CAREER GUIDE

UGA

for Students with Disabilities

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Exploring Careers and Making Decisions

Exploring career opportunities after graduation can be overwhelming. Taking the next step towards your career path can be easier with some reflection and organization. At the Career Center, we help you identify your personality, interests, values, and skills to find a career direction that best suits you. We can help you in one-on-one career counseling appointments, daily Drop-In Hours, and regular career programming.

Appointments & Drop-Ins

We provide career coaching via in-person, phone, and virtual appointments, scheduled on Handshake or by calling (706) 542-3375. We also offer Drop-In Hours for quick questions, with in-person sessions Mon-Thurs and virtual sessions on Fridays. career.uga.edu/appointments

Arch Ready Programs

Our Arch Ready programs equip you with skills and experiences employers value. Attend individual programs based on your interests or commit to five programs in one semester to earn the Arch Ready Professionalism Certificate. career.uga.edu/archready

Career Assessments

The first step to making career decisions is to know yourself! The Career Center offers assessments that can aid you in choosing your major, planning your course of study, and determining your career path. Start a self-guided reflection with the Finding Your Career Fit guide (PDF). career.uga.edu/assessments

Intern for a Day

This job shadowing program will match you with a company in your interest area. Offered each semester, attend an information session, and select employers you would like to visit. career.uga.edu/intern_for_a_day.

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Career Preparation: Applications, Interviews & Networking

We are here to support you as you prepare for a job or graduate school search. These resources are a great place to start!

Career Center Web Resources

Access resources to help you write a resume, prep for an interview, search for jobs and internships, and more. career.uga.edu/students

Handshake

Register for Career Center events and find jobs or internships, including on-campus positions and post-graduation destinations. uga.joinhandshake.com

Career Development eLC Modules

Participate in self-paced modules with resources, informational videos, and action items to help you make progress toward your goals. Enhance your job applications, explore career options, and grow your network. career.uga.edu/career_development_elc

UGA Mentor Program

Connect with a network of Bulldogs that can set you on the path to success. You can request a mentor based on search criteria such as identity (e.g. disability), location, UGA degree, job function, and more. mentor.uga.edu

Career Fairs & Events

Explore events and programs designed for both undergraduate and graduate students. There is something for everyone, from career fairs and diversity events to virtual career programs and the chance to earn the Arch Ready Professionalism Certificate. Check out the full list on our events calendar. career.uga.edu/calendar

We encourage you to notify our staff of any accommodations you need when you make an appointment or before an event. To make a request, you can contact your Career Consultant or email career@uga.edu. We are also available to answer any questions at (706) 542-3375.

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Organization Culture and Diversity

As you begin your job search, consider the kind of organization you want to work in and the workplace culture. Is this a workplace that is consistent with your values? Will it provide the training and support you need? Are the leaders and employees people you feel you can successfully work with as a team? Consider these types of questions as you research organizations and apply for jobs.

Additionally, it is wise to consider the culture of the organization in relation to disability. Are you only interested in working with an organization that is disability-friendly? If so, what does that entail?

Here are some questions you can ask employers during an interview to help you determine if a company culture aligns with your values and goals:

- Would you say that your organization has a diverse employee base?
- Does your organization have a disability affinity group?
- What is the process to request accommodations at your organization?
- How would you describe your organization's culture?

Please refer to career.uga.edu/students for more information about job searches and interview preparation.

Workplace Communication

Professional communication is another area that all students must navigate as they join the workforce. Deciding how best to communicate with an employer during the job search and as a new employee can be daunting.

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Helpful Communication Guides

You can review email correspondence examples on our website to help as you network and navigate the job application process. Additionally, the Mentee Communication Guide shares best practices for introductions, meeting preparation, and other professional networking conversations with UGA Mentors that can apply to most professional situations. You can refer to these resources during the job search, including as you consider communication information about disclosure and accommodations in the workplace.

