

Liberal Arts Students: Preparing for Work in Business

Purpose: This guide provides ideas for ways that a GVSU liberal arts or interdisciplinary studies major can obtain knowledge and tangible skills related to working at a for-profit organization. Oftentimes, employers are more interested that a student has a particular set of skills (and that they are able to articulate those skills) than a particular major. This guide includes the following:

- Strategic elective courses students may take to gain skills
- Examples of how to speak an employer's language when writing resumes, cover letters, and responding to interview questions
- Current key terminology in business

Strategic Electives:

Communication Skills

- **CAP 423 Writing Corporate Communications:** An advanced writing course on the research, development, and preparation of corporate communications. Uses desktop publishing. Includes brochures, annual reports, employee newsletters, executive speeches, position papers, backgrounders, corporate memos, customer letters, and crisis communications.
- **COM 201 Speech:** The student will examine practical programs in speech preparation, delivery, informative and persuasive strategies, and listening and responding to messages of others.
- **COM 203 Argument and Analysis:** Being able, in speaking or writing, to present arguments for a position and to analyze the arguments of others are skills that are basic to almost any human activity. In this course participants will practice the skills of argument and analysis in discussing the nature of argument itself.
- **COM 301 Small Group Communication:** The study of the committee, task force, panel, and class. Weekly practice in decision making, conflict resolution, and socialization through class discussion groups
- **PA 335 Grant Writing:** Provides instruction in writing grants, evaluating grant proposals, and in researching and cultivating funding sources.
- **WRT 200 Intro to Professional Writing (Prereq WRT 150):** Introduces students to business writing, media writing, and technical writing.
- **WRT 350 Business Communications (Prereq WRT 150):** Training in communication skills for business and the professions including handling research, gathering data, writing reports, manuals, directions, and correspondence, and making oral presentations.

Technology Skills

- **CAP 105 Technology in Advertising and Public Relations:** This course familiarizes students with the technologies currently used in the public relations and advertising professions. Emphasis is on working with technical specialists including graphic designers, photographers, videographers, and website developers. Students learn technology terminology and gain hands-on experience with a variety of technical software and equipment.
- **CIS 150 Basic Principles of Computing:** study of the major components of a computer system. Introduction to software packages such as word processors, spreadsheets, databases, and languages.

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Budgeting and Financial Skills

- ***FIN 221 Personal Finance:** Designed for the non-finance major who wants to improve the management of personal finances. Aspects of finance that individuals are likely to face will be discussed. Specific topics include credit buying and borrowing, insurance, home ownership, stock and bond investment, mutual funds, income taxes and estate planning.
- **PA 375 Public Budgeting & Finance Admin:** The content, tools, and techniques of budgeting from the perspectives of the manager, legislator, and citizen. A survey of revenue raising methods and administration. Applicable to public jurisdictions and nonprofit agencies of all sizes. Includes accounting principles essential to public management.

Leadership and Management Skills

- ***MGT 331 Concepts of Management:** The management process through an examination of its functions of planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling work, and work performance in a business organization. Theoretical concepts and applications through the use of selected case materials.
- ***MGT 333 Human Resources Management (Prereq MGT 331):** The historical evaluation, structure, policies, and practices of human resources departments. The work of these departments in acquiring, training, and developing human resources, facilitating corporate communication, motivating employees, setting appropriate wage and salary levels, and facilitating union relations are introduced.
- ***MGT 345 Team Building:** A class which integrates theory and application by teaching students how to be effective members of a work team. Emphasis on both logical and creative problem solving. Dynamics and processes within teams serve as the focus of analysis, learning, and practice.

