

# **ARE 490 - Career Seminar in Agricultural and Resource Economics**

## **Transition from College to Professional Career**

**Fall 2009**

<http://www.ag-econ.ncsu.edu/faculty/brandt/ARE490.pdf>

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**Class Meeting:** Wednesday, 1:30-2:20 p.m. in Kilgore 159

**Office Hours:** I am often in my office but an appointment is best; please see me after class or call my Administrative Secretary (Linda Warrick 515-3107). One can also email me, as I am active on the computer during the weekday (and occasionally on the weekend).

### **Class Objectives:**

Begin transition in thinking and attitude from that of a student to that of a professional. Improve career planning and preparation.

- Know yourself
- Explore career opportunities
- Learn about the job market
- Learn about the CALS placement system
- Improve written and oral communication skills
- Gather information about a company/firm

### **Class Philosophy:**

Since the focus of this class is preparation for a career, we will treat this class as if it were a part of your first job. This has several important implications. The primary one is that your role will be that of a new employee who is trying his/her best to be the kind of employee who would like to be promoted soon. Another is that you will not be able to benefit from the standard "student" role. A new employee who plans ahead, knows when he/she will miss a meeting and gives advance written notice, generally will be considered a responsible person if it doesn't happen too often. A person who simply misses an appointment or assignment without clearing it first will be a candidate for job dismissal, because it is difficult and less productive to work with irresponsible people. A person who sees ways to substantially improve an assignment, clears it with his/her supervisor, and then does an outstanding, creative job is considered a candidate for promotion. But, one who does what one feels like doing instead of the job one has been assigned, without clearing it first, will find oneself a free agent, looking for another position.

Everything submitted in this class must be typed. Correct written and spoken English is expected of professionals and penalties for (repeated) infractions will increase progressively. I will tell you up front that I am VERY particular about grammar and spelling and I evaluate your work accordingly. PROOFREAD (and have a friend proofread) EVERYTHING THAT YOU SUBMIT IN THIS CLASS (even your email communications). **All written material for this class should include your student name and class number (which will be assigned to you). Number should be in the upper right hand corner of the first page, please. Put your Student Number on everything that you turn in to me. Staple everything (all assignments for the day) together that you turn in on a particular day for easier sorting.**

**Guest Lectures:** Outside speakers have been invited to add to your perspective as you consider a professional career. A concentrated time will be spent on how to prepare the resume, interviewing, and researching a firm. Other speakers will provide you with personal perspectives of the job search process and how to survive in a professional career. Glean the best from each of these speakers and make that a part of you.

**Speaker Reports (S1-S10):** After each speaker in class, write (type) a half-to-three-quarter-page memo telling me about the class (12 point font, please). I will accept these reports via email if that is an option that you prefer (proof read your email if you submit assignments in this manner but a preferred method is to submit a Word document as an attachment to your email). Please be sure to include the name of the speaker in your communication (as well as your own name if it is not in your email signature). Type your student number for this class (you will be told your number in the second week of class) in the upper right hand corner of all written reports.

Each report is to be identified with your name, the speaker's name, the class report number, and the due date. Sample:

**Student #**

**MEMO**

**To: Jon A. Brandt**  
**From: "Your Name"**  
**Re: Interviewing Skills**  
**Speaker: Marcy Bullock**

These reports are due at the beginning of the next class period. Three paragraphs should cover the following:

What did the speaker discuss? What was the most significant insight you gleaned from the presentation? What of importance did you learn that you did not know before? (Not just a summary or listing of topics covered.)

Give an evaluation of the presentation (style and substance). What did you learn about how (or how not) to make a presentation? Would you use this style in your presentation?

Offer your recommendation for improvements for next year. Should this speaker be invited

back, did this speaker present valuable, interesting information (even if not in your specific area of interest)?

If you know that will miss a class, email a brief explanation to me or contact Ms. Warrick (3350 Nelson) by noon Wednesday before class. Late reports will receive lower scores; missed reports will receive zeroes. Your grade will be based on the eight (8) highest scores recorded of the ten (10) speaker assignments due.

**Resume Project (R1-R3):** Each report is to be identified with your name, the report number (e.g., R1), and the due date. (See sample heading above.)

**Sep. 2 R1** Submit your most up-to-date resume (word-processed), taking into account information received in class. Also, prepare an appropriate cover letter for a job posted in the CALS Placement Office (or a job of your choosing). Prepare and distribute two copies of the cover letter and resume, one to a classmate and one to the instructor. Each class member will then have a resume and a cover letter for comparison and review.

**Sep. 23 R2** Prepare and submit a separate short, word-processed critique (identifying yourself as author of the critique) of the other student's resume and cover letter. Submit one copy of the critique only (not the resume and cover) to the instructor and return one copy of the critique and the original resume and cover letter to the student.