How to Show You Can Communicate Well

Employers indicate that communication is one of the top skills they look for in job candidates, and it is one of the eight career competencies identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE).

As a job seeker and new professional, you can demonstrate good communication skills in several ways:

- **Responding to messages promptly**. Typically, try to respond to emails, phone calls, texts, and other messages within one business day.
- **Listening actively** and asking appropriate follow-up questions for specific information.
- **Sharing information in an organized manner** that is easy to understand. It is wise to proofread written messages for spelling errors and overall clarity.

Striving to communicate promptly and clearly in your job search will always make a good impression on a potential employer!

For other information about transitioning from college to your career, you can refer to the Life After UGA guide.

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Disclosure and Accommodation

Sharing information about your disability can foster a transparent and genuine relationship with your employer. This openness may reduce stress and enhance your workplace experience by enabling you to be yourself and obtain necessary accommodations. Nonetheless, it is crucial to strategically plan the timing and method of disclosing your disability and requesting accommodations.

What Is a Disability?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a person with a disability as someone who has a *physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.* Some examples of disabilities include:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Vision Impairment
- Cancer
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Depression and Anxiety
- Diabetes
- Physical Disabilities
- Epilepsy/Seizure Disorder

What is the ADA?

The ADA is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, State and local government, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications. It also applies to the United States Congress. For more information on the ADA, you can review the *Guide to Disability Rights* at ADA.gov.

What Are "Accommodation" and "Disclosure" in the Job Search?

The ADA protects persons with disabilities against job discrimination in the workplace and the job search. Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants and employees.

Accommodation. According to the ADA, a reasonable accommodation is *a modification to a job, work environment, or way a job is normally completed that enables a person with a disability to have an equal opportunity to access and complete a job.* Accommodations remove or offset barriers preventing you from competing for a job, performing a job, or gaining equal access to a benefit of employment. Possible accommodations include:

- Changes to **facilities and equipment**, such as assistive technology, large print materials, and appropriate furniture.

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- **Access services**, like sign language interpreters, transcription, and screen reader accessible work platforms or databases.
- Adjustments to **job expectations**, such as flexible schedules, modified break schedules (length and frequency), or remote/hybrid work options.

Remember that you are the expert on yourself and what you need. Keep in mind that requested accommodations need to be considered reasonable and related to the limitations of your disability. You can refer to the [Searchable Online Accommodation Resource (SOAR)](#) to explore accommodation options.

Disclosure. Requesting workplace accommodations involves informing your employer, or "disclosing," that you have a disability. Below, you will find options for when and how to disclose your disability and request accommodations.

When Should I Disclose a Disability in the Workplace?

You have the option to decide if, when, and how to disclose your disability at work or during the hiring process. Since disclosure is voluntary, it is up to you to discuss your disability and any accommodation needed with your employer. Be aware that the employer may request documentation of your disability to support your accommodation request.

You may disclose a disability at any stage during the hiring process or while employed. When deciding whether and when to disclose, consider the advantages and possible drawbacks of disclosing at various points in hiring and employment.

The process of disclosing a disability can differ based on whether the disability is visible or invisible. For invisible disabilities, you must disclose them to request accommodations, as employers cannot accommodate a disability they are unaware of. For visible disabilities, be prepared for potential questions from employers or colleagues, and think ahead about how you want to respond. Ultimately, you have the choice of when (or if) to disclose a disability and request accommodations.

