

How to get a fabulous career:

Maintain an “AboutMe” document “for your eyes only.” This ongoing list of your achievements will be valuable when you need to write a good resume, and it will alert you to your own inadequacies far enough in advance to take corrective action. Starting this list a week or two before you need a resume won’t work. Start now!

Your “AboutMe” document should cover the areas listed below (some of these are adapted from the 2009 National Defense Fellowship Application). Regularly (devotedly) update your “AboutMe” document and take corrective action if you’re too lean in any category.

Personal data

Contact information

1. Name - Enter your legal name, and any other name that may appear on your transcripts or reference letters (e.g., your maiden name).
2. Resident state - Enter the state you are a resident of for tuition purposes.
3. Email - Enter your primary email address. Information about your application, including official award notification, will be sent to this email address. Make sure that you can be reached at this email address on or about March 30, 2008. Award winners are expected to accept or reject the offer within two weeks of receipt of official notification.
4. Primary address - Enter your primary (mailing) address.
5. Secondary address - Enter your permanent address.
6. Phone numbers - List a phone number where you can be reached on or about March 31, 2008. You may provide an alternate and a mobile phone number, preferably ones at which you can continue to be reached after March.

Citizenship/Residence status (usually optional except when applying for government positions)

If you hope to apply for a US government position, be aware that applicants usually must be U.S. Citizens or U.S. nationals. A U.S. national is an individual who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States; individuals who are citizens of U.S. territories such as American Samoa and Swain's Island are U.S. nationals. The term does not refer to permanent residents.

Even for careers in industry, many businesses want to know your citizenship/visa/residence status. In some instances, employers are not allowed to request this information, but you can always provide it voluntarily.

Demographic Information (always optional)

Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Disability – Often by law, this information is not typically provided to evaluators or prospective/current employers – it is not supposed to impact your eligibility in any way. It is used to determine the degree to which members of diverse sections of the eligible population are aware of and apply for a program. See privacy act statements for more information about the policies of companies or institutions to which you apply.

Academic Background

Schools

- The city, state, and country of the institution you attend/attended.
- Degree obtained or pursued
- degree status
- overall GPA and base GPA (i.e., highest possible GPA)
- your major
- number of credits completed
- dates you attended the school or expected graduation date
- whether you attend/attended the school as an undergraduate, graduate, or other.
- whether the school is your baccalaureate institution.

Current academic status

What are you doing at this moment? (Senior, First Year Graduate Student, Second Year Graduate Student, Employed and not a student, etc.). Enter the name of your current or most recent academic advisor.

Joint Baccalaureate-Master's Programs

Indicate if you are or have been in a four- or five-year joint baccalaureate-master's program. Sometimes, a Masters obtained in this way is valued differently from a more traditional Masters that involves a thesis or more extensive coursework.

Continued education (lifelong learning)

List all forms of education that you have voluntarily pursued that are *not* required in your formal education. Examples: Technical seminars, workshops, first aid training, writing assistance, undergraduate independent study projects, etc.

Employment history

List the names, addresses, points of contact, and dates of employment of all employers that are relevant to your engineering career (leave out the summer job at McDonalds unless you were a manager there, indicating leadership ability). Include summer internships. Describe your role and responsibilities.

Areas of specialization

List specific subjects about which you are knowledgeable. Since this “AboutMe” document is for your eyes only, you might want to (honestly) rank your level of

knowledge on a scale from 1 to 10, with a ranking of 1 indicating that your knowledge is minimal and 10 meaning that you are competitive with the world's experts in that subject. Example specializations include: Matlab programming, linear algebra, solar cells, micro-manufacturing, C/C++ programming, shock physics, heating and ventilation, etc.

Proposed Area of Study

What do you want to do with your education? Build upon it in graduate school? Apply it in industry? No matter what the answer is, you need to be able to state clearly how you would like to use what you have learned.

Discipline

You should select the discipline (Mechanical Engineering, Physics, Economics, etc.) to which your particular course of study is most closely related. If you are uncertain as to which discipline is most appropriate, consult with your academic advisor. Don't make the mistake of proposing to study a discipline for which you have little or no background.

Area of Specialization

Describe your area of specialization within your chosen discipline. For example, an applicant within the Physics discipline might enter "optics" or "acoustics". An applicant in Mechanical Engineering might enter "computational shock physics" or "climbing robots." Don't be wishy-washy. The more specific you are in stating your interests, the more likely it will be that someone (employer, grad school professor), etc. will bring you onto their team – they know that you are most likely to be successful if you will be working in an area that interests you.

Desired advanced degree

MS, PhD, MD, etc.

Proposed Graduate institution

Where would you like to do advanced studies?

Publications

Enter all relevant peer-reviewed publications and presentations pertaining to your field since entering college. These may include articles, journal submissions, and conference proceedings. List the author(s), year, article title, publication title, volume, issue, and page numbers. Indicate what you contributed to this paper if your name is not in the author list, or any other information you would like to convey. If you have an article in press, put "(in press)" after the end of the title.