**Nov. 4 R3** Submit to the instructor a final, revised copy of your resume signed and dated by your advisor. (No cover letter, please.) Also, give a separate copy of your final resume to your advisor for his/her file.

**Interview (I1):** An important component of this class will be for students to understand what interviewers are looking for in job applicants and to gain experience in interviewing. During the semester, each student must schedule a practice or real interview with a potential employer. **It will be the student's responsibility to insure that an interview occurs during the semester.** (Previous interviews are not acceptable.) Students are encouraged to sign up for an actual interview through the CALS Career Services office. Or, consider scheduling an interview with one of the persons you meet at the **CALS Career Expo, Thursday Oct. 29, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.** [information about the Expo and updates of companies registered will be forthcoming]. Dress professionally, as if this were a real interview for a job! (That would include a tie around the neck rather than caps on the head for men.) This is excellent practice. This is a two part assignment. (1) After the interview, each student should receive a completed interviewer evaluation form to be given to me. (2) In addition, each student will prepare up to a one-page report (following same format as for your speaker reports) to indicate what was learned as a result of this exercise. This report should include (a) what expectations the student had prior to the session, (b) how the interview session went, and (c) what the student believes that he/she will do differently in another interview. The **I 1** report, which includes (1) the interview form completed by the interviewer and (2) your report of how the interview went, is due not later than **Nov. 25**, one week before the end of the semester.

**Job Search:** Part of the task of moving into a professional career (or perhaps graduate school as a

shorter term goal) is learning more about the occupation or firm that one might be joining. One should not interview with a firm without knowing a good deal about the firm for at least two reasons. First, the interviewer will be impressed that the candidate has sought out information about that firm and realize that he/she is serious about the interview. Second, one should not enter into a possible long-term relationship with a firm without having a good idea about the opportunities available and the responsibilities they involve, the history of the firm, its growth potential, and its industry environment. In this class, each student will conduct an in-depth analysis of a particular firm of interest covering these and other points. (I would suggest exploring a firm about which information of the type suggested above is readily available.)

- Sept. 16**      **J1**      Organize a brief (2 pages) outline of the information about the firm of choice. Identify the name of the firm to be researched. (The instructor will indicate approval as soon as possible.) Indicate from where the information will be obtained (i.e., two or more sources).
- Oct. 14**      **J2**      Present a first draft of your job search paper (stapled in upper left corner). This should include a cover page (not counted in the page length) with Title, Name, Course, Date and Instructor in very large font (e.g., 36 pt) and your class student number in the upper right hand corner. The paper should include (at least two) information sources. The paper should be 5-10 pages (double-spaced), 12-point font, with 1" top, bottom, and side margins. PROOFREAD! I will evaluate this paper and provide feedback, which will not count toward the final grade. I strongly encourage each student to put a good effort into this draft.
- Nov. 18**      **J3**      Final version (with your first draft) of this paper is due! Organization and format criteria are described below. Critically PROOFREAD the paper; have a friend proofread the paper!!! This is a significant part of your grade. Papers turned in after November 18 will be considered late.
- Nov. 30**      **J4**      We will schedule several evening sessions of up to ~3 hours each for students to give oral presentations during the week of Nov. 30. Students will be required to attend only the session in which they are giving their papers. **The oral presentation should be 7-10 minutes in length.** DO NOT READ YOUR PAPER! Students are encouraged to use Power Point presentations. If one needs other visual aids, please contact the instructor. Be prepared to respond to questions.

I strongly recommend that all students in this class attend the CALS "Career Expo", Thursday, October 23, 2008 (9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.) in the Talley Student Center in order to establish contacts (network) and learn more about potential employment opportunities. Go early! Take a dozen copies of your completed resume for distribution. Consider asking one of these contacts to interview you.

**Academic Integrity:** Student learners should be familiar with the academic integrity section of the NC State University Code of Student Conduct [see [http://www.ncsu.edu/student\\_affairs/osc/](http://www.ncsu.edu/student_affairs/osc/)] and are expected to abide by the Code at all times. Honesty, fairness, and rigor denote scholarly activity.

A scholar does not take credit for the work of others, does not take unfair advantage of others, and does not perform acts that frustrate the scholarly efforts of others. A scholar does not tolerate dishonesty in others. The violation of these principles is academic dishonesty. This course is designed to improve a student's communication skills as well as increase opportunities for success in the job market. Several written (and one oral) reports are due throughout the semester. Violations will be handled according to the specifications in the Code.

**Course Grading:** While this course will involve work on the part of students, grades should reflect the effort generated. The assignments will be graded so that the "deserving" ones will receive a 93-95. Exceptionally well done assignments can earn more. Assignments that are incomplete, late, casually done with repeated mistakes, or where directions have not been followed will be downgraded.

The course grade weighting is:

Class Reports	30%
Resume Project	20%
Interview Project	10%
Job Search Paper	25%
Job Search Presentation	<u>15%</u>
Course Score	100%

Grades will be determined as follows:

Score	Grade
97+	A+
93-96	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
<60	F

**Student Evaluations of Class:** Online class evaluations will be available for students to complete during the last two weeks of class (November 23-December 4). Students will receive an email message directing them to a website where they can login using their Unity ID and complete evaluations. All evaluations are confidential; instructors will never know how any one student responded to any question, and students will never know the ratings for any particular instructors.

Evaluation website: <https://classeval.ncsu.edu>

Student help desk: [classeval@ncsu.edu](mailto:classeval@ncsu.edu)

More information about ClassEval: <http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/classeval/>

### **Items to think about when writing the paper, in your own words:**

1. Organization could include such information as: company history, mission, number of employees, location(s), sales revenues, profits, products, and competitors. A significant portion of the paper should describe the type of job that the company offers to a person with a BS degree in Agricultural Business Management (special training needed?), salary (a range if you can get it but be tactful and respectful about this – use this class assignment as the reason that you need to ask), bonuses (?), benefits (e.g., does the company pay for advanced education, company car, health and retirement?), and opportunities for career advancement. What will your job responsibilities be? What are the expectations of the company regarding its employees? How often will you have to relocate (if ever)? Is this a growth industry? Can you grow with the company? Be sure to include a summary or conclusion (Would you work for this firm?).
2. I strongly advise students to write their papers in “third person” format. Absolutely do NOT write your paper in second person (you, your).
3. Don't mix singular and plural subjects and verbs. Remember, you are writing about one company (singular). Describe it (not “they”, “their”, etc.).
4. Use a variety of Action Verbs. Avoid passive verbs: is, was, has been, There is, etc.
5. Proof read VERY carefully! (Have someone else read your paper.) Spell checking with the computer is NOT enough. Read for sentence structure, agreement of subject and verb, complete sentences, awkward sentences, etc.
6. Cover page, please, very large font: Company, Course, Name of student, number in right hand corner.
7. Reference at least two sources of your information (e.g., annual report, library source, magazine, interview with an individual (name, please), etc.). This means to use these sources as background but to write the paper in your own words, not the words of the source. Please do not use or list Wikipedia as a reference.
8. The finished paper (excluding references and cover page) should be at least five (double-spaced) pages (and up to 10 pages) in length (papers shorter than five full pages will be discounted). Use 1” margins, top, bottom, and sides, 12-point font. Number your pages, starting with the page after the cover page. References can be cited at the bottom of the last page of the paper (if there is space); a new page for References is not necessary. **Put your student class number in the upper right hand corner of the cover page. Staple your paper together please.**

### **Items to think about when presenting the oral report:**

(Grade: 70% oral presentation, 30% visual application)

1. Plan to use visuals. (Power point is preferred.) Be familiar with equipment if you use visuals.
2. Practice your presentation. Introduce your subject and yourself. Project your voice to the back of the room. Use action verbs. Indicate your sources of information. Presentation is expected to be 7-10 minutes long.
3. Do NOT read your paper.
4. Summarize your presentation.
5. Be prepared to answer questions.
6. Dress professionally.

## ARE 490

### Career Seminar

<b>Date</b>	<b>Projects Due</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Speaker</b>
Aug. 19		Introduction of course, Pictures	
Aug. 26		Resume	Jon Brandt (S1)
Sep. 2	R1, S1	Career Opportunities	Jamie Thomas (S2) (Hog Slat, Inc)
Sep. 9	S2	Career Services Overview	Melissa Kahn (S3) (CALs Career Services)
Sep. 16	J1, S3	Networking/Informational Interviewing	Marcy Bullock (S4) (CALs Career Services)
Sep. 23	R2, S4	Interviewing	Melissa Kahn (S5) (CALs Career Services)
Sep. 30	S5	Career Opportunities	Justin Spruill (S6) (ALDI, Inc)
Oct. 7		Fall Break – No class	
Oct. 14	J2, S6	Career Opportunities	Gene Charville (S7) (AgCarolina Financial)
Oct. 21	S7	Career Opportunities	Scott Goodwin (S8) (DowAgro Sciences)
Oct. 28	S8	Career Opportunities	Mac Winslow (S9) (Lifewatch)
Nov. 4	S9	Career Opportunities	Randy Canady (S10) (Nufarm Americas, Inc)
Nov. 11	S10	No class. However, assignments are due in my office.	
Nov. 18	J3	No class. However, assignments are due in my office.	
Nov. 25	I1	No class. However, assignments are due in my office.	
Dec. 2	J4	Job Search Oral Presentations	Students
Evenings, week of Nov. 30 – Dec. 3 and afternoon of Dec. 4	J4	Job Search Oral Presentations	Students
Dec. 16 (1-4 pm)	J4	Job Search Oral Presentations	Students