Marketing and Advertising Skills

- **CAP 210 Fundamentals of Advertising:** Basic principles of advertising, including its socioeconomic role; the function and operation of client advertising departments and the advertising agency; application of research, budgeting, and the creative process; media characteristics and media selection.
- **CAP 310 Advertising Management and Cases:** Management and direction of the advertising function as viewed and practiced by the client advertising manager, the advertising agency, and the media. Analysis of actual cases and presentation of findings and recommendations.
- ***MKT 350 Marketing Management:** An introduction to marketing. Provides a general understanding and appreciation of the forces operating, institutions employed, and methods followed in marketing products and services both domestically and internationally.
- ***MKT 352 Marketing Research (Prereq MKT 350 and STA 215):** Detailed examination of business research procedures and applications. Problem definition, research design, data collection, sampling techniques, costs, etc. Case problems and projects.
- ***MKT 356 Professional Selling (Prereq MKT 350):** The principles of professional salesmanship and their practical application in the marketing mix. Actual sales presentations by students are included.
- ***MKT 358 Advertising and Marketing Communications:** A managerial analysis and examination of the nonpersonal demand generating element of the firm's marketing efforts. Includes study of communication theory; advertising; market, audience, and target segmentation and selection; media analysis; public relations; publicity; and most other nonpersonal communications activities. These elements are strongly related to personal selling in the private sector firm.
- ***MKT 365 GIS for Economic and Business Decision Making:** Explores the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology in economic and business decision making, including market area analysis, geodemographic segmentation, site selection, routing, customer profiling, sales territory management, and location strategies. Emphasis on hands-on activities. Problem-based learning approach.

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Numeracy Skills

- ***ECO 300 Applied Economics Analysis** (ECO 200, 210, or 211, and STA 215): An introduction to empirical methods in economics and the relevant data sources. Uses spreadsheets and econometric software to apply visual and statistical analyses to social science data. Examines ethical issues involved in research.
- **STA 216 Intermediate Applied Statistics** (Prereq STA 215): Project-oriented introduction to major statistical techniques using a statistical package such as SAS or SPSS.
- **STA 318 Statistical Computing** (Prereq STA 215): A detailed study of the advanced features of major statistical packages used in statistical computing, such as SAS and SPSS. Emphasis on the data entry, data manipulation, data storage, data simulation, and graphical display features of these packages.

Research Skills

- **CAP 115 Research Basics for Advertising and Public Relations**: This course presents the basic techniques for finding, collecting, evaluating and using primary data and secondary information relevant to solving communication problems. Explores library resources, search engines, government and commercial web sites, corporate documents and databases. Includes citation formats and presentation methods.
- **PSY 300 Research Methods** (Prereq PSY 101): Emphasis on the logic of psychological research, the formulation and testing of hypotheses, research design, sampling procedures, data collection and analysis, and the ethics of conducting research.
- **US 300 Interdisciplinary Research Methods** (Prereq STA 215): This course is a survey of selected interdisciplinary research methods. It includes comparative analysis of research methods used in natural and life sciences, social sciences, and the humanities, with a focus on integrative and problem-solving methodologies. Procedures for evaluating data, sources, and findings are reviewed.

Systems Thinking Skills

- ***MGT 268 Introduction to Management Information Systems** (Prereq CIS 150): This course is designed to give the student an understanding of the importance of information systems in modern companies, the components that make up information systems, and insight into the integration that good information systems foster in a business organization. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Systems will also be covered.
- ***MGT 351 Enterprise Information Systems** (Prereq MGT 268): This course provides a comprehensive understanding of Enterprise Information Systems (EIS) focusing on Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Systems and the key role they play in modern organizations. Students will gain an understanding of ERP Systems from both a functional (business process) and implementation perspective using SAP R/3 software.

Cross Cultural Skills

- ***ECO 369 International Economic Issues** (Prereq ECO 200 or 210): Selected topics in both international trade and international finance. Includes preferential trading arrangements such as NAFTA and the European Union; analysis of barriers to trade and arguments for and against protectionism; the influence of exchange rates on capital flows; and the relationship between international trade and economic growth.
- **ITC 100 Introduction to Intercultural Competence**: This course introduces students to the concept of cultural competence, and provides them with the knowledge and application of skills necessary to succeed in diverse settings. This course examines theories of intercultural engagement and then requires students to consider how they might apply knowledge in diverse practical settings.
- ***MGT 303 Introduction to International Business**: An introduction to the issues that a company will experience when doing business in a global economy. Emphasis is on the influence of culture on business practices. Topics will include economic structures, marketing approaches, accounting and financial issues, management and organization issues, and distribution issues.
- ***MGT 466 International Management and Multinational Corporations** (Prereq Senior Standing): A study of the managerial challenges of conducting business in a global economy. Emphasis on cultural differences and their impact on the situations and issues managers confront when working internationally.

