

Graduating in the age of Covid-19

Student
Guidebook



Introduction

At The Washington Center, we understand that entering the workforce these days must be a surreal experience for you. The entire workforce has been turned upside-down, hiring freezes have been instituted across industries and sectors, and unemployment is rising rapidly.

We know that this is not the world you thought you'd be graduating into. These are stressful and uncertain times for you, for us, and for millions of graduating college students across the country.



We Want to Help!

The good news is that there are plenty of immediate and long-term actions you can take to increase your appeal to organizations that are hiring, network and connect with professionals online, manage your resources wisely, enhance your (virtual) competencies, and set action-oriented goals for yourself.

This guide will introduce a variety of resources, ideas, and mindsets you should adopt and utilize to overcome these challenging times.



How to Use this Guide

This guide was designed with you in mind, soon-to-be college graduates! It will take you through three stages designed to use in chronological order. Specifically, the guide starts with critical mindsets needed to succeed in the age of covid-19 before moving on to immediate and long-term action steps you can take to thrive upon graduation.

This is our best attempt to prepare you for graduation during these unprecedented times. Obviously, we know that no written content can replace personal advising or coaching. Luckily, your LEAD Instructors have increased their availability for the remainder of the semester and are here to guide you in the near future.

Please reach out to your LEAD Instructor to schedule a personal advising date!



Phase 1: Getting Started

Before taking any action, we recommend that you pause for a moment and think critically about your approach. These are not ordinary times and you will likely need to stretch your comfort zone and adapt to the world as it is.

Take time to think about this before jumping into action.



Be Very Practical

For many of you, your professional plans and career launch strategies will soon have to change. The companies you're interested in may not be hiring right now, as entire sectors are being reconfigured and overturned. This is painful and bizarre, but it can also be a call for action. You will need to adopt a practical approach and align your job search with organizations that are still hiring.

We know this can be difficult, and in many ways counterintuitive to everything you heard during college, but it's necessary. You will compromise and make concessions, but you will also be setting yourself up for long-term success!

Stay Connected

You all know that most people find jobs through networking and personal connections. This should come as a surprise to no one. Staying connected with people and communities, and growing your network is paramount to success in a virtual world.

Increasing your network should be a daily exercise! Don't forget about folks you met at work, through networking, or at random during your time in D.C.!



Be Action-Oriented

To graduate during a (possible) recession is to begin your career underwater. As the market struggles and reinvents itself, recent college graduates run the risk of being left behind. It is up to you to be assertive, action-oriented, entrepreneurial, and gritty, as you navigate a changing market.

This requires you to seek out opportunities, aggressively connect with people, and most importantly, be comfortable with the unknown. You will find power and confidence in your ability to tackle the unknown. You will persevere, but it takes an action-oriented mindset to get there.

Share How You're Feeling

You are not alone in this! Whether it's your LEAD Instructor or campus advisor, a close friend or a mentor, share your feelings and be ok with being vulnerable.

You have a powerful group of guides, coaches, advisors and confidants at your disposal. Use them, embrace them, and find power in their guidance. We are all in this together and are all here to help each other.



Phase 2: Immediate Actions

In the last month we've seen unprecedented change to the workforce and labor market. In a short period of time the market has changed dramatically as entire industries have been impacted by the devastating effect of COVID-19.

To successfully enter the workforce today, you will need to take some immediate actions! Specifically, you'll need to enhance your appeal to organizations that are hiring and arm yourself with a "virtual toolkit" of skills and approaches that best fit the times we're in. The resources on the next page represent some immediate actions you should take to prepare yourself for your career launch.



Who's Hiring Now

Many companies are still hiring. These resources will help you stay connected to who's hiring:

- [Candor](#) - who's hiring and who's not.
- [The Muse](#) - who's hiring and who's not.
- [Coronavirus Career Advice: 27 Best Work From Home and Remote Jobs](#) - Forbes
- Tip: follow Federal and State governments hiring status.
- Tip: follow #GetHired on LinkedIn to get real-time information about companies that are hiring.

Virtual Career Fairs Resources

Most virtual job fairs take place at the university level, as academic institutions and employers collaborate to facilitate virtual recruiting sessions for their own students. So check your university's career services webpage for upcoming virtual career fairs.

Click below for additional resources:

- [JobFairsIn](#) - open virtual job fairs.
- [LiveCareer](#) - tips on how to succeed in virtual job fairs.
- [The Balance Careers](#) - answers to common questions about virtual job fairs.