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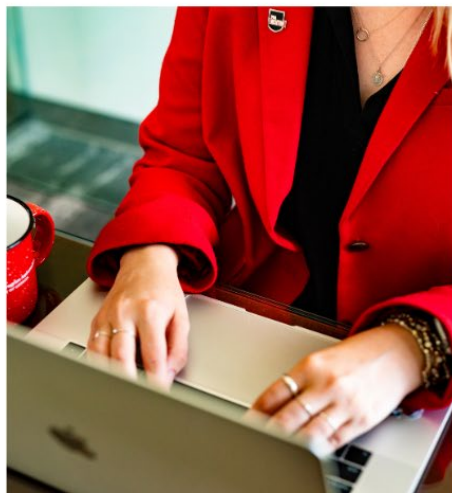
Preparing to Disclose

First, reflect on what is most important to you in the workplace. You can explore your level of comfort in talking about your disability and decide what information you would like to share. Create a script or draft of your disclosure, and rehearse your disclosure if you intend to disclose verbally. Keep your request concise and positive. It is best to create a space where you and your employer feel comfortable with an open dialogue about what is necessary and reasonable to accommodate your needs.

What Information Should I Share When Disclosing a Disability?

Inform your employer that you have a disability and wish to request an accommodation under the ADA. Mention the types of accommodations that have been effective for you in school or previous jobs, as well as those you anticipate needing in this role. Additionally, share any strategies you already use to "self-accommodate."

Requesting an accommodation usually involves an interactive process, such as a discussion with someone from the human resources office.

If an employer refuses your accommodation request, continue the dialogue. Ask for clarification on the reasons for the refusal to understand their decision better and inquire if you can modify your request. For accommodation ideas, consult the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) to identify options to discuss with your employer.

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The Transition of Accommodations from College to the Workplace

The transition from receiving accommodations in college to the workplace can often be intimidating because it is new territory. In college, you disclosed your disability and the need for accommodations to the Disability Resource Center. You were assigned to an Accommodations Coordinator who helped you to inform your instructors of your accommodations needs. In the workplace, the requirement to request accommodations is your responsibility just like it was in college. However, the accommodations process is usually facilitated by Human Resources, so you need to locate that department.

It is essential that you are prepared to explain your accommodation needs and how they impact your ability to perform the essential functions of your job. This understanding usually begins during the interview process, but once you start your job, your understanding of the job requirements will increase as you become more familiar with the environment and culture of the workplace.

College to Career Transition: How is the Workplace Culture Different from the University Culture?

After graduation, you will notice some differences in the workplace and college environment in regard to the accommodations process. At UGA, the Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides support for persons with disabilities to have equal access to educational opportunities. The DRC provides guidance and acts as an intermediary to instructors and faculty while also keeping sensitive health information confidential. Even with accommodations in place, a student must still fulfill the essential course objectives.

In the workplace, the accommodations process is usually facilitated by Human Resources often starting with a confidential conversation. It is your responsibility to communicate with your employer and advocate for yourself. It is important to note that even if accommodations are approved, you must be able to fulfill the essential functions of the role.

Disclosure Resources

Scripts

As a reminder, the disclosure and accommodations process is usually a confidential interaction between you and your employer. It is important to learn what the process is at your organization and identify the correct contact with whom to have this conversation. However, you may want to be prepared to have this conversation if it comes up, or if you want to bring it up, in other situations.

Use these templates to practice or compose a disclosure. Include a brief description of how the disability impacts you in the work environment and the specific accommodations you are requesting. Communicate to the employer that you are reliable, valuable to the organization, and able to complete the role as well as (or better than!) others.

On Resume: Share disability-related activities, such as "Disability Center Peer Advisor" or "Member of Students for Disability Advocacy."

In a Cover Letter: "I am confident I can be successful in this role. I work best when _____(*describe ideal working conditions*). Sometimes, my work environment may require accommodations. I look forward to discussing the position and my candidacy with you in a formal interview."

In an Interview: "My disability gives me a unique perspective and skill set. For example,_____ (*describe specific traits or accomplishments*). I use these skills to benefit the team by _____(*example from current or former work*)."

After a Job Offer: "Thank you for this offer. I am very excited about the opportunity to work with your team, and I am confident I can be successful in this role. I would like to discuss some accommodations I may need."