**To enroll in a 300-400 level Seidman College of Business course, students must have a 2.0 GPA and 55 credits, plus meet any necessary prerequisites.*

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Certifications:

- **Intercultural Training Certificate:** The Intercultural Training Certificate is a 15-hour academic certificate of completion designed to give students the skills to interact sensitively and effectively with the rich diversity of people in our increasingly global community. Students will learn in an atmosphere of respect about the many kinds of difference that expand our human capacity and enrich our experiences.
- **SAP TERP10** (2 week academy); overview of the most important modules in SAP ERP, preparing them to support business processes across the organization. In addition to the knowledge they gain, participants also demonstrate their interest in and aptitude for working with SAP or other ERP systems, making them great candidates for entry-level employment.
- **ERP Program:** The ERP Program at Grand Valley State University is one of the world's leading programs where students gain an understanding of integrated, cross-functional business process experience using enterprise software SAP® to execute business processes, and to develop proficiency in the use of enterprise systems. Check out the various ways to engage with this program and get started at: <http://gvsu.edu/erp/the-seidman-erp-program-curriculum-options-7.htm>.
- **Sustainable City and Regional Planning Certificate:** This 12 credit hour (minimum) Certificate in Sustainable City and Regional Planning provides students with a foundational knowledge of sustainability in planning and land use issues. This certificate can be completed in three semesters.
- **GIS Certificate:** The certificate in GIS (13 hours minimum) provides relevant and emerging technical skills for professional career advancement with immediate applications in the workplace. The program is designed for students from traditional science programs seeking technical skills necessary for career opportunities in the private or governmental sectors, and practitioners in environmental resource management, urban and regional planning, geography, health sciences, law enforcement, local government, and facilities management.
- **Green Chemistry Certificate:** A certificate in Green Chemistry will be a strong curricular addition to the degrees offered at GVSU. This 13-14 credit hour Certificate in Green Chemistry provides students at Grand Valley State University with a foundational knowledge of green, benign chemistry and its principles. This certificate can be completed in one calendar year, if all prerequisites were completed previously.

Speaking Employers' Language:

Employers often report that particular skill-sets are in high demand at their organizations, not necessarily majors. Therefore, it is important to understand these desired skill sets and employ commonly used business terminology when writing resumes, cover letters and responding to interview questions. Below you'll find business vocabulary framed within the context of liberal arts students' experience and knowledge.

Analytical Skills

- "I've studied situations from **multiple perspectives**, and I'm able to understand different viewpoints, much like a business analyst does when researching business requirements."
- "Because I have experience using different technologies, I'm able to recognize what business needs are and how technology can be created or modified to fill those needs. That's a form of **business analysis** I'd like to work with in this role."

Communication Skills

- "Good business writing can save business readers time. When it's clear, well-organized, and well-worded, readers read quickly. That saves time, and **reduces wasted expense**. In my technical writing course, I learned strategies for writing for a variety of business audiences."
- "**Persuasion** is the heart of good writing, whether you're trying to manage change, adopt a new idea or get people to agree with an unpopular opinion. I know how to write persuasively."
- "With a little bit of ramp-up time, I know I'd be able to help project teams produce better written **deliverables**."

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Cross-Cultural Skills

- “I’m an advanced speaker of Mandarin Chinese and a student of Chinese culture. I’m especially interested in **economic development** in the region where your company does business in China.”
- “I’m proficient in Spanish and have studied how this language is used in **e-commerce**. I am ready to assist any organization operating in Spanish speaking countries to reach and attract customers and clients.”
- “When we study language, we learn much more than the mechanics of the language. We learn the culture, the behaviors, the norms and expectations of people who speak this language. I’m ready to apply that knowledge to help advance this company’s **global economic presence**.”
- “**Cultural literacy** helps us be proactive, not reactive, when dealing with and working with or for people in other parts of the world.”

