

Career and Professional Development

Strategic Plan 2021 - 2023



CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
VIRGINIA TECH

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introduction

"Without a vision for the future, we will always revert to the past."

(adapted from P. K. Bernard)

Today's college students pursue an academic degree and a culmination of valuable experiences to position themselves for a better future. They invest time and financial resources, many graduating with tremendous debt, and expect a return on their investment through desirable jobs and/or admission into graduate or professional school. Colleges and universities have made great strides over the years to aid students in completing their degrees.

It is now imperative for institutions of higher learning to contribute in strategic ways, preparing students to be successful upon graduation and beyond. Career and Professional Development (CPD), in collaboration with campus and external partners, is uniquely positioned to develop an ecosystem to support students as they explore career options, make career decisions, gain experience, reflect on their growth, develop their professional identities, prepare to enter the workplace, and launch their initial career plans.

In an ongoing effort to advance our mission, CPD strives to address the shifting environment by re-imagining our staffing and resources, utilizing existing and emerging technologies, extending our reach across campus and with employers; and increasing our capacity to expand student access to high-impact programs and services as we prepare the next generation of talent.

The COVID-19 pandemic was an interesting and challenging time to create a strategic plan, and yet, uncertainties of the job market, recruiting strategies, in-person and virtual jobs and internships, and strategic communication options pressed us to accelerate more progressive and informed ways of working with Virginia Tech students, the Virginia Tech community, and hiring organizations.

The purpose of our new strategic plan is to prepare for the future by creating priorities and goals in alignment with our vision, mission, and core values, The Virginia Tech Difference: Advancing Beyond Boundaries strategic plan, and Virginia Tech's new Bridge Experience undergraduate initiative (Quality Enhancement Program for accreditation). In doing so, we are committed to creating collaborative relationships and partnerships to produce high quality, accessible, relevant, and innovative programs services and resources that address the diverse needs of Virginia Tech students and the organizations who recruit them to fill their internship, co-op, and post-graduation opportunities.

Ut Prosim (That I May Serve),

Donna Cratchiffe

Dr. Donna Cassell Ratcliffe

Director, Career and Professional Development



who are we?

Career and Professional Development (CPD) is a comprehensive, centralized department within the Undergraduate Academic Affairs unit and serves Virginia Tech students of all academic levels and recent graduates.

The CPD team includes twenty-nine staff, a graduate assistant, and thirty-five student assistants who provide a range of personalized advising, programs, services, and resources to support student career exploration, experiential learning, development of core professional skills, job search, and application to graduate or professional school (refer to Appendix A for Organizational Chart).

The staff is organized into teams to optimally execute our vision and accomplish our mission with students and employers while embracing our core values.



Members of the Career Development and College Relations teams assist students who are exploring academic major and career options, and creating their career plans during college and beyond. Most serve as a liaison to designated Virginia Tech academic colleges, University Studies, and the Graduate School. In addition, team members also create relationships and inroads with underrepresented and underserved student groups such as veterans, international students, first generation students, Cultural and Community Centers, students with disabilities, and student athletes.

In each of these roles, CPD staff work with, and provide consultation to, faculty, advisors, staff, and students to collaboratively identify and meet needs through targeted programs, services, and resources. For students exploring health care professions, the Health Professions Advising team provides guidance, programs, and resources during the decision making process, and toward successful application to medical, dental, physical therapy, physician assistant and other professional school programs.

With a focus on the professional development and experiential learning of students as they prepare for work after graduation, CPD focuses on seven core professional competencies sought by hiring organizations. These competencies are embedded in all on-campus and off-campus experiential programs under the Cooperative Education and Internship Program (CEIP). In addition to these guided learning experiences, career advisors assist students as they seek and reflect upon experiences to maximize their learning and to help prepare resumes and interviews for future opportunities.

Virginia Tech alumni are an amazing resource for students as they give back to their alma mater. Hokie Mentorship Connect offers students different ways to engage with alumni through affinity discussion groups, one-on-one conversations, or a six-month mentorship program. These connections assist students as they navigate college, explore careers, launch a job search, or apply to graduate school.

Maintaining current employers and continuing to foster new connections is the work of our employer relations team. This is essential to providing relevant career and job search information, networks, contacts, and internship, cooperative education and post-graduation jobs for Virginia Tech students and recent graduates. This team provides consultation to recruiters seeking to build pathways for company branding and the promotion of opportunities. Team members schedule meetings with target academic departments and student groups, as well as on-campus and virtual interviews. They direct employers to key in-person and virtual job fairs to meet their hiring needs. Job listings and company information sessions are posted on Handshake, CPD's central job listing site.

Many employers also provide services to students through presentations, panels, resume and interview critiques, and networking events which forge early relationships with the hope of creating talent pipelines for future employment.

CPD teams work behind the scenes to market and promote our offerings, manage events, assure IT needs are met, assess programs and services for continuous improvement, and manage resources necessary to support the success of our office.

CPD teams include:

- Career Development and College Relations
- Health Professions Advising
- Professional Development and Experiential Programs
- Employer Relations
- Events and Marketing
- IT and Assessment
- Administrative

strategic plan journey

The Career and Professional Development Strategic Planning Committee launched the process to create a five-year plan by engaging the entire staff in an all-day retreat facilitated by an external consultant.

This was followed by many guided staff exercises and discussions, conversations with Virginia Tech's Director of Strategic Planning, scheduled sessions with thought leaders in our profession, and several meetings with company representatives who recruit Virginia Tech students. The team also reviewed the CPD vision, mission, and core values, and more narrowly focused our existing core values.

When faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, the team paused this process for a couple months, then pivoted to a two-year strategic plan approach to accommodate changing variables. It was critical for us to assess and understand "what is" and "where is all of this going" in order to be relevant, credible, and strategic consultants to students, campus partners, and hiring organizations.

The 2021-2023 CPD Strategic Plan was launched in January 2021 and will be continually assessed and adapted to assure relevance and timeliness. This process will result in the strategic plan expansion into the following years as the landscape shifts and updates are appropriate.

Strategic Plan Committee



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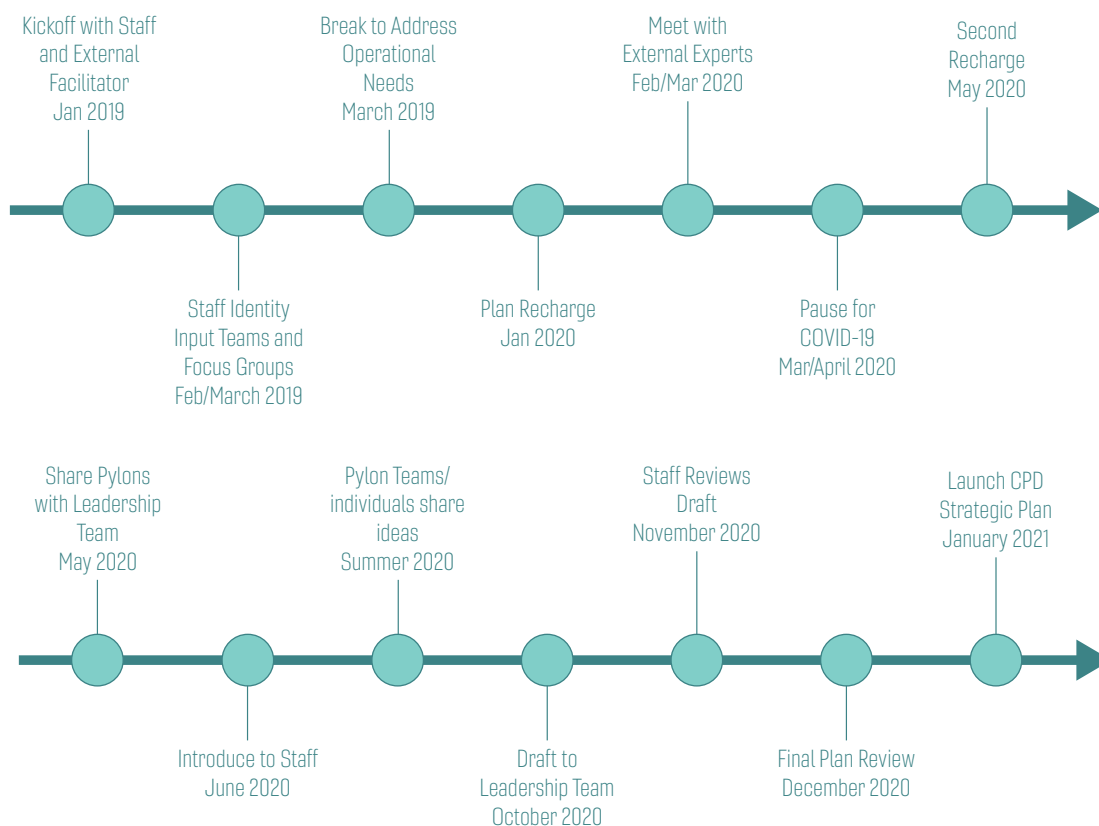
engaging professionals in the process

Including thought leaders and other key professionals shed light on current and predicted trends related to our profession, helping to chart our path forward. The strategic planning process started with a day-long staff retreat facilitated by an external consultant to explore the things we were doing well, those aspects of our office that we might stop doing, programs/services that needed improvement to continue, and our key relationships that advance or hinder our work with students and employers. This was the first major step of engaging CPD staff, prior to scheduled focused staff conversations.

The CPD Strategic Plan Committee consulted a couple of times with Virginia Tech's director and assistant director of strategic planning as the university's plan was in progress and after completion to understand university processes, priorities, and key alignments. Reviewing strategic plans from notable institutions' career offices offered model practices and document formats.

The committee developed a firm grasp on current environmental factors and trends through individual conversations with the chief education strategy officer from Handshake, founders and CEOs of The Career Leadership Collaborative and Scott Resource Group. (Refer to Acknowledgments in Appendix B)

Timeline



2021-2023 strategic plan

"A goal should scare you a little and excite you a lot."
Joe Vitale

After a year of focused work, the framework for the 2021-2023 Career and Professional Development Strategic Plan is built upon four Pylons, representing our revered campus Pylons at Virginia Tech:

- 1) Advance Departmental Excellence
- 2) Engage Technology
- 3) Develop a Career-Everywhere Culture
- 4) Prepare the Next Generation of Talent



These are the critical strategic focus areas that shape our twelve priority focus areas, upon which we have created twenty-eight goals to pave our way to the near future of Career and Professional Development and beyond. The detailed 2021-2023 CPD strategic plan is outlined in Appendix B.

Pylons and Priorities





Pylon 1: Advance Departmental Excellence

Career and Professional Development inspirationally strives to develop excellence in every aspect of our operation, believing that a solid infrastructure and a prepared and empowered team within an inclusive environment produce a solid foundation to execute our mission and priorities.

In doing so, we are committed to creating a thriving, stable, and safe operation; aligning and training our staff to support our strategic goals; creating a diverse team culture and climate; and producing high-quality, high impact programs, services and resources.

Priorities

1. Create a thriving and stable operation
2. Support professional development for all staff
3. Offer high-quality, high-impact services, programs, and resources



Pylon 2: Engage Technology

We want to be known as the premier resource for relevant career information and a source of knowledge and encouragement for students, not just in-person Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. until 5 p.m., but also 24/7 online.

Our aim is to offer more dynamic and helpful accessibility and connectivity to students and employers and relevant online content. In an ongoing effort to advance our mission, we strive to reimagine our utilization of existing and emerging technologies; extend our reach across campus and with employers; and increase capacity through leveraging web, social media, and mobile technologies to provide consistent and effective content delivery and expanded access.

Priorities

1. Utilize technology to extend reach of Career and Professional Development
2. Leverage new and existing technology to increase student and employer connections
3. Foster equity and access to technology



Pylon 3: Develop a Career Everywhere Culture

Career development and career readiness are not solely the responsibility of those working in Career and Professional Development at Virginia Tech. We view our campus community as partners in the career education and development of our students. It is our vision to provide education and resources for all of our partners to help them better serve our students.

We are committed to advancing our reach to those partners in order to expand access and information about services, resources and opportunities for students, particularly those who have not currently taken advantage of our services and those within underrepresented and underserved communities as they prepare for life beyond the college experience.

Priorities

1. Expand the Career Champions program
2. Create a communications/marketing strategy
3. Pursue opportunities to be in a career consultant role
4. Explore and pursue ways to build career development and professional development into the curriculum



Pylon 4: Prepare the Next Generation of Talent

To ensure Virginia Tech is a destination for talent, Career and Professional Development will foster students' professional development through purposeful programming. We are committed to developing experiential learning and professional development resources, programs, and opportunities. We will expand experiential learning opportunities to support Virginia Tech's Quality Enhancement Plan, discover and promote alternative opportunities for students, and continue to develop relationships with employers in a variety of career fields.

In the new career climate that Virginia Tech students will be entering, Career and Professional Development will prepare students for positions that may not resemble traditional career opportunities students have pursued in the past. We will develop programming and resources targeted to virtual search strategies, virtual and hybrid work environments, and graduate and professional school preparation.

Priorities

1. Expand Experiential Learning
2. Foster Students' Professional Development
3. Develop Resources and Programming for New Career Climate

Contributions to the 2020-2024 Virginia Tech Strategic Plan and Quality Enhancement Program

On the heels of Virginia Tech launching its 2020-2024 The Virginia Tech Difference: Advancing Beyond Boundaries (strategic plan) and the development of the 2021 Quality Enhancement Program - Bridge Experience, Career and Professional Development finds itself a key contributor to support institutional priorities by:

- Preparing students to serve a global community
- Offering services to support underrepresented and underserved students
- Powering Hokie Mentorship Connect Program to connect students with Virginia Tech alumni
- Enhancing institutional excellence through technology
- Serving as a credible campus resource toward the goal for 100% of undergraduate student engagement in a transcriptable experiential learning Bridge Experience

The chart below illustrates the connectivity of the CPD strategic goals to the priorities and goals of Virginia Tech.

| | | The Virginia Tech Difference: Advancing Beyond Boundaries | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| | | Priority 1: Advance Regional, National, and global | Priority 2: Elevate the <i>Ut Prosim</i> (That I May Serve) Difference | Priority 3: Be a Destination for Talent | Priority 4: Ensure Institutional Excellence |
| CPD Strategic Plan | Pylon 1: Advance Departmental Excellence | | Priority Goal 1 | Goal 1 | Priority Goal 3 |
| | Pylon 2: Engage Technology | Priority Goal 2 | Priority Goal 1 | Goal 2 | Goals 1, 3 |
| | Pylon 3: Develop a Career Everywhere Culture | Goal 2 | Priority Goal 1 | Goal 2 | Goal 3 |
| | Pylon 4: Prepare the Next Generation of Talent | Goal 2 | Priority Goals 1, 2, 3 | Goals 2, 3 | Goal 3 |

Note: The priorities and goals noted in the blue cells are from The Virginia Tech Difference: Advancing Beyond Boundaries (strategic plan).

CPD Contributions to The 2020-2024 Virginia Tech Difference: Advancing Beyond Boundaries

Conclusion

With this strategic plan as our guide, the Career and Professional Development team will pursue the advancement of departmental excellence, technological engagement, development of a career everywhere culture, and preparation of the next generation of talent. The goals we created for each Pylon inspire us to achieve the desired outcomes that keep us mission-focused, relevant, innovative, and effective.

During implementation, we will include timely checkpoints to evolve the plan, addressing environmental, societal, technology, workplace, and organizational changes. Throughout our work on this plan, Career and Professional Development remains committed to our core values of believing in purpose, being educators, building relationships, serving as catalysts, and working as a team, to meet and exceed the needs of students, employers, faculty, staff, alumni, families, and other campus partners.

Appendix A
Career and Professional Development Organizational Chart



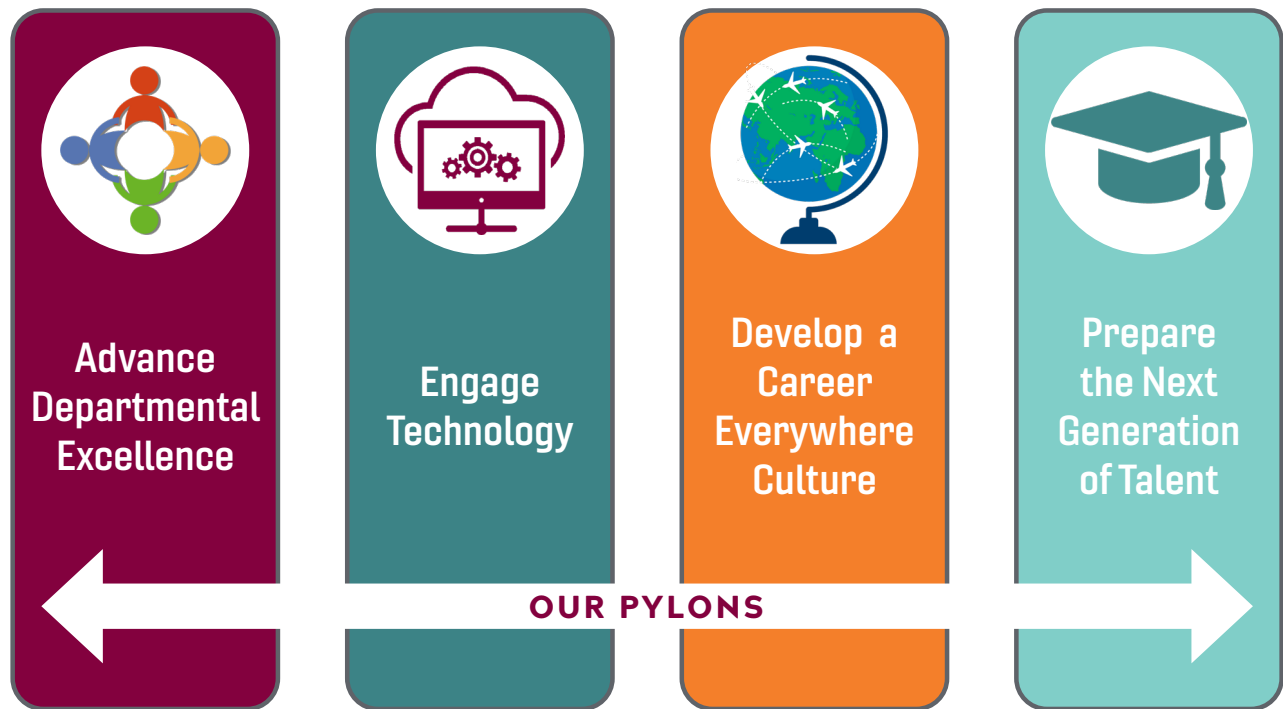
Appendix B

Acknowledgments

Career and Professional Development staff would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals for contributing to our strategic planning process.

- Patrick Madsen (external consultant), Director of University Career Center, University of North Carolina, Charlotte
- Erin McCann, Director of Strategic Planning, Virginia Tech
- Patty Becksted, Assistant Director of Strategic Planning, Virginia Tech
- Christine Cruzvergara, Chief Education Strategy Officer, Handshake
- Jeremy Podany, Founder and CEO, The Career Leadership Collective
- Samara Reynolds, Director of Career Services, Virginia Commonwealth University
- Mary Scott, Managing Consultant, Scott Resource Group

Appendix C
2021-2023 Career and Professional Development Strategic Plan Pylons, Priorities, and Goals



Pylon 1: Advance Departmental Excellence

| Priorities Year One | Goals |
|--|---|
| <i>PRIORITY 1.1</i> Create A Thriving And Stable Operation | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design a staffing infrastructure and budget to support office mission and priorities 2. Enhance the interdepartmental team culture, climate, and relations where everyone feels welcome, supported, included, needed and valued |
| <i>PRIORITY 1.2</i> Support Professional Development For All Staff | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide and encourage professional development for all staff and the sharing of new-found information to relevant staff for continued professional growth and expertise development 2. Encourage training and events to increase awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the workplace and research and pursue memberships in diverse professional organizations |
| <i>PRIORITY 1.3</i> Offer High-Quality, High-Impact Services, Programs, And Resources | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commit to high quality, high impact programs, services and resources that support our office mission and priorities 2. Assess needs, programs, services, software and resources (human and fiscal) to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, and the greatest return on our investment |

Pylon 1: Advance Departmental Excellence continued

| Priorities Year Two | Goals |
|---|---|
| PRIORITY 1.1 Create A Thriving And Stable Operation | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strive to recruit, hire, and retain a representative staff to enhance the team and serve our diverse clientele |

Pylon 2: Engage Technology

| Priorities Year One | Goals |
|--|--|
| PRIORITY 2.1 Utilize Technology To Foster Equity And Access And To Extend Reach Of Career And Professional Development | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build a robust video library by creating new content, as well as record and repurpose existing presentations 2. Monitor products (equipment, software) that can serve to extend our reach and foster equity and access 3. Think creatively and use technology to provide information to students about content typically provided through services or programs that are not available on a continual basis 4. Offer advising services in accessible and equitable ways paying particular attention to the role of technology |
| PRIORITY 2.2 Leverage New And Existing Technology To Increase Student And Employer Connections | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare and foster ease with technology needed for students and employers to interact in virtual interviews and other events 2. Facilitate virtual information sessions, networking events, career fairs, and other opportunities using Brazen or other platforms |

Pylon 3: Develop a Career Everywhere Culture

| Priorities Year One | Goals |
|--|--|
| PRIORITY 3.1 Expand The Career Champion Program | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create new cohorts with university partners and build on opportunities for initial cohorts 2. Continue to develop resources for families to be Career Champions |
| PRIORITY 3.2 Create A Communications/ Marketing Strategy | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Address who we are, what we do, and what we know from the data we have with consistent messaging 2. Develop a holistic marketing plan that includes campus-wide messaging, program and services collateral, and an outreach strategy to engage university partners 3. Prioritize information and resources available on website and enhance organization of site and promotion of various resources |

Pylon 3: Develop a Career Everywhere Culture continued

| <p>PRIORITY 3.3 Pursue Opportunities To Be In A Career Consultant Role</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider faculty access to resources: videos, guides, reflection pieces. Beef up faculty part of website to make these available 2. Create opportunities for internal advisors to expand their knowledge of career fields/industries through employer site visits and other initiatives |
|---|--|
| Priorities Year Two | Goals |
| <p>PRIORITY 3.4 Explore And Pursue Ways To Build Career Development And Professional Development Into The Curriculum</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a plan to pursue opportunities that already exist and create new opportunities to build career development and professional development into the curriculum 2. Develop a 15-week class that can be packaged in modules for faculty to use and embed sections relating to career development and professional development topics 3. Create a winter Semester career development course |

Pylon 4: Prepare the Next Generation of Talent

| Priorities Year One | Goals |
|--|---|
| <p>PRIORITY 4.1 Expand Experiential Learning</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate with experiential learning partners across campus to expand capacity and influence experiential learning best practices for transcriptable experiences (QEP) 2. Adapt CEIP assignments and processes, scaling the program to fit the potential increased demand from the QEP requirements 3. Develop resources on alternative experiential learning opportunities (for example, student-led personal projects and the 2020 summer programs) 4. Strengthen current employer relationships and develop new relationships in a variety of fields 5. Lead the development of an on-campus intern program in collaboration with key departments 6. Collaborate with Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid to create the infrastructure of the Federal Work Study Experiment Program |
| <p>PRIORITY 4.2 Foster Students' Professional Development</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase student participation in Hokie Mentorship Connect to align with the University's strategic plan, increasing the discussion board opportunities regarding diverse student populations and common career fields 2. Expand on usage of resources, such as online platforms, for skill development 3. Embed professional competencies into programming and resources |

Pylon 4: Prepare the Next Generation of Talent continued

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>PRIORITY 4.3</i> Develop Resources And Programming For New Career Climate | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prepare students to succeed in a virtual and hybrid environment in the workplace2. Provide comprehensive resources and programming regarding graduate and professional school preparation for an anticipated increase in student interest in applying to graduate programs3. Increase resources and programming for recent graduates encountering a weakened economy with different job prospects4. Utilize and educate on the expanding virtual networking and job/internship searching methods and resources; increase resources and awareness of remote opportunities |
|---|--|

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