Remote Work Opportunities

With individual mobility being hindered by travel restrictions, many companies will likely embrace remote work in the near future. The following sources will help you find remote-work:

- [Remote Work Summit \(Mid April\)](#) - access to companies and professionals hiring for full-time and part-time positions in the near future.

Check out the following websites:

- [Weworkremotely.com](#)
- [Lexjobs.com](#)
- [Remote.co/remote-jobs](#)
- [Justremote.co](#)
- [Virtualvocations.com](#)
- [Remoteok.io](#)
- [Pangian.com](#)
- [Jobspresso.co](#)
- [Remotive.io](#)
- [Powertofly.com](#) (women in tech)
- [Angel.co](#)
- [Skipthedrive.com](#)

Virtual Networking and Informational Interviews

Even during these difficult times it is essential to expand your network, connect with people, and “get yourself out there”. You can do this from home, here’s how:

- [7 Non-Irritating Ways to Network Online](#) - Inc.
- [Coronavirus and Your Career: How to Effectively Network During a Quarantine](#) - Forbes.



Virtual Interviewing Best Practices

As in-person interviews are being cancelled across the country, companies are shifting to virtual interviews. Be ready for a new kind of interview!

- [Best Practices](#) - Fast Company
- [Virtual Interview Strategies](#) - Virtual Vocations
- [9 Best Practices for Virtual Interviews](#) - Harvard Business School
- [Virtual Interviewing Best Practices](#) - The Muse

Round-out Your Skill Set

Many educational companies and universities are currently offering their content for free. Take advantage of this opportunity to enhance your skills and knowledge.

- [Coursera.org](#) - Offering 100 free courses until May 31st.
- [Harvard University's](#) - Free online classes
- [EdX](#) - Free Online Courses
- [Open Culture](#) - more than 1,500 free online courses
- Yale's most popular course ever, [The Science of WellBeing](#)



Phase 3: Resources for Long-Term Success

Graduating into a (possible) recession can have profound long-term implications on your income potential, job prospects, and career success. For long-term success you will need to fully comprehend your financial situation, avoid complacency, and be assertive in how you navigate the market.

Here are resources, ideas, and strategies to stay competitive, generate income, and avoid potential pitfalls along the way.



Understanding Your Student Loans

The average college student in the U.S. graduates with about **\$30,000 in student-loan debt**. This constitutes a formidable, often prolonged financial burden during “normal” times. Rest assured that the impact will be compounded during a recession.

It is absolutely imperative that you fully comprehend all aspects of your student loan management, repayment options, impact on your personal budget, and of course, relevant and current legislation.

Click on the following resources and to get started:

- Studentloansherpa.com - a good place to start.
- [Understand Federal Student Aid](#)
- [Understand Income-Driven Repayment \(IDR\) Plans](#)
- [Which IDR works for you?](#)
- [Understand the Role of a Student-Loan Servicers.](#)
- [Understand Loan Forgiveness Programs and Opportunities](#)

Personal Budgeting Resources

Graduating into a (possible) recession could result in **reduced income** over a prolonged time-period. Your ability to save, be frugal, and budget your money wisely is essential.

Click on the following resources and to get started:

- [Understand Budgeting Basics](#) - The Balance
- [Create a Comprehensive Personal Budget](#) - Policy Genius
- [Financial Tips for Young Professionals](#) - MoneyGoody
- [Additional Financial Tips for Young Professionals](#) - Investopedia
- [Understand Compound Interest](#) - Investopedia



Invest in Life-Long Learning

Graduating into a (possible) recession places the responsibility of staying relevant on the individual. You will need to stay tuned to innovation and market trends, and find ways to continue your education or “upskilling” as time goes by.

Click on the following organizations can help you with your continuing education:

- [Coursera](#) - online courses
- [General Assembly](#) - technical training
- [MOOC.org](#) - free online courses
- [EdX](#) - free online courses from leading universities
- [Udacity](#) - online classes

Commit to Lateral Movement

Studies have shown that switching positions and employers can help increase people's income over time. This might be counterintuitive to some, but you'll need to prioritize mobility over loyalty to a single organization!



Negotiate Everything

Graduating into a recession oftentimes results in lower-than-market-value first-job salaries.

Studies have shown that a low entry-level salary can fundamentally reduce your income over time. Consequently, make it your habit to perfect your salary negotiation skills and always, but always, negotiate!

Think About Supplementary Income

Graduating into a recession may force you to be resourceful and creative with the ways you generate income if you hope to “catch up”.

Look to leverage your strengths and knowledge to develop side hustles, apply to paid micro-internships and gigs and do not be too proud to do basic jobs in order to supplement your income.

