Navigating Identity in the Job Search

The job search process is an exciting and stressful time as you navigate who you are and the kinds of opportunities you are seeking, while managing how you will be perceived by others in your search. Many students have questions about how to navigate aspects of their identity during this process. This handout is designed to empower you with basic information and resources to help you proceed. We also invite you to schedule an individual appointment to talk with a career counselor for individual support specific to your unique questions and needs.

Disclosure

Whether you want or need to disclose aspects of your identity, there are many strategies to consider.

What to disclose
Aspects of your identity that you may be disclosing include: ability status and accommodation needs, gender identity or expression, racial or ethnic background, citizenship status, criminal record, veteran status, religion/religious affiliation, family status, and more.

Timing
In most cases, there is no perfect timing of when and how to disclose aspects of your identity. There are pros and cons to each. Options for when to disclose include:

- Before you apply (ex. during networking meetings or through informal contact with professionals affiliated with the organization)
- In your resume or cover letter
- When an employer calls to invite you for an interview
- During the interview itself
- After the interview and before receiving the job offer
- After the interview and after receiving the job offer
- After you start in your new position
- On the job after a job-related problem or conflict arises

Increasing your confidence with disclosure
Disclosing sensitive or complex aspects of your identity can be hard, but there are steps you can take to increase your confidence and comfort with doing so.

- Be informed with research to help you target your job search to organizations that are more likely to be welcoming and affirming of your situation and needs.
- Practice your disclosure language with a trusted mentor or career counselor.
- Make a list of the toughest questions you may receive and make a plan in advance for how you might address them if they come up.
- Educate yourself about the laws and legal environment related to your disclosure (see resource list below). Being armed with information can help you know what to anticipate, how to respond, and how to advocate for yourself well.
- Reflect upon and be ready to share with employers how your identities add value to their organization and the position you are interested in
- Get support from mentors, trusted friends or family, career counselors, mental health therapists, and others. You do not have to go through this alone!

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer. This document is available in alternative formats. Contact CLA Career Services for assistance.
Illegal Interview Questions

In the United States, it is illegal for employers to ask you questions about your marital status, if you have children or are expecting a child, religious practices, political affiliation, race or nationality, sexual orientation, age, whether you have a disability, your gender, and whether or not you have been arrested.

These questions are illegal because information that could be shared in a candidate’s response may be used to discriminate against them. If you are asked an illegal question, you do not need to answer it. Instead turn the focus back on your qualifications for the position. For example, if you were asked, “What are your family obligations?” you could respond with something like, “I am confident I can meet the demands of this position because of my ability to...” For more information, read the article Improper Interview Questions and How to Handle Them.

How to Research Organizations and Assess Cultural Fit

• Talk to family, friends, advisors, career counselors, community leaders, and/or instructors and ask if they know any professionals who share your identity or identities with whom you could speak to get their perspective about working for organizations in which you have an interest.
• Check organizations’ websites, linkedin.com, glassdoor.com, and the company’s social media to see if the organization includes the following items:
  • A statement and or resources related to diversity and inclusion
  • Non-discrimination policies and procedures that support diversity
  • LGBTQ-friendly benefits like trans inclusive health insurance and LGBTQ friendly parental leave
  • Affinity or resource groups for different populations
  • Gender-neutral bathrooms
  • Trainings around diversity and inclusion for employees
  • Disability resources
• Check out organizational ratings:
  • Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index and Best Places to Work
  • Military Times’ Best for Vets Companies
  • DiversityInc’s top 50 Companies for Diversity
  • DiversityInc’s top 10 Companies for People with Disabilities
• Check job boards and LinkedIn groups that share your identity (identities):
  • OUT for Work: Internship and Job Board - their programs, resources and services provide assistance to students in the cultivation and enhancement of skills to explore career options, master search techniques and strategies, and research employment opportunities.
  • TJobBank - employment site specifically designed to bring inclusive employers together with transgender candidates.
  • Diversity Working - a job search engine that offers 550,000 active and non-replicated diversity jobs.
  • LGBT CareerLink - Out & Equal Workplace Advocate’s job search and employment networking website.
  • Getting Hired - a job search site for people with disabilities.
  • Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) - a recruitment and referral program that connects federal sector employers nationwide with highly motivated college students and recent graduates with disabilities who are eager to prove their abilities in the workplace through summer or permanent jobs.
  • Recruitmilitary.com - a full-service military-to-civilian recruiting firm. Veteran owned and operated with over 140,000 jobs in their exclusive database of openings.
  • Transition Assistance Online - a comprehensive career website for job searching, career tools, finding military-friendly companies, job fairs, and transitions guidance for veterans.
Navigating Identity in the Job Search, cont..