After Starting a Job: "Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I am enjoying this role, and I value the work we do. I feel it is important that I share that I have _____ (*describe disability*), which can require me to_____ (*describe need and/or accommodation request*). I wanted to bring up this information early to ensure we can work together on a reasonable accommodation."

A Performance Issue Arises: In this role, I have used my strengths and developed new skill sets. I have noticed that I have difficulty when_____ (*describe difficulty*). Some possible solutions to help me include_____ (*describe accommodation*). I would appreciate your support in implementing these strategies."

Modified from the University of Toronto's Disclosure and Accommodation Guide for the Workplace

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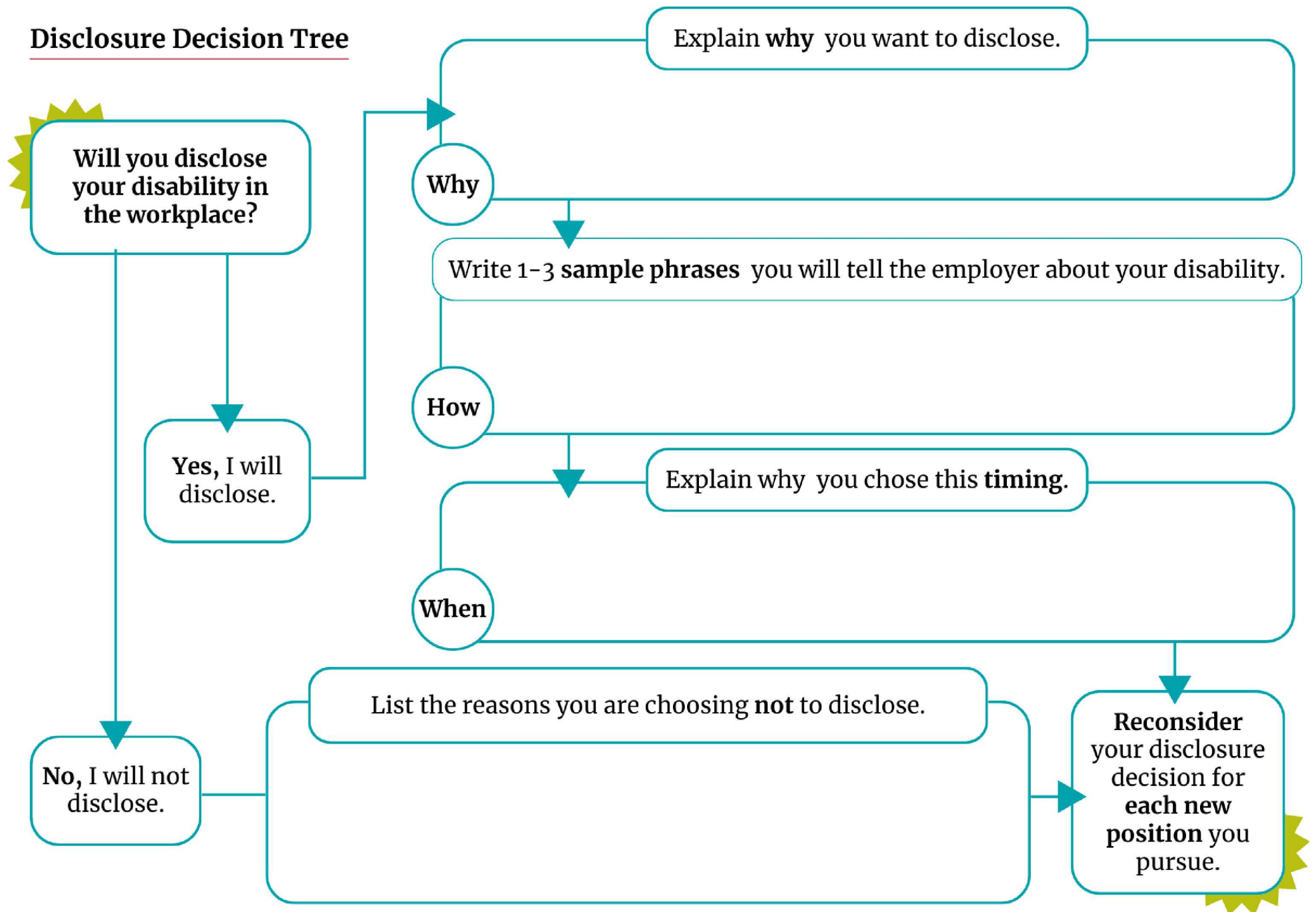
Disclosure Timing: Pros and Cons

Review the following information as you decide if and when you will disclose a disability to an employer or potential employer.

	When	Potential Benefits	Potential Risks
In the Application Process	**In the Cover Letter**	• Time to prepare a positive, written statement in advance • Opportunity to tailor your abilities to the job duties • Gives you peace of mind that you have disclosed	• Recruiter biases may hinder the offer of an interview • You cannot witness the employer's reaction in body language and mood while disclosing
	In the Resume or Job Application	• Allows you to be direct and clear • Gives you peace of mind that you have disclosed	• Employer may have a stereotyped view of a disability and not give an interview
During the Interview Process	**When an Employer Invites You to an Interview**	• Establishes open communication • Allows the employer to review ADA compliance information and put any needed accommodations in place for the interview	• An interviewer may focus on the disability and potential obstacles rather than your qualifications • Your performance abilities may be doubted before you have a chance to prove them
	During the Interview	• Opportunity to view employer's reaction and body language in response to disclosure • Ability to disclose in a brief, positive manner • Demonstrates your confidence	• Employer may feel uneasy or unprepared to respond appropriately or answer questions about accommodations • The pressure is on you to choose a good time to disclose • An employer may doubt your performance before you have a chance to prove your capability

When		Potential Benefits	Potential Risks
During the Offer	**After the Interview but Before an Offer**	• Keeps the interviewer's focus on your skills and qualifications in the interview • Opportunity to explain that you needed to learn more about the role and its essential functions before disclosure	• Employer may feel you should have disclosed earlier in the application process • Employer may not seriously consider you for the position
	After the Offer	• Legal recourse may be available if disclosing disability negatively affects the hiring decision • Time to get accommodations in place before the start date	• Employer may feel you should have disclosed earlier in the application process
On the Job	**After the Position Begins**	• Opportunity to establish your credibility and capacity to perform the role before disclosure • Able to speak with coworkers about disability-related topics • Legal recourse may be available	• May delay time in securing accommodations • You may need to disclose if your job responsibilities change • The longer you wait to disclose, the harder it may become to disclose
	When Performance Issues Arise	• Difficulties may not arise, so you may not need to disclose	• Employer may have difficulty in changing their perspective of your work performance • It may be difficult to reestablish trust with the employer
Never	**Never**	• Disability information is kept private and does not become a factor in hiring decisions	• Not protected from discrimination under the ADA

Modified from the University of Toronto's *Disclosure and Accommodation Guide for the Workplace* and Virginia Commonwealth University's *Disclosure Decisions to Get the Job* referencing Hafner, D., Estervig, J., & Owens, L.A. (2008).

Disclosure Decision Tree

Will you disclose your disability in the workplace?

Yes, I will disclose.

No, I will not disclose.

Why

Explain **why** you want to disclose.

How

Write 1–3 **sample phrases** you will tell the employer about your disability.

When

Explain why you chose this **timing**.

List the reasons you are choosing **not** to disclose.

Reconsider your disclosure decision for **each new position** you pursue.

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Career & Networking Opportunities for Students with Disabilities

Many organizations outside of the University of Georgia provide career support for individuals with disabilities. Here are some organizations you may wish to review to see if their services will benefit you.

