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## **JOB SEARCH DOCUMENTS – General Info**

Students who get hired in design firms do so because their skill set, work ethic, and personality are aligned with a particular job opening at a particular moment in time. Yes, networking is the best way to put yourself into a position to find work. However being in the right place at the right time is only part of the equation. Once there, you'll want to make sure you're ready. With that in mind, you'll need to create each of the following job search documents:

1. **Résumé:** a marketing device that summarizes your skill set and/or background. Depending on your skill level and professional background, your résumé make be in one of three different formats (chronological, functional, or hybrid).
2. **References page:** a list of people who will endorse you as an employee.
3. **Cover letter:** a formal business letter introducing your job application.
4. **Portfolio:** a robust display of your design, graphic, and written communication skills as well as critical and conceptual thinking ability.
5. **Work samples:** a very brief display of your design and graphic communication skills. This document offers no process, just "eye candy" sent as part of the initial job application.

For each of these documents, here are important things to keep in mind:

**Creation of them takes time and dedication.** Think of this process as an actual three-credit academic course, where you work for 12 to 15 hours (or more) a week over the course of three or four (or more) months. Set goals, create a task list, make a work schedule, and stick to it. While the actual sequence may vary from student to student, it's perhaps most common to create a résumé first, then references page, sample cover letter, portfolio, interview portfolio, and work samples page. Like any design project, you'll want to create a version of each, get feedback, and revise. It may take three or four iterations of each document to get them to the quality they need to be. Budget revision into your timetable.

**Each document must be catered to a specific job opportunity at the specific design firm that you're applying to.** Blast résumé-sending is a thing of the past; it simply does not work anymore. Each opening you find must be diligently researched (the firm, key personnel, projects, awards, etc.) and your documents must be thoughtfully crafted with that opening and that firm in mind.

**Understand your audience and value their time.** These documents are not an autobiography. They are marketing tools designed to get you an interview (the interview is what gets you the job). Design professionals and HR people are very busy; the average résumé gets looked at for 30 to 60 seconds initially. No cover letter or résumé should be more than one page (you get to add a page for every 10 years of experience). Provide only the necessary information, quickly, but at the same time don't omit important information, especially design or relevant professional skills.

**All documents must be well-designed.** This does not mean fancy or flashy. Instead, make documents that are clean, clear, and easy to navigate. Do not use templates and, early on, do not use unnecessary graphics, logos, or colors. These things can cause formatting problems and are often looked upon as cover-ups for lack of substance. Start with blank pages and add raw content. A minimal amount of formatting at the end should suffice. And be sure to leave some white space so as not to visually overload your reader. Early on, use one font throughout (cover letter, résumé, and references page). Use a professional font such as Calibri, Times New Roman, Garamond, Georgia, Arial, or Verdana. Do not use funky fonts such as Bauhaus, Brush Script, Charlemagne, Giddyup, or Lucida. Use a consistent and professional font size scheme throughout (e.g. your name: 14 point, all other text: 10 point).

**All documents should have consistency and look good together as a package.** Use consistent organizational structure and page layouts including margins, tabs, bullets, etc. as well as font types, effects (bold, underlining, etc.), and sizes. Be consistent in the ways you represent certain things. For example, are you abbreviating months and/or states in your résumé? (Are you abbreviating them correctly?) What size dash are you using (- or –)? Are you using the serial comma? Do your dates line up on the right margin?... along an inner tab? Consistency shows careful attention to detail far better than a Skill bullet saying “Attentive to detail.”

**Every document must be 100% free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.** This is without question the quickest and easiest way to get eliminated from consideration for a job opportunity. (Some HR people are actually grateful for résumés with typos because they reduce the applicant pool right away.) Almost every document that comes into the LRC has one to 10 mistakes/typos on it. Therefore every document that does not come into the LRC gets sent to firms with one to 10 mistakes/typos on it. Don't let that happen to you. Once you have a document drafted, proofread it several times, spell- and grammar-check it, and show it to a family member/friend who's a really strong writer. Once that's done, make an appointment with one or more of the following departments/people:

- First-year students:
  - a LRC writing consultant, [writingcenter@the-bac.edu](mailto:writingcenter@the-bac.edu)
  - Michael Daniels, [michael.daniels@the-bac.edu](mailto:michael.daniels@the-bac.edu)
- Second-year (and beyond) students:
  - a LRC writing consultant, [writingcenter@the-bac.edu](mailto:writingcenter@the-bac.edu)
  - a member of the Practice department, [practice@the-bac.edu](mailto:practice@the-bac.edu)