Presentations

List the presenter(s), title of the presentation, type (oral or poster), meeting/conference, month, day, and year presented. Indicate what you contributed to this presentation if your name is not in the presenter list.

Patents or patent applications

Enter the title, status (i.e., whether it is a patent or patent application), the patent or application number, patent inventors, patent approval or submission date, and a brief description of the patent.

Awards & Honors

For each of the following, indicate the agency granting the award or honor. Group similar awards together. For example, list together all awards that directly derive from your grade point average such as Dean's List recognition.

- scholarships
- academic honors
- scientific or engineering student leadership roles
- honorary societies
- other recognition since entering college.

Scientific or Research Experiences

Describe all scientific or research experiences since entering college. These experiences may include current projects, internships, or positions of employment.

Leadership and Teamwork

Describe or list any leadership experiences, such as class president, committee chairperson, or scouts, with dates. Describe or list any teamwork experiences, such as class projects, varsity sports, extracurricular groups, or clubs. Provide dates.

Memberships & Professional Activities

Describe or list any educational or professional memberships such as IEEE, SWE, or Tau Beta Phi. Include membership start dates. List professional activities such as organizing scientific workshops, editing manuscripts for journals, etc.

Certifications

Describe or list any certifications, such as Professional Engineer, water safety instructor, parachuting, etc. Include certification date.

Community & Volunteer Work

Provide a summary of volunteer work and experiences, interests and/or hobbies. Where possible, indicate relevance to your career goals (leadership, teamwork, etc.)

Summary of Goals (ESSENTIAL!)

In your own words, provide an essay summarizing your educational objectives and your long-range professional goals.

As part of this statement, emphasize your ideas regarding: (1) the kinds of research in which you would like to be engaged during your graduate study or career; or (2) specific research questions that interest you and how you became interested in them. Discuss these research interests in sufficient detail for an expert who is technically competent in your field to judge your understanding of the questions to be addressed. This includes relevant hypotheses and approaches one might take to answering the questions, and other research principles required to investigate the research area you identify. Do not make this a recapitulation of a grant submission or a project report. Explain the science, but emphasize your longer-term goals and how the science fits into your life as an individual. Include citations to the literature. Be sure to include all relevant information pertaining to your goals.

The essay should be carefully checked for grammar and spelling errors. It illustrates your ability to think independently and creatively, but also your ability to write about your research or study plans accurately, thoughtfully, and concisely.

The people evaluating your responses will be highly qualified professionals and faculty members, generally with doctoral degrees in the discipline you have selected. Therefore, avoid tutorial discussions or flowery writing that drones on about your enthusiasm without any substance.

References

Enter contact information for at least three references in order to send a request to each. References should be scientists, engineers, or faculty members who have current or recent knowledge of your academic accomplishments or your professional experiences. Usually, you will not be able to see what your reference submits.

Please make sure that you enter the correct email address for your reference, and that you follow up with your reference to make sure they agree to be listed as a reference.

A minimum of three references is usually required.

The following information should be provided for each reference:

1. Name - The first and last name of the reference.

2. Institution - The current institutional affiliation of the reference.
3. Department - The current departmental affiliation of the reference.
4. Position - The current position of the reference.
5. Email address – Enter the reference's email address. Keep in mind that once you save the email address, you will not be able to change it, and an email will be sent to the reference when you click the "Save this reference" button.

Standardized test Scores (SAT, EI, GRE, MCAT/LSAT, etc.)

Keep a record of all standardized test scores. If you intend to apply to graduate school, the most important one is the GRE. To do well on any standardized test, you really should take a practice test first (and keep taking practice tests until you get good scores).

If you take the GRE, save the registration number. Your GRE registration number is assigned to you by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and appears on your test results. Your registration number is 7 digits, and it is not the same as your confirmation number. Subject Tests are highly recommended where applicable. A GRE General Test score should be provided, even if you did not have to take a GRE for your graduate program. You (not your employer) are responsible for contacting ETS and requesting that they send official copies of your GRE scores to prior to the application deadlines. You should request scores from the ETS at least 20 business days before the deadline. You may contact ETS at <http://www.gre.org> or (609) 771-7670. MCAT/LSAT test scores cannot be substituted for GRE test scores.

Official Transcripts

When applying for jobs or fellowships, transcripts from your baccalaureate institution (and from any institution at which you have been a graduate student) are usually required. To begin a dialog with a prospective employer, it is a good idea to give them unofficial transcripts or grade reports, but they will ultimately require *official* transcripts. Therefore, be sure that you know how to request official transcripts from your educational institutions. Allow at least four weeks for most institutions to respond to a request for transcripts. Transcripts should include courses in the most recently completed semester or quarter.

Criteria against which my performance is currently judged

Whether you are a student or working professional, you are always judged against specific criteria. If you're employed, these are the criteria for raises or promotions. If you are only taking classes, list the grading metrics. If you are a graduate researcher, list your project deliverables. Regularly edit your "AboutMe" document to indicate how you are performing relative to those criteria.