Broad Futures

Apply for an internship program designed to support neurodivergent people entering the workforce. The experience includes coaching, mentorship, classes, and an internship. Note that this program has a cost, and financial aid may be available to cover expenses fully or partially.

broadfutures.org/

Career OneStop

Explore careers and access training and job search resources from the U.S. Department of Labor.

careeronestop.org/

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services (GVRS)

Access career counseling and other employment resources to find and maintain employment in Georgia. These resources can include Transition Services that support the transition from high school to the workforce and job coaching, training, and placement services.

gvs.georgia.gov/vocational-rehabilitation

Lime Connect

Participate in events, networking, and other programs as you connect with professionals and students with visible and invisible disabilities. As a non-profit organization, Lime Connect seeks to change the perception of disabilities in the workplace and expand workplace access for persons with disabilities.

limeconnect.com/

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Job Search & Disclosure Resources for Students with Disabilities

As you conduct your career exploration and job search, you can refer to the resources below for support specific to individuals with disabilities.

Ability Links

Search for jobs using this web-based community for job seekers with disabilities and inclusive employers. abilitylinks.org

ABILITY Jobs

Find jobs using one of the largest job sites for people with disabilities. abilityjobs.com

Americans with Disabilities Act

Obtain answers to common questions about your rights and responsibilities under the ADA and review resources on ADA-related topics.
ada.gov

disABLEDPerson.com

Discover opportunities for individuals with disabilities using this leading job board. disabledperson.com/

Disability Equality Index

Review a list of the best places to work for persons with disabilities generated by The American Association of People with Disabilities and Disability:IN™. This list, published annually, scores employers based on inclusive practices for employees with disabilities.
disabilityin.org

Getting Hired

Search for jobs at organizations committed to promoting disability-inclusive workforces.
gettinghired.com

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

Discover possible accommodations related to a disability and access information on job search questions, such as disclosing a disability.
askjan.org/

RespectAbility

Find news, education, and resources about issues facing people with disabilities, including leadership and workforce development programs.
respectability.org/
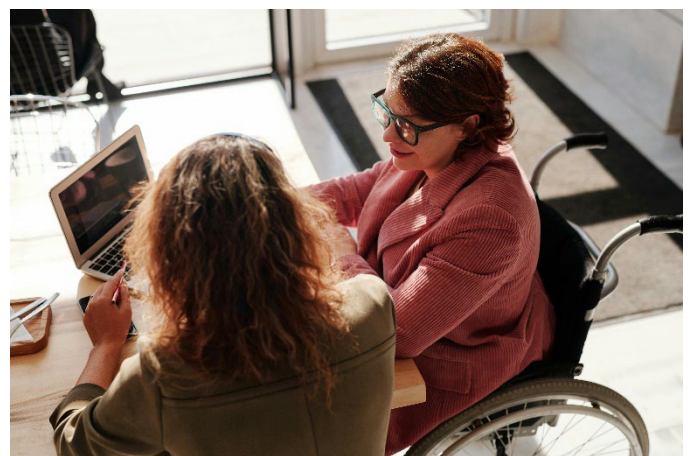
UGA Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The DRC's primary commitment is to assist the University of Georgia in educating and serving UGA students with disabilities. The DRC strives to promote a welcoming academic, physical, and social environment for students with disabilities.

Engage with the DRC to learn more about accommodations available at UGA to access equal educational opportunities.
drc.uga.edu

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

Examine information about your rights to equal opportunity in employment as protected by federal law, including the *Guide for People with Disabilities Seeking Employment*, which provides answers to common questions about the ADA. The site reviews disability laws and how the commission can support those who may be facing discrimination.
eeoc.gov/eeoc-disability-related-resources

U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

Learn more about policy and research related to ODEP's mission to coordinate with employers and all levels of government to increase workplace success for people with disabilities.
dol.gov/agencies/odep

Workforce Recruitment Program

Connect with federal and private-sector employers seeking college students and recent graduates for jobs and internships. Applications open each fall from late August to mid-October. Participants can access career advice from recruiters, conduct informational interviews, and communicate directly with employers.
wrp.gov/wrp