Emotional Intelligence Skills

- “In literature, we analyze human motivation in great detail. I believe that’s given me a strong foundation in **emotional intelligence**.”
- “Many people don’t realize that in history/anthropology/political science, we study the kinds of things that enable us to develop empathy and to learn to leverage **diversity**. I believe both these things are key elements of emotional intelligence.”
- “Thanks to my psychology classes, I’ve developed a good understanding of **team behavior**, and as a result I’m capable of being a productive team player. We shouldn’t waste precious cycles in interpersonal misunderstanding.”

Leadership Skills

- “I’m a **big picture** person who is able to describe my vision and projected outcome.”
- “I’m an organizer, able to take an assignment or work effort and break it down into manageable tasks, I am able to **delegate** work to others on my team.”
- “Multiple **conflicting priorities** are an everyday reality in many course projects I’ve worked on. I have learned to roll with change and to help others handle it.”

Research Skills

- “I’m someone who likes to dig in, get to the **root cause**, and understand how pieces and parts fit together.”
- “I don’t settle for superficial results. The **low-hanging fruit** on Google page one isn’t enough.”
- “I’ve done extensive research using major databases, like EBSCO, and am good at devising **keywords** to get me the right information.”
- “I have the capacity to pursue the most challenging research projects, and I’m able to **drill down** to the right level of detail.”
- “In my classes, I’ve learned that **front-loading** a project with the right research is important to the final product.”
- “On a research team, I often **spearhead** the work effort and make sure we streamline how we approach the tasks at hand.”

Systems Thinking Skills

- “I’m a **big picture** person, capable of looking at parts of the whole and seeing beyond immediate issues.”
- “I’m a **planner**, and I can assemble individual tasks and assignments to achieve a greater end.”

Examples adapted from “Business Resumes for Liberal Arts Students” booklet by Susan de la Vergne:
<http://www.uwec.edu/English/internships/upload/Business-Resumes-booklet.pdf>

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Key Terminology in Business:

Big Data: an accumulation of data that is too large and complex for processing by traditional database management tools.

Business Development: business development is the creation of long-term value for an organization from customers, markets, and relationships.

The Cloud: a network of remote servers hosted on the Internet and used to store, manage, and process data in place of local servers or personal computers.

Community Outreach: the practice of offering support to community members.

Corporate Communications: corporate communication is a set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communications, aimed at creating a favorable point-of-view among stakeholders on which the company depends.

Database Management: the maintenance of information stored in a computer system.

Data Mining: the practice of examining large databases in order to generate new information.

Deliverable: an output, product, result, or outcome; a term of great flexibility.

Economic Development: progress in an economy, or the qualitative measure of this. Economic development usually refers to the adoption of new technologies, transition from agriculture-based to industry-based economy, and general improvement in living standards.

Market Research: the collection and analysis of information about consumers, competitors and the effectiveness of marketing programs. Market research allows businesses to make decisions that make them more responsive to customers' needs and increase profits.

Media Relations: media relations refer to the relationship that a company or organization develops with journalists, while public relations extend that relationship beyond the media to the general public.

Onboarding: the induction and assimilation of a new employee into a company or organization.

Performance Management: a scientifically based, data-oriented management system. It consists of three primary elements - measurement, feedback and positive reinforcement.

Seamless: moving from one thing to another easily and without interruption.

Synergy: the interaction of two efforts that result in a greater return than the sum of the two.

Transparency: a situation in which business and financial activities are done in an open way without secrets.

Triple Bottom Line: a company's triple bottom line measures 3 factors - profit (the economic value created by the company, or the economic benefit to the surrounding community and society), people (the fair and favorable business practices regarding labor and the community in which the company conducts its business) and planet (the use of sustainable environmental practices and the reduction of environment impact).

Sources: merriam-webster.com, investopedia.com, and languagemonitor.com