

Job Search Tips for Pharmacy Students

Getting Started

Are you looking for an internship or job, but don't know where to start? You have many resources at your fingertips! First, you must identify what kind of job or internship you are seeking. Next, start networking to identify job openings of interest to you and employers for whom you would like to work. Potential resources to tap include the SDSU Career and Academic Planning (CAP) Center, faculty, current or former employers, professional organizations (including student chapters), family, and friends.

In addition to helping you identify job openings and employers in your field, these individuals can help you recognize your strengths and weaknesses so that you can market yourself well as you prepare your application materials. The key is knowing which skills and qualifications employers are seeking in pharmacy candidates and communicating those qualities effectively in your job search materials.

Skills/Qualifications Desired in Pharmacists

The best way to discover which skills employers are seeking is to review job descriptions of interest to you. Most job descriptions will state the specific qualifications required for a particular job. When reading the description for a job that you are applying for, highlight or underline key credentials required for the position, then be sure to identify those skills in your resume and/or cover letter.

If you do not have a job description or if the job description is unclear, talk with employers or faculty in your field, or with alumni and other students who have full-time employment or internship experience to gain insight into key qualities and experiences you should emphasize in your application materials. Consider the following skills and qualities employers seek in pharmacists.

- Ability to counsel patients
- Ability to work under pressure
- Attention to detail
- Communication skills
- Computer skills
- Customer service skills
- Ethics
- Mathematical skills
- Organizational skills
- Prioritization skills
- Professional demeanor
- Record keeping
- Respect for confidentiality
- Teamwork
- Trouble shooting

In addition to the skills listed above, it is important for pharmacists to demonstrate knowledge in various areas, including medical terminology, medication brand and generic names, insurance payment systems, and pharmacy practices and procedures.

Source: This list of skills was adapted from various pharmacy job descriptions and job search websites.

Tips from Pharmacy Employers

Pharmacists' professional responsibilities cover five essential areas. View these five essentials below and consider your experience with these topics when creating your resume and preparing for interviews.

1. *Drug delivery and medication safety:* This includes delivering the right drug, identifying the correct dosage, labeling medications clearly, identifying potential side effects, and detecting possible drug interactions.
2. *Patient education and advocacy:* This includes making sure the patient understands the name of the drug, what the medication treats, how and when it should be taken, how it may react with other drugs and with foods, and optimal storage methods.
3. *Monitoring drug therapy:* This includes helping customers obtain proper follow-up for disease management.
4. *Teaming with other health care providers:* This includes daily interactions with doctors, nurses, nursing home staff, and other prescribers.
5. *Research and clinical studies:* This includes promoting wellness through routine screenings and participation in community-based research to monitor new drugs.

There are many other key factors to consider when creating application materials. One strategy is to convey any unique activities in which you have participated, including research, grant writing, or publication of scholarly articles. Most pharmacy students gain clinical experience, but only a few participate in these other distinctive activities. Be sure to acquire experience that stands out from other candidates, then articulate that experience in your job search materials. You also should contribute to student pharmacy organizations, taking on leadership roles whenever possible. This demonstrates not only your leadership ability, but also your commitment to the pharmacy profession.

Source: Pfizer Guide to Careers in Pharmacy at <http://pfizercareerguides.com/>

SDSU College of Pharmacy

The SDSU College of Pharmacy provides resources for students seeking internships or post-graduation employment opportunities. For information about job opportunities and tips on conducting your job search, visit the College of Pharmacy Career Opportunities website at <http://www3.sdstate.edu/Academics/CollegeOfPharmacy/CareerOpportunities/Index.cfm>. The College of Pharmacy also hosts Pharmacy Days, a career fair and job interview event for SDSU pharmacy students, each fall. Pharmacy Days brings many pharmacy employers to campus and allows students the opportunity to gather information about job opportunities and to network and interview with employers in their field.

In the past, employers who attended Pharmacy Days provided feedback and information about SDSU students' preparation for the event. Below are some of their comments and suggestions.

Resume Development

- Keep resumes to one page for retail positions; other positions may warrant a curriculum vitae (Visit the CAP Center or schedule an appointment with a CAP Center staff member for guidelines on creating a curriculum vitae.)
- Include only experience pertinent to the profession
- Correct grammar and typing errors
- Get appropriate email addresses
- Include expected graduation date from Pharm.D. program
- Be specific when describing experiences
- P1's and P2's need to list shadowing experiences and an employment objective
- P4's also should include an employment objective

Interviewing Skills

- Be knowledgeable about the employer
- Approach employers with confidence
- Prepare questions that you will ask the employer
- Maintain eye contact
- Dress professionally; avoid distracting jewelry and short skirts
- Be prepared to share detail about your related work experience

Qualities Pharmacy Days Employers Seek in Job Candidates

- Confidence
- Desire to be life-long learners
- Empathy
- Experience in retail/pharmacy service
- Flexibility
- Initiative
- Leadership skills
- Motivation
- Open personality
- Organizational skills
- Passion for the profession
- Positive attitude
- Professional appearance
- Strong clinical and assessment skills
- Strong work ethic
- Willingness to learn

Source: Fall 2005 Pharmacy Days Employer Survey

CAP Center Resources

If you need help with your job search, contact the CAP Center staff. We have various resources to assist you. Through the CAP Center, you can access workshops on Resume Writing/Job Searching and Interview Skills, schedule individual appointments with one of our staff members to gather information about the job search process, have application materials critiqued or take part in a practice interview.

You also can register with our online system at <http://careercenter.sdstate.edu>. The system allows you to search and apply for jobs in your career field, post resumes and other job search documents, sign up for on-campus interviews, research employers that have recruited SDSU students, and receive notices regarding job listings, on-campus interviews, and campus events.

Pharmacy Job Search Websites

SDSU College of Pharmacy Career Opportunities: <http://www3.sdstate.edu/Academics/CollegeOfPharmacy/CareerOpportunities/Index.cfm>

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy: <http://www.aacp.org/site/page.asp?VID=1&CID=686&DID=4740&TrackID=>

American Pharmacists Association: <http://www.pharmacist.com/careers.cfm>

CareerPharm Practice Interview Questions: <http://www.careerpharm.com/seeker/resources/interview-questions.cfm>

Pharmacy Postings: <http://www.pharmacypostings.com/>