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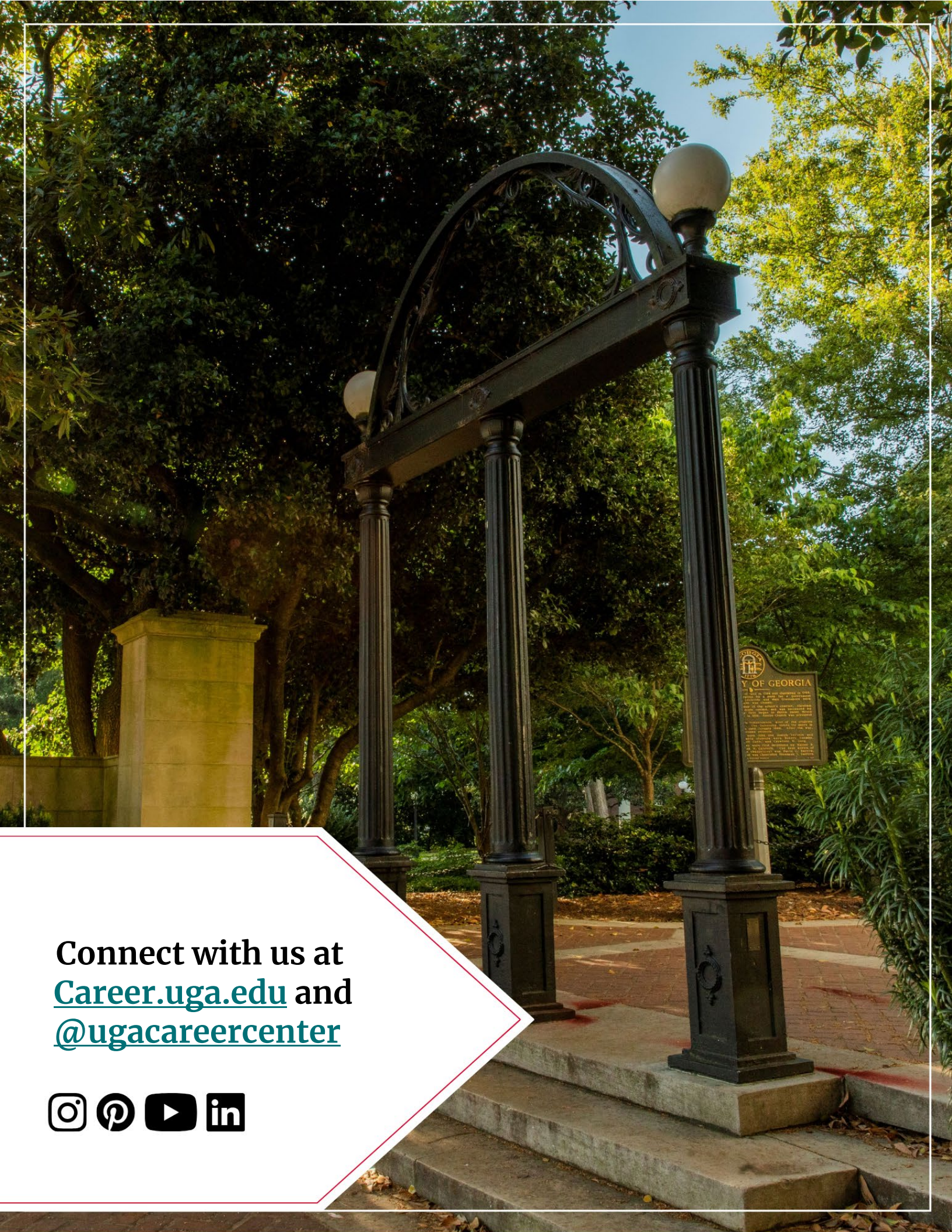
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