Check job boards and LinkedIn groups that share your identity (identities), continued:
  - **Federal Jobs for Military Veterans** - Federal employment information for veterans, transitioning service members, their families, federal HR professionals and hiring managers.
  - LinkedIn Groups: [GLBT Professionals (and Friends)], [Veterans Hired], [Professionals with Disabilities] - LinkedIn groups with job postings & advice.

Ask questions in the interview to help you assess fit, such as:
  - How would you describe the culture at this organization? In this department?
  - What kind of affinity groups, if any, does this organization have?
  - What kind of training and professional development is provided or encouraged in this organization? In this department?
  - What values does this department have and how do you see these values being upheld?

FAQs

Here are some frequently asked questions and common concerns that you might want to consider and prepare for:

1. How do I disclose my identities in my job search?
2. I’m worried my appearance may raise concerns to prospective employers (ex. hair color/style, piercings, tattoos, religious attire, gender expression, etc.). How do I decide whether to change my appearance for an upcoming interview?
3. Should I list a certain organization on my resume that may “out” me (i.e. religious groups, political affiliations, LGBTQ organizations, etc.)?
4. What should I do if I’m asked an illegal question during an interview? (avoid, redirect by asking them to clarify the question and how it relates to the position, or notify them they’ve asked an illegal question)
5. I do not shake hands for cultural reasons. What should I do at my interview?
6. How do I identify whether a company or organization will be a good fit for me?
7. I know I will need accommodations during my interview or on the job. How do I address this?
8. I’m worried my background check may raise concerns. What should I do?
9. How do I address citizenship status if I am unable to legally work in this country? (undocumented or international students)
10. How do I answer the question, “do you need a sponsor to work in the U.S.?”
11. What are the legal protections for transgender individuals in the workplace in Minnesota?
12. How can I research what health coverage benefits are available to me through a prospective employer?
13. I have a gap on my resume because of a leave of absence for a mental health crisis. How can I manage this in my job search or address the impact to my GPA for graduate school?
14. Where can I get help knowing how to best highlight my military service as being relevant to a position? (refer to [http://career.umn.edu/veteran.html](http://career.umn.edu/veteran.html))
15. I got a job offer and have heard that women often make less than men in the U.S. How do I make sure I am paid fairly? (refer to guide on salary negotiation, how to research salaries, etc. - salary negotiation online workshop)
16. I am experiencing some changes in my family structure (i.e. marriage, pregnancy, children, adoption, death of family member, changes in primary care status, etc.), and I am worried about how this could impact employer perceptions of my ability to effectively do my job. How do I navigate this?

All of these questions are valid, and a [CLA Career Counselor](mailto:clacareer@umn.edu) can help you address them and direct you to additional helpful resources. You may also want to consult mentors in the communities with whom you identify.
Resources for Further Support

Campus resources

- Meet with a CLA Career Counselor
- Career Resources for Diverse Populations
- Disability Resource Center - Career Resources
- Equal Opportunity Affirmative Action
- Gender and Sexuality Center for Queer and Trans Life
- Women’s Center
- Multicultural Center for Academic Excellence
- University Veterans Services
- University Student Legal Service
- International Student and Scholar Services
- Student Counseling Services
- Student-Parent Help Center

Off-campus resources

- Lambda Legal - a nonprofit legal organization that offers many resources related to workplace rights and employment laws affecting LGBT people, including state-by-state resources and a legal help desk you can contact with your legal questions.
- Coming Out at Work - a resource from the Human Rights Campaign about coming out at work, including a list of questions to ask employers.
- Transgender Law - a non-profit organization that brings experts and advocates together to work on law and policy initiatives designed to advance transgender equality.
- Immigration Advocates - a collaborative effort of leading immigrants’ rights organizations that promotes more effective and efficient communication, collaboration, and services among immigration advocates and organizations by providing free, easily accessible and comprehensive online resources and tools.
- Navigate MN - Immigration and Education Justice resources.
- Job Accommodation Network - The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is the leading source of free, expert, and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues.
- Negotiation and the Gender Divide - Women Don’t Ask, book and resource guide
- MAP Project - an overview of current state laws and locality ordinances on employment discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.
- U.S. Department of Labor--Veterans - an overview of veteran employment laws.
- LGBTQ Professional and Student Associations - a comprehensive list of LGBT professional and student associations from the Human Rights Campaign.

Links to all of the resources mentioned in this document can be found in the online PDF version of this guide: cla.umn.edu/career-guides