



Agricultural and Applied Economics (A A E) 723

Professional Development for Applied Economists

1. Administrative Details

Credits:	1
Instructional mