

Recession Resilience Resource Guide



www.smeal.psu.edu/alumni/alumni-career-services



PennState
Smeal College of Business

Alumni Career
Services

Alumni Career Services coaching clients,

This guide was developed in response to rapid, sweeping changes transforming our economy, job market, workplace, and public health. In a recession-era market, the phases of career transitioning remain the same, but current circumstances have called on us as career practitioners to fortify alumni with tools and tips that strengthen mindset and preparedness. As you begin with a career coach, expect powerful questions, structure, and customized advice to complement the content here. Please note that this guide is considered a fluid document and we continually welcome insights from our partners in business and industry, including all of you talented alumni.

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Table of Contents

- 1 Smeal and Penn State's Lifelong Career Support of Alumni
- 2 Mindset and Self-Clarity: The First Step
- 3 Virtual Continued Education Options
- 4 Research: A Knowledge-is-Power Approach
- 5 Strategy: Targeted Branding, Marketing, and Networking
- 6 Execution: Applications and Interviews
- 7 Diversity and Inclusion: Affinity Groups
- 8 Occupational Associations and Resources
- 9 Remote Work Support for Flexibility and Care
- 10 Recession Resilience Toolkit: A Checklist of Essentials

Smeal and Penn State's Lifelong Career Support of Alumni

[Smeal Alumni Career Services](#), the only college-specific Penn State Alumni Career Services (ACS) team, offers several core services for career enrichment throughout the alumni lifespan:

- Podcasts: half-hour interviews with Smeal faculty, alumni, and industry leaders
- Webinars: hour-long sessions with Smeal faculty, alumni, and industry leaders
- Archived podcasts and an online library of webinars to watch at your leisure
- Career coaching: 1:1 5-session service for all Smeal degree graduates

For LinkedIn engagement, we offer two networking groups exclusive to our alumni:

- [Penn State Smeal College of Business Alumni \(Official\)](#)
- [Smeal Alumni-to-Alumni Career Support](#) (supported by leadership from Smeal's Alumni Engagement Committee)

We have also partnered with [Experiential Insight](#), digital executive group coaching, and [Jobscan](#), a service that helps our career coaching clients optimize resumes for applicant tracking systems.

Smeal's [Alumni Relations](#) team continues to connect alumni with a myriad of engagement opportunities.

[Penn State Career Services](#) leads career fairs open to students and alumni. They have transitioned to virtual career fairs in light of the pandemic, clearly benefiting alumni far-flung geographically.

Penn State's centralized [Alumni Career Services](#), run by the Penn State Alumni Association, offers:

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• LionLink (PSU networking platform)• Nittany Lion Careers (PSU recruiting platform)• Job Search Tools Webinars• Virtual Office Hours• Nittany Networking Events | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interview Stream• 1:1 Career Coaching• Specialized Webinars• Professional Document Review• Alumni Job Search Tune Up |
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Please note that some services offered by PSU Alumni Career Services require a membership with the Alumni Association. Benefits of Alumni Association membership include acquiring an alumni.psu.edu email and access to [this online library of business resources](#).



Mindset and Self-Clarity: The First Step

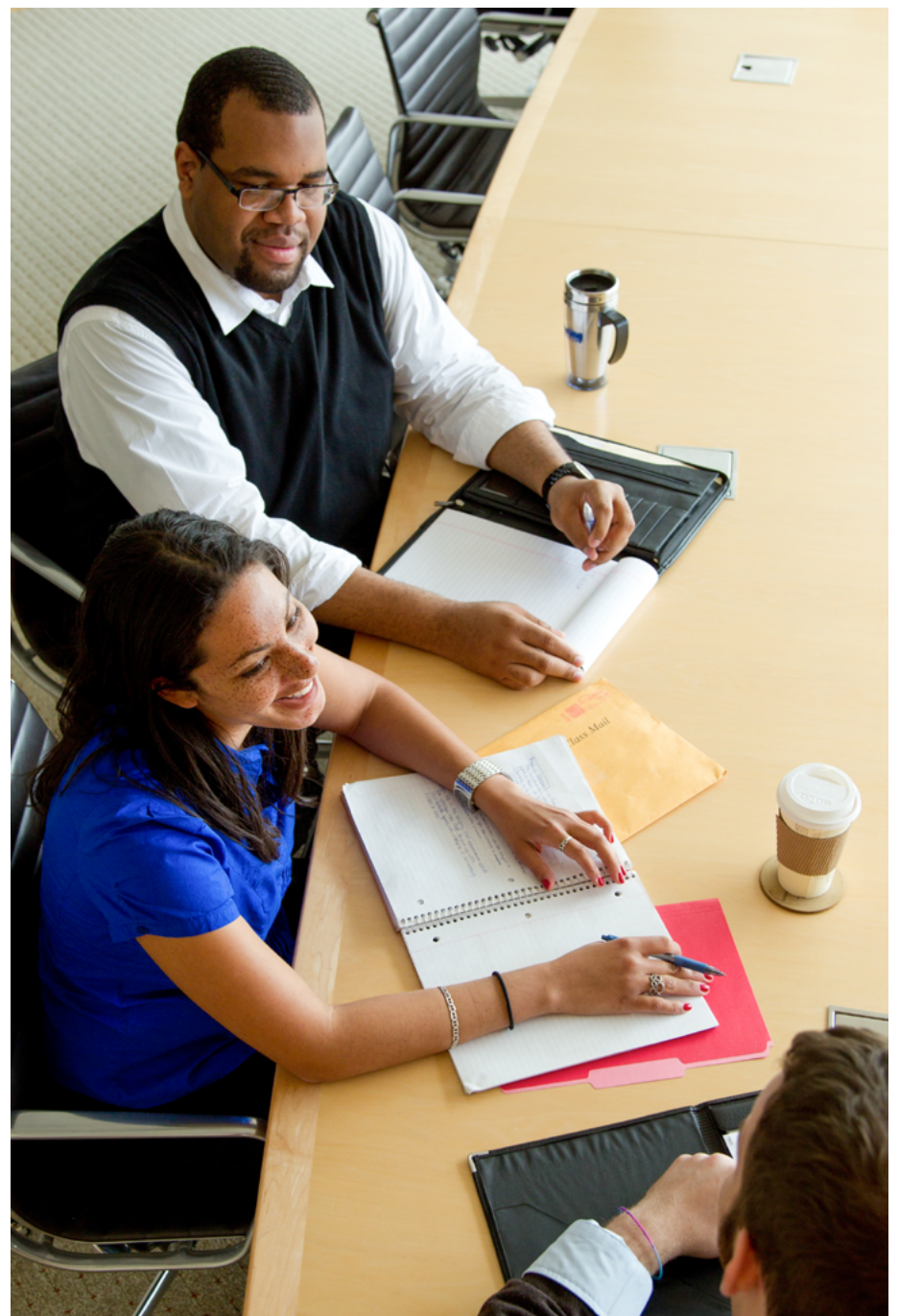
The first step of a career transition entails refreshing yourself on the product you're preparing to sell (you) and bolstering confidence. Knowing yourself well in the context of your job search will help you find the best fit in terms of workplace culture and deployment of your technical expertise. When it comes time to negotiate, you'll also be in a stronger position if you've come to clearly understand and articulate your own value.

Self-reflection, market research, and engaging your inner circle with focused career conversations will help you determine these key components of self-clarity around your transition:

- Ideal work preferences
- Values and motivators
- Knowledge, skills, and attributes
- Unique selling points
- Career story and spin
- Value proposition

A positive, hopeful mindset and dedication to proactivity offers the best weapon in the face of a volatile market. Working with a strengths-based career coach will allow you to identify and rehearse the value you bring potential employers. To further enhance self-clarity and strengthen mindset, we recommend the following action steps:

1. Referencing the Smeal ACS alumni informational interview guide, identify 5-6 people in your occupational area and collect insights while cultivating your professional network.
2. Take [free self-directed interest assessments from CareerOneStop and O*NET](#) that result in occupational recommendations (these sites are also helpful for market research).
3. Take advantage of the [Smeal Alumni-to-Alumni Career Support](#) group on LinkedIn as a virtual job club with give-and-take conversation. Giving back in the process of job searching will have long-lasting benefits.
4. Conduct a [skills gap analysis](#) in light of market research to prioritize skills for development.
5. Copy/paste your LinkedIn profile into [TagCrowd](#) for a word visualization of how you're currently coming across online. This exercise offers a baseline of self-information as you continually make adjustments in line with your aspirational brand.
6. Identify your labor market value with use of these resources:
 - [Payscale](#)- helps determine labor market value, includes a free salary report based on experience, education, and other factors
 - [Paysa](#)- another resource for determining labor market value and salary comparison
 - [SheNegotiates](#)- several free resources on salary negotiation available for download
 - [Educate to Career Salary Calculator Center](#)- salary data analytic tool based on college, location, and other factors



Virtual Continued Education Options

Increasingly, workers are choosing to customize professional learning by undertaking specialty Master's degrees and certificates in lieu of traditional residential degrees. The Smeal College of Business has been at the forefront of curricular innovation in business education, now offering more areas of concentration than any other MBA program (see [this article](#) for a description of how the paradigmatic change occurred). With the pandemic, a shift towards virtual continued education will likely accelerate a trend that has long been recognized.

For individuals, resilience builds with the power of new, relevant learning in adaptation to changing circumstances. Continued education and informal learning will play an instrumental role in recession-era worker empowerment. Here are some solid steps forward:

1. Review Smeal's [professional graduate programs](#) and [World Campus online graduate certificates](#).
2. Browse popular options for a general professional audience:
 - [LinkedIn Learning](#) (wide array of business topics, including use of remote work productivity tools (Zoom, BlueJeans, Webex, Skype, Microsoft Teams, etc.)
 - [Coursera](#)
 - [Google Skillshop](#)
 - [Hootsuite](#)
 - [Skillshare](#)
 - [Udemy](#)
 - [Ted Talks](#) (also check out [25 Most Popular Ted Talks](#))
 - [EdX](#)
 - [MasterClass](#)
3. Check out resources from well-regarded institutions:
 - Ivy league universities currently [offer free courses](#)
 - Executive search firms [BlueSteps](#) and [ExecuNet](#) offer webinars

The pursuit of continued education offers a good talking point for a wise expenditure of time in transition. Unemployed job seekers can positively spin a transition and counter the perception of "skill decay," for example, by explaining how their professional learning directly meets business needs. Employers will be impressed by those who assume value validation projects, meaning relevant projects that have produced results responsive to employer needs.



Research: A Knowledge-is-Power Approach

The successful recession-era job search cannot be conducted in a vacuum. It is necessary to research regional market demand and identify a list of target companies. Knowledge of macroeconomic trends will inform strategy and protect your positive mindset (remember as you develop resilience-- it's not you, it's the economy).

The [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) has the most accurate, up-to-date information on U.S. labor market trends, including fast-growth occupations, education and training, benefits, and salary expectations. States also have their own departments of labor with updated information, such as [Pennsylvania's Department of Labor and Industry](#), which partners with [CareerLink](#).

Decentralized sources of knowledge on this topic can also be helpful, such as Candor's [user-generated graph](#) on the real-time hiring data of companies.

Researching companies is also imperative for nailing your value proposition and concentrating efforts strategically. We recommend identifying 10-20 companies and researching them to record knowledge gained in areas such as mission/values, culture, products/services, projected growth, opportunities, and pain points. What problems can you solve for them?

The following sites for company and occupation reviews have been successfully used by other alumni in their job searches:

- [Vault](#)
- [Owler](#)
- [GuideStar](#)
- [Candid Career](#)
- [Niche](#)

Use job boards strategically to assess key qualifications and skills in demand, but not as a method of application (in today's "hidden market," keep in mind many jobs are never advertised):

- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Indeed](#)
- [Glassdoor](#)
- [CareerBuilder](#)

Additionally, we recommend the following news sources for career and/or business trends:

- [The Muse](#)
- [Forbes](#)
- [Vault](#)
- [Harvard Business Review](#)
- [SmartBrief](#)
- [Harvard Business Review](#)
- [Career Pivot](#)
- [Crunchbase](#)
- [Investopedia](#)
- [Entrepreneur](#)
- [Business News Daily](#)
- [Wall Street Journal](#)
- [Green Biz](#)

Strategy: Targeted Branding, Marketing, and Networking

In short, branding is your “who,” marketing is your “how,” and, in combination with networking, these elements will power your search efforts.

Here are a few high-level tips from the Smeal ACS team:

- **Resumes** should be tactical marketing documents designed to appeal to a particular employer.
- **LinkedIn profiles** should be optimized with the most relevant keywords to increase the likelihood of showing up in recruiters’ search results; they also serve as an expression of your unique value. Typically, recruiters find potential candidates, not the other way around. The only way people can find you is if you’re using the keywords applicable to your role and industry (especially in your headline).
- **Marketing materials** should consistently reflect your target aspiration so that viewers get a clear sense of where you fit in the labor market.
- To avoid the stigmatization of unemployment, emphasize your positive mindset, storyline, and value proposition; also, replace the word “unemployed” with “in transition and looking for new opportunities” during networking conversations. Never lose sight of your value!
- In a recession economy, employers may be struggling with their own growth and bottom-line results need to be made especially clear as part of the candidate’s value proposition. Include relevant, quantified accomplishments as much as possible, considering questions such as:
 - Have you generated revenue?
 - Have you helped your company reduce costs?
 - Did you establish time-saving processes and increase efficiency?

Once you have tailored your marketing materials to target roles and companies, you’ll bring an informed perspective to networking conversations. Rely on your network, an engaging online presence, and a laser-sharp value proposition with specific metrics of success.

When connecting with people during crisis, consider leading with a well-being focus before diving into the purpose for the call or web meeting.

Bottom line: Keep networking and building relationships! Your relationships are more likely to get you a job than your resume.



Execute: Applications and Interviews

Since much of talent acquisition is done online, the next step after optimizing one's LinkedIn profile is to alert recruiters and hiring managers to your availability. This is done in two steps:

1. Signal availability to recruiters on the dashboard that's private to you (see "Show recruiters you're open" in a dashed-line box) by selecting your target location and position titles.
2. Click on the Jobs tab on the profiles of your target companies and click "Create job alert." This keeps you informed of new opportunities and signals interest.

Ideally, job seekers will socialize into new positions at target companies by reaching out to known employees or, more likely, the 2nd- or 3rd-level connections of your connections (this is why LinkedIn becomes such a powerful reference point, a virtual Rolodex in turbulent times!). By developing a rapport with people internal to the company, job seekers are more likely to gain a foothold with their application through an employee referral system or, more informally, positive word of mouth that brings attention to the application.

To officially apply for a job, we still recommend going to the target company's website for application submission. Applying to a job from LinkedIn or through a job board will not differentiate your application as much as being one of a smaller pool of candidates who take the time to go directly to the company's job openings page.

Of note: [Nittany Lion Careers](#) is a single-system recruiting platform for students, alumni, and recruiters that offers a hub of connectivity for employers actively seeking Penn State talent. Also, in the fall of 2019, Smeal ACS coaches prepared [this interview preparation webinar](#).

For virtual interviews, here are our tips for **phone screens**:

- Omit possible distractions (children, pets, doorbells, etc.)
- Prepare success stories to commonly asked behavior-based interview questions
- Prepare visual prompts for your accomplishments aligning with the target job description
- Wear comfortable clothes
- End on a high note to highlight the 'value add' of your candidacy and express enthusiasm for the position

For **video interviews**, the pointers above are still relevant. It is helpful to practice with the technology (ensure proper sound and lighting) and choose professional, non-distracting clothing and background.

Executing the job search can be hard work! We recommend maintaining a healthy work/life balance and continuing to network and apply until you've accepted an offer.

Diversity and Inclusion: Affinity Groups

To appreciate the diversity in our alumni network and protect vulnerable populations (recognizing that recessions can aggravate demographic disparity), we list affinity groups here for additional support.

Disability status:

[The Association of People Supporting Employment First](#)
[abilityJOBS](#)
[CareerOneStop, Workers with Disabilities](#)

Encore careerists:

[Encore.org](#)
[American Association of Retired Persons](#)

LGBTQ:

[Human Rights Campaign](#)
[National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce](#)
[Out and Equal Workplace Advocates](#)

Military service members/veterans:

[Veteran Jobs Mission](#)
[Hire Veterans](#)
[RallyPoint](#)
[USTechVets](#)
[American Corporate Partners](#)

Nationality:

[My Visa Jobs](#)
[Smeal Career Resources](#)

African Americans:

[The Black Employment and Entrepreneur Magazine](#)
[National Black MBA Association, Inc.](#)
[National Association of Black Accountants](#)
[Black Enterprise](#)

Asian Americans:

[Asian Women in Business](#)
[National Association of Asian-American Professionals](#)
[Ascend and Ascend NAAMBA \(National Association of Asian MBAs\)](#)

Hispanics/Latinos:

[iHispano](#)
[Prospanica \(formerly National Society of Hispanic MBAs\)](#)
[Association of Latino Professionals for America \(ALPFA\)](#)

Women:

[FairyGodBoss](#)
[American Business Women's Association](#)
[Financial Women's Association](#)
[American Women's Society of Certified Public Accountants](#)
[Forte Foundation](#)
[Women in Industry and Business](#)
[PA Women Work](#)

Occupational Associations and Resources

Analytics

[Business Analytics](#)- resource for those interested in becoming a business analyst

Entrepreneurship

[U.S. Small Business Administration](#)- cabinet-level federal agency supporting small business owners and entrepreneurs

[National Minority Supplier Development Council](#)- supports certified minority business

Enterprises

[Invent Penn State](#)- commonwealth initiative to further economic development, job creation and career success

[Business Name Generator](#)- for generating short, brandable business names

Finance

[American Institute of Certified Public Accountants](#)- largest member association for accountants

[Association for Financial Professionals](#)- for treasury and finance professionals

[National Association of Personal Financial Advisors](#)- leading association of fee-only financial advisors

[Efinancialcareers](#)- niche job board in finance

Marketing

[American Advertising Federation](#)- oldest national advertising trade association

[American Marketing Association](#)- association for marketing professionals

[Association of National Advertisers](#)- association for marketing and advertising professionals

[MarketingHire](#)- job and general news site for marketers

Supply Chain

[Institute for Supply Management](#)- international non-profit supply management organization with online self-paced learning and certifications: CPSD (Certified Professional in Supplier Diversity) and CPSM (Certified Professional in Supply Management)

[Association for Supply Chain Management](#)- largest nonprofit association for supply chain

[Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals](#)- serving supply chain management and logistics industries

[Inbound Logistics](#)- includes articles, podcasts, newsletters, and company profiles

[Logistics Management](#)- includes news, blogs, webcasts

[Supply Chain Management Review](#)- includes news, blogs, webcasts

[Supply Chain 24/7 Daily](#)- news site, option to sign up for newsletters

[Smeal's CSCR COVID-19 Supply Chain Management Resources](#)- included updates, highlights, resources

Remote Work Support for Flexibility and Care

The global pandemic transformed the in-person workplace into a virtual one almost overnight. Smeal Alumni Career Services is accustomed to the remote work environment because our signature programs are conducted virtually and we have a remote team member in Boston. In spite of this familiarity with remote work, it has still been an adjustment and we can definitely appreciate the stress experienced by those whose value rests on in-person work.

Here are the tools and resources that have been successful for our remote team collaboration:

Zoom: The go-to platform for web-based conferencing, Zoom has brought our team face-to-face and been our longstanding tool for use in career coaching, webinars, and even podcasts. It is also favored by employers, so we support alumni in their use of the platform not just for work, but for the likelihood of experiencing video-based interviews.

Microsoft Office 365 Teams: This communication tool allows us to avoid overloading email inboxes and organize correspondence topically in threads, plus enjoy chat features for levity. Because our institution has purchased Microsoft Office for business, Teams integrates seamlessly with other technical aspects of our work, such as use of Outlook. We're not trying to sell the service, though! Slack has been adopted to meet the same purpose and has also experienced widespread popularity.

LinkedIn: The largest professional networking platform in the world has been our primary bridge for public outreach in addition to an email listserv. Engagement on the general feed is recommended, but tailoring content to particular demographics has also been useful by establishing LinkedIn Groups and engaging within them. One advantage of Groups is that you can in-mail members (send them private messages) without using up your in-mail messages to people outside your network allotted by LinkedIn.

Overall, experience with the remote technology used by target employers will definitely give candidates an edge! Recruiters and hiring managers are seeking people who can thrive in the virtual environment.

Generally, we recommend that those new to remote work:

- create a dedicated workspace
- establish a routine, work plan, and healthy boundaries
- take breaks to reset and counter 'screen fatigue'
- stay in communication; be proactive and responsive
- gain and nurture social support

You're not defined by your employment status and you'll bring your best self to the process if you take good care.

Recession Resilience Toolkit: A Checklist of Essentials

Resilience is less about bouncing back to your old self than bringing new meaning to your personal and professional selves through skill-building, relationship-building, and research. Pausing to reflect on the possibilities is well worth your time.

Pragmatically, the 20 tools that energize a successful transition include:

- ☐ Portfolio of work or evidence of relevant success
- ☐ Professional email address
- ☐ Professional email signature
- ☐ Optimized LinkedIn profile with customized URL
- ☐ Testimonials and endorsements for trust and credibility
- ☐ 20+ success stories
- ☐ List of 10-20 target companies
- ☐ Target job descriptions
- ☐ Resume customized for each target job with quantified accomplishments
- ☐ Good story to spin the transition
- ☐ Short pitch to communicate your value
- ☐ List of relevant networking contacts (use [Hunter.io](https://hunter.io) to find people’s email addresses)
- ☐ List of relevant recruiters
- ☐ Business cards
- ☐ Template for networking outreach
- ☐ Template for follow-up thank-you
- ☐ System for managing transition-related information
- ☐ Good calendar system (e.g., Outlook, Google calendar)
- ☐ Extended pitch to communicate your value
- ☐ Access to remote technology (Zoom) for interview practice

In closing, the following graphic may also help to picture the career transition and reflect on where you’re currently at in the process with the assistance of a career coach:

