.

EDUCATION

Master of Business Administration, GPA: 3.9/4.0 May 20xx
San Jose State University, San Jose, CA

Bachelor of Science, Advertising, GPA: 3.6/4.0 20xx
San Jose State University, San Jose, CA

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Marketing Manager, Spike Software Inc., Palo Alto, CA 11/20xx-present

- Manage strategic marketing programs that support third-party partners, including VARS, solution providers, software developers, and trainers.
- Supervise staff of 25; department received award for efficiency and ingenuity.
- Collaborate with product sales managers to identify key partners needing focused support.
- Oversee and maintain product website to provide a core communication site to promote partner program and key partners.

Product Marketing Manager, Spike Software Inc., Palo Alto, CA 12/20xx-11/20xx

- Managed \$15 million budget and direct mail lead generation program resulting in a five percent response rate.
- Developed innovative sales techniques to promote company products at tradeshow through direct mail campaigns and corporate sales.
- Implemented vertical marketing program to support the sales cycle in key markets.

Associate Product Manager, Spike Software Inc., Palo Alto, CA 6/20xx-12/20xx

- Performed the product release management function for tracking international launches.
- Collaborated and interfaced with manufacturing, marketing, engineering, and sales to track product releases.
- Managed BOM and SKU listing to ensure accuracy, reducing count by 40 percent.

Product Coordinator, Spike Software Inc., Palo Alto, CA 12/20xx-6/20x

- Supported a 20-person marketing group by organizing meetings and coordinating projects.
- Assured team members produced deliverables on time.
- Compiled weekly progress reports for product manager.

Marketing Specialist Contractor, XYZ Communications, Inc., San Jose, CA 4/20xx-12/20xx

- Managed five marketing projects related to sales tool development to support product launches, field sales efforts, and to educate customer base.
- Increased clients' sales by an average of 30%.

SKILLS

Technical: Microsoft Office Suite, Google Suite, Tableau

Languages: Bilingual, Spanish and English

For more information on resume format and writing, as well as cover letter basics, review our [Resume/Cover Letter Guide](#).

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Interview Preparation

The main goal of the interview process is to not only determine if you meet the qualifications for the position, but also determine if you are a “good fit” for the company or organization. The employer wants to know how well you will perform the duties and tasks required and whether you will be a great addition to the team.

Academic Positions

Interviewing for research and teaching positions can be a challenging process, but it is also an opportunity to share your work and make a strong impression.

Research Positions

Here are a few sample research interview questions:

1. Describe your research. How is your research relevant to this position?
2. How do you see your research impacting the field?
3. If you were to start your research again today, what would you do differently?
4. Describe a research problem you have faced. What did you learn?
5. What experience do you have with attracting funding?

Teaching Positions

Here is a sample of a few common teaching interview questions:

1. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
2. What is your teaching philosophy?
3. Describe your classroom management structure.
4. How would you meet the unique educational needs of your students?
5. What interests you about our campus?

Non-Academic Positions

Below is a list of general, common interview questions.

6. Tell me about yourself.
7. Why do you want to work here?
8. Why should we hire you?
9. What is your greatest strength?
10. What is your greatest weakness?

For a list of more questions and tips on how to prepare for an interview, review our [Interviewing Guide](#).

Overview of Career Center Services

San Jose State University's Career Center can assist you with a variety of services towards achieving your career goals. Whether it's resume writing, job/internship search, interview preparation, or anything career related, we are here for you. Below is a list of our virtual apps, online resources, and services.

Virtual Career Center Apps

Get started by checking out our virtual apps!

- [SJSU Handshake](#): Search for jobs/internships and career events.
- [VMock](#): Receive instant and personalized resume feedback.
- [SJSU² Quick Connections](#): Connect with professionals to conduct informational interviews.
- [Focus2](#): Take self-assessments to explore careers.
- [Big Interview](#): Practice interviewing by recording yourself answering interview questions.

For a full list of our Career Center apps, visit sjsu.edu/careercenter.

Career Resources Online

[Job/Internship Search Guide](#)

Starting Your Search | Networking with Employers | Preparing Your Professional Pitch | Attending Job/Internship Fairs & Info Sessions | Utilizing LinkedIn | Conducting an Informational Interview

[Resume/Cover Letter Guide](#)

Resume Basics | Resume Samples (By Interest Area) | Writing Accomplishment Statements | Using Action Verbs | Identifying Transferable Skills | Online Resume Review (VMock) | Applicant Tracking Systems | CV vs. Resume | Cover Letter Basics | Cover Letter Sample | Reference List Basics

[Interviewing Guide](#)

Interviewing Basics | Big Interview | Types of Interviews | Common Interview Questions | Behavioral, Situational, and Difficult Questions | Interview Attire | Interview Etiquette | Thank You Notes | Negotiating an Offer

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[Alumni Services](#)

Recent graduates have access to basic services, including SJSU Handshake and online career education, career coaching appointments, and career education workshops for a year after graduation. Continued access to on-campus recruiting, including career fairs and employer information sessions, requires a current Career Center Alumni Membership and is subject to select events.

[Portfolio](#)

Create a Career Portfolio to showcase your academic work, projects, career accomplishments, skills, and experience using Portfolio.

[PhD.org](#)

Find the graduate school that is right for you at PhD.org. Review over 4000 doctoral programs across 59 fields.

One-on-One Career Counseling Appointments

Graduate students can schedule a 30-minute appointment (in-person, phone, or virtual) by emailing carrie.mcknight@sjsu.edu. Career counseling sessions cover all career related topics.

- Exploring Majors/Careers
- Job/Internship Search Strategies
- Resume/Cover Letter
- Interviewing
- Exploring Graduate School
- Online Profiles (Handshake, LinkedIn, and Portfolio profiles)
- Considering an Offer
- Interacting with Employers

Drop-in Advising

Stop by the Career Center for a 15-minute session for career support with:

- Resume advising
- Cover letter advising
- Job/internship search
- Brief career exploration
- Quick interview tips
- Brief online profile review