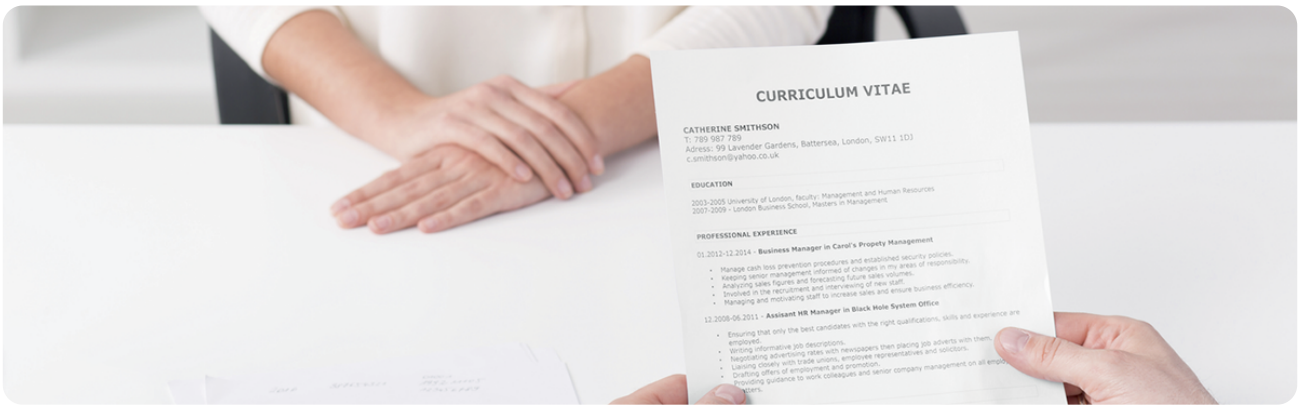
Science Societies

Building a C.V. during grad school

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The C.V.—short for *curriculum vitae*, or "course of life"—is a detailed outline of an academic career. It is part resume, part biography and should outline all of your career-related experiences and achievements. Varying slightly from the traditional business resume, the C.V. is often requested by future employers, scholarship selection committees, and funding agencies, especially (but not exclusively) in academia. But how do you go about building a C.V. during grad school? Whether you are just getting started with a blank document or hoping to freshen—or

strengthen—your existing C.V. to send off for scholarship or job applications, we have some ideas to help you out.

Tailor Your Experiences

Graduate school exposes you to a wealth of opportunities to prepare you for your future career. You will develop skills specific to your research, but there are other qualities that many employers will also be looking for, like communication, teaching, fundraising, and leadership skills. If you have an ideal career path already in mind, try to find experiences that will prepare you for that particular job. For example, if you aim to work in Extension and conduct research, you might want to explore outreach and grant writing. If you want to work in private industry, perhaps teaching experience isn't as necessary, so you might not pursue those avenues as thoroughly. Consulting your adviser and mentors about your career aspirations will help them to help you cultivate experiences to explore these career interests further. If you are unsure about your next step after graduate school, now is the time to dabble in new adventures and find out what you like—and more importantly, what you don't!

Publish

Publications are the currency of academia and are valuable in private industry as well. Most grad students are expected to publish the results of their thesis or dissertation research in peer-reviewed publications. Get a head start by prepping your thesis literature review and methods sections while you run the experiment; then all you have to do is add in your results and discussion after you finish your analyses. This will expedite getting your manuscripts submitted when you move on to your next position—and before you forget all the minute, but critical, details.

If you need more publications beyond your primary research, there are plenty of options to get creative. You could team up with co-authors to write a literature review on a topic in your field, delve into an adviser-approved side project, mentor undergrad researchers, or ask your adviser if they have any unpublished data from past projects that you could write up and submit. Also, find collaborators from other departments or even other universities and consider publishing a single-year study together. Be sure to check whether your discipline's journals allow graduate students to review manuscripts—this can be valuable experience, helps give back to the group who reviews your papers, and can help you become a better writer.

It can also be beneficial to explore less traditional publication opportunities. If your university has an Extension program, you could offer to update old fact sheets or even write a new one if you have an area of expertise that hasn't been covered yet. You can also write about your research in trade journals for stakeholders, or you could look into opportunities to write op-ed or research pieces for your professional society's journals.

Explore Teaching and Outreach Opportunities

Many grad students are tasked with being a teaching assistant during their program, giving departmental seminars, and/or doing some sort of outreach communications with the public regarding your research (i.e., field days, etc.). Any type of instructional opportunity can be directly translated into improving your teaching experience. Take advantage of chances to guest lecture, assist in course laboratory sections, and develop course material. In addition, you might also present scientific talks at professional society meetings like the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA International Annual Meeting. While these presentations are geared toward academics and researchers, the structured talks provide excellent experience for communicating science.

If outreach to industry stakeholders and the public is important for your future career, seek out more opportunities to speak to those groups. In addition to traditional academic outreach programs like field days, you might also explore unconventional outreach opportunities. Programs like Skype A Scientist and Letters to a Pre-Scientist are great ways to engage with kids and get them—and you—excited about your research. See if you can give a talk at your local nature center, makerspace, or community garden, so the general public can learn more broadly about your research area.

Apply for Grants, Fellowships, and Scholarships

If your adviser is applying for any upcoming grants related to your research, ask if there's anything you can do to be included in the process and added as a co-principal investigator for the project. This will give you the opportunity to learn how to develop research budgets, timelines, and proposals in addition to receiving feedback on grant writing. Future employers value individuals who have been active and successful at receiving internal and external funding for their research. And even if you aren't awarded the grant, still add to your C.V. that you wrote and applied for it. For grad students and early career members, just showing you have experience writing grants can be a huge asset, and collaborating on grants can help you develop new research skills that may help you further along in your scientific journey.

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anything you can do to be included in the process and added as a co-principal investigator for the project. ”

Similarly, apply for any fellowships and scholarships that you qualify for from your department, college, university, or professional societies. It can show future employers that others value your accomplishments and are willing to invest in you, which is, after all, the goal of a job hunt.

Volunteer

Volunteering your time is a valuable component of a C.V. We know time is tight. You’re busy, and the last thing you want to do is add something else to your plate, but volunteering can be a great way to broaden your network and give back to your community while taking a step back from your research. Serving on committees, moderating sessions at meetings, or judging undergraduate presentations or grant proposals can be a good way to get involved and develop relationships in your department, college, university, or professional society. But there are also tangible opportunities within your local community to explore. See if your community has a crop-gleaning program or community garden, put in a few shifts at the campus food pantry, assist a local STEM advocacy group, help plant some trees at the new restoration site in town—find something that will allow you to take a break from your research while also giving back. You’ll feel better, your community will benefit, and you might just learn some skills that will be beneficial to your future career!

Learn to Say ‘No’

As a grad student, it can be tempting to accept all offers that come your way. This can result in a constant cycle of saying "yes." After all, you want to build your C.V., and what better way than to agree to every opportunity. But our best advice to fellow grad students is to learn how and when to say "no." These can be tricky waters to navigate since much is expected out of you as a trainee. Understand what your responsibilities are as a graduate student, prioritize those activities, and then evaluate and determine what extra activities you would like to take on to expand your desired experiences. Overloading your plate can and will lead to mental and physical burnout (trust us, we've both been there) and cause you to lose focus of your goals. It is always better to do one or two things really well than five or six things poorly.

Build the C.V.

There's no one-size-fits-all format for building your C.V., but there are some general sections we both have in ours:



If outreach to industry stakeholders and the public is important for your future career, seek out more opportunities to speak to those groups. Photo by Kyle Spradley | © 2014 – Curators of the University of Missouri.

- Contact info—a header with your full name, professional mailing address and email, and any additional professional contact info like work phone numbers, social media, websites, and ORCiD or Google Scholar links.
- Education—universities, attendance dates, degrees, and thesis/dissertation topics or summaries.
- Professional Experience—other professional jobs, internships, consulting projects, and research or teaching assistantships. You might include specific duties here as

well as course descriptions, enrollment numbers, and format (lab, lecture, or online) for classes taught.

- Publications—we divide ours into Peer-Reviewed or Trade/Technical. Include DOI links if available. If you aren't the lead author, you might also add a note of your specific duties related to that publication.
- Grants—make sure to note the funding agency, whether it was funded, and the amount requested and awarded for each project.
- Presentations—this can be divided into national, regional, and local, or you might separate into invited and submitted talks. Include the date, title of the presentation, what meeting or group you presented to, the format (poster, seminar, webinar, etc.), and location. If you know the number of audience members, you might add that info too.
- Awards—list any fellowships, scholarships, or awards, along with dates.
- Service/Volunteerism—things like committee service (including dates, position on the committee, and any projects or achievements during your time), journals you've reviewed for, and other volunteer activities.
- Memberships—list the society and your tenure of membership.

Of course, if you have other items that don't quite fit in with these headers, you can always add those in as well. For example, Paige has a section on Mass Media where she lists links to newspaper articles about her research, podcast appearances, and YouTube videos; Travis has an Additional Activities section where he has listed his time as an invited reviewer for a textbook and tours that he has given to high school groups visiting university research facilities.

Now that you have ideas on what opportunities to pursue, get started! We recommend adding items as you go, so you don't forget anything that strengthens your C.V. If you aren't sure if something should be included, add it. You can always take it off later, if

needed, when tailoring your C.V. to a specific job.

Final Thoughts

We are not experts here. We don't have massive C.V.'s that have been curated with decades of experience. To the contrary, we have only been involved with academic research for a few years, and our experiences and subsequent C.V. development have been largely influenced by our advisers' guidance. Luckily, that guidance has aided us in developing C.V.'s that have put us in a strong position to achieve our career goals. As mentioned earlier, most advisers are happy to help tailor graduate school experiences to your career goals, especially if those overlap with their areas of expertise and professional networks. Your unique journey is worthy of documenting in your C.V. and not only tells your story, but helps communicate that important message to current and future colleagues!

Dig deeper

Gurleen Kaur, Erick Begitschke, How to Prepare Applications for Awards/Scholarships as a Student, CSA News, 10.1002/csan.20998, **68**, 4, (33-36), (2023).

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