

Building Skills for Success

You probably haven't noticed Skills 101 on the list of courses offered in the class schedule bulletin – simply because Skills 101 is a process rather than a course. A process whereby during your academic career, you will learn to identify the skills you already have, learn about the skills needed to be successful within your field of study and/or occupational area of interest, decide on which ones you would like to develop and determine how to do so.

Some of you might ask – I'm not sure exactly what skills I am gaining from my academic experience. As an undergrad you will in addition to learning about specific disciplines, have the opportunity to develop skills such as how to seek information, conduct research, analyze issues, write reports, give presentations, manage time, solve problems, and work as part of a team. You will be exposed to art, culture, history, and begin to understand issues of access, diversity and equality. You will have the opportunity to learn how to communicate effectively, to reason inductively and deductively, to think, to synthesize, to exercise judgment, and to understand global issues. These are the skills that you will want to let an employer know that you have and more importantly that you know how they relate to the internship or position at hand.

One of your jobs as an undergraduate is to learn how to identify your skills, develop new ones and be able to articulate to a potential employer the skills you have, where they were developed and how they match those needed for the position to which you are applying. Remember, as you select courses, it's important to think about the purpose of the course not just the content.

There are 3 types of skills: personal, transferrable, and work/knowledge specific. Examples include:

Personal

Self-confidence
Initiative/Motivation
Global Thinking
Responsibility/Reliability
Strong Work Ethic
Risk Taking/Entrepreneurial
Enthusiasm
Leadership
Flexible/Adaptable

Transferrable

Critical Thinking
Analyzing
Communication (written/oral)
Creativity
Research/Investigating
Time Management
Goal Setting/Decision Making
Teamwork
Planning/Organizing

Work/Knowledge Specific

Laboratory Skills
Language Skills
Policy Analysis
Graphic Design
Social Research
Urban Development
Marketing
System Architecture
Benefits/Compensation

In addition to a solid academic background, employers expect you to have demonstrated ability in personal and transferrable skill areas – some of these include but are not limited to:

Communication: (written/oral): Ability to verbalize, write, listen, give presentations, facilitate discussions, and share knowledge effectively

Technical: Ability to appropriately apply technology and effectively use major software and the web to accomplish a given task; ability to apply computing skills to solve problems

Leadership: Ability to lead, gather resources, coach and allow others to lead

Teamwork/Collaboration: Ability to work effectively with others and to collaborate successfully; to be able to work with diverse teams, negotiate and manage conflicts

Interpersonal: Ability to relate to colleagues and customers, inspire others, resolve conflict, be tactful, understand cultures, and show diplomacy

During your academic career, you will have the opportunity to develop skills through your academic studies (projects, research...), volunteer and paid positions, internships, membership in clubs/organizations, leadership in student associations, and job shadowing. What skills would you like to develop through a paid position? Are there some skills that you think might be more attainable through volunteer work or an internship? And then there are the skills learned through your participation within student associations, clubs, organization such as leadership, organization, time management, problem solving, financial budgeting, initiative, and responsibility – just to name a few.

Let's explore how you can develop some of the skill areas desired by employers regardless of your major:

Communication Skills: you can develop communication skills by taking classes and getting involved in co-curricular activities that utilize oral and written communications. Employers emphasize the need for future employees to have proficient communication skills – especially the ability to do public speaking and give group presentations.

Classes: Advertising, Mass Media, Journalism, Speech, Oral Communication, Theatre. Possible courses at UHA – DRA160 Intro to Theatre; CMM115 Improving Communication Skills; CMM240 Intro to Media; CMM225W Interpersonal Communication; RPW110/111 Rhetoric and Professional Writing...

Experiences: write press releases and newsletters for community organizations, on-campus clubs, or University offices; create advertisements and publicity for campus events; write (or edit) articles, features, or editorials for the campus newspaper (*The Informer*); join a speech or debate team; act in a play or theater group; conduct campus tours; obtain telemarketing or sales experience; consider joining one of the campus radio stations (WSAM) or news station (Channel 2)...

Computer/Technical Skills: you can obtain technical skills in classes, workshops and experiences that focus on applying technology and learning software programs. Employers expect new college graduates to be familiar with standard business computer applications including word processing, spreadsheets, data management, presentation software and we research.

Classes: Advertising, Business/Technical Writing, Intro to Computers, Economics, Statistics. Possible course at UHA – CMM210 Media Literacy; CMM281 Intro to Multimedia; CMM 240 Intro to Media; M114 Everyday Statistics; EC 101 Intro to Economics; AUCT150 Technology as a Human Affair; CS110 Programming Foundations; MWD110 Multimedia Web Design and Development...

Experiences: design a personal web page; design or maintain web sites for student organizations; work as a computer lab assistant; design brochures, newsletters, and advertisements using computer and desktop publishing software; complete an internship in a financial institution, use spreadsheets to balance accounts and manage financial records; design PowerPoint presentations for class or an organization; keep up on new developments and applications in computer technology through membership in industry-specific magazines, online resources, and journals...

Leadership Skills: you can build leadership skills in classes and experiences that involve developing and exercising leadership. Employers seek graduates who have demonstrated leadership by being active contributors on campus.

Classes: Managing Organizational Behavior, Psychology. Possible course to consider at UHA – AUCS340 Ethics in the Professions...

Experiences: run a campaign for Student Government; be elected to a student government office; become a Resident Advisor or Peer Educator; become an officer in a campus organization; initiate a new program, service, resource, or business; be an officer or committee chair in your fraternity or sorority; join ROTC; facilitate group discussions; serve as a Red Cap; organize and manage an intramural sports team; lead children's programs, tutor, or coach children's sports teams; serve as a camp counselor or recreational leader; be involved in campus, local or state politics; participate in a living/learning community; find out about and participate in student leadership programs on campus...

Teamwork Skills: you can improve teamwork skills in classes and experiences that emphasize group process and include team projects. Employers depend not only on individual contributions, but also on collaborative efforts and teamwork to build the overall success of the organization.

Classes: Advertising, Group Communication, Sociology, Theatre. Possible courses at UHA – PSY252 Social Psychology; DRA160 Intro to Theatre; CMM222 Small Group Communication; CMM111 Business and Professional Communication...

Experiences: participate in a musical group or act in a play; become part of a committee; join student government; join a college council; serve on a student-run board; be part of an intramural team; work for a society, club, or group to organize programs, events, or conferences; design group projects and/or presentations; serve on the executive team in a sorority, fraternity, club, society, or organization; be part of a group volunteer project (Habitat for Humanity); volunteer for a team in a nonprofit organization (fundraising team, programming team etc.); become a Resident Advisor; serve as a student representative on an advisory committee...

Interpersonal Skills: you can develop interpersonal skills in classes and experiences that emphasize human relationships and provide opportunities to interact with people. Employers desire individuals who are skilled at building rapport among group members and are able to resolve conflict in ways that provide opportunities for positive growth.

Classes: Psychology, Communication, multi-cultural courses, History, English, Philosophy, Sociology. Possible courses at UHA – CMM225W Interpersonal Communication; CMM115 Improving Communication Skills; CMM212 Persuasion...

Experiences: conduct interviews with people to gather information; lead a discussion group; be a mentor for children or teens; volunteer as a tutor, coach, or camp counselor; volunteer in literacy programs or conversational English programs; tutor grade school children; work in programs to orient incoming freshmen or international students; work as a customer service representative; volunteer in a clinic, hospital, elderly-care facility, or shelter; become a Resident Advisor...

Additional skills for success:

Critical Thinking: conducting research; joining small group discussions or group work in diverse teams; participating in study abroad opportunities, living-learning communities, or learning communities; volunteering for the campus newspaper; judicial board involvement.

Social Responsibility and Cultural Awareness (understanding and appreciation of): diverse membership of student organizations and governance groups; participating in service-learning or community-based learning; attending cultural festivals or events; travel or study abroad; joining sports teams; judicial board involvement; enrolling in courses dedicated to exploring other cultures (AUC's).

You have the time to build an impressive skills base – as a first or second year student you will want to take the list of skills you currently have and identify the skills you would like to develop throughout the rest of your academic career. Beside each write where you think you might best develop the skill – in a certain class, working in a particular environment, volunteering somewhere specific, joining a club or association and taking on a leadership role, playing a particular sport, or taking part in an internship or job shadowing program. You can build a skills base that will get you noticed.

The Office of Career Services

GSU Room 309

860-768-4287

www.hartford.edu/career