

## Marketing Your Liberal Arts Degree

Your liberal arts degree is highly marketable!

Every year the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) surveys companies asking what they want in new hires at their companies. Consistently, the top rated qualities they identify are skills that are at the core of a liberal arts degree. Here are the top five skills from the 2015 survey:

1. Ability to work in a team structure
2. Ability to make decisions and solve problems (tie)
3. Ability to communicate verbally with people inside and outside an organization
4. Ability to plan, organize and prioritize work
5. Ability to obtain and process information

Your academic program at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, combined with job shadow and internship/research opportunities, will give you the real-life, hands-on experience employers want.

*Having* the experience isn't enough, though. You have to learn to articulate your skills through your resume, cover letter and interview responses. Don't just list "Strong leadership skills," instead cite specific times you *demonstrated* that leadership skill. For example you might say "Founded the CrossFit HWS club and recruited 20 members in the first year."

The trick is to try and figure out what skills a particular employer is looking for. There are many ways to do that but here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Go beyond the Google search!
  - Anyone can google, but you have the power of connections! Career Services has a network of alums and parents that have agreed to talk to students and graduates about their jobs, their organizations, and their industries.
- Read the job description carefully
  - Highlight the tasks they include and the skills referenced. Specifically mention your experience with those items specifically in your resume and cover letter.
  - Many jobs are listed on multiple job sites so look at them all. You will often find one site will include information that another did not.
- OK, now you can do some Googling ...
  - Read what is out there about that organization and/or field. What are the trends of that industry? What are the challenges it has faced?
    - Your liberal arts education is providing you with a strong foundation of communication, problem solving, and analytical skills!

One last tip: put together a "Skills Portfolio" that you can draw from as you tailor that resume, craft your cover letter, and prepare for the interview. Your skills portfolio doesn't need to be anything fancier than an electronic document that includes bullet points you can draw from. Here are some examples for general skill areas:

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
  - Worked on a community-based research project with *Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning* on a project exploring solutions to high school drop-out rates
- Adaptability to change (aka, flexibility)

- While serving on the Campus Activities Board, made last minute changes to an event when a featured speaker was stuck at the airport
- Interpersonal Communication
  - Worked as a Career Ambassador leading information sessions for groups of first year students.
- Teamwork
  - Served on HWS Sustainable Foods Club to create a community garden. Built the gardens by hand with the help of kids from the Boys and Girls Clubs.
- Written Communication
  - Created for the monthly newsletter for Rotarac, the campus version of Rotary; wrote and edited articles.
- Technical literacy
  - Served as social media chair for Chi Phi for two years, during which we completely rebuilt the fraternity's Facebook page and managed our overall social media presence.

Above all, NEVER apologize for your liberal arts degree or feel like it doesn't hold value. In fact, some of the most successful names across many fields built their careers on liberal arts degrees. Here are some notable examples:

- Laura Sydell '83, Digital Culture Correspondent, National Public Radio - History
- Stewart Butterfield, CEO of Slack Technologies – Philosophy
- Rachel Bell '96, Co-Founder JobDirect.com - Sociology
- Steve Forbes, CEO of Forbes, Inc. – American History
- Michael Eisner, Former CEO of Walt Disney Company – English Literature
- Sally Ride, Astronaut and First Woman in Space – English
- Jeffrey R. Immelt, CEO of General Electric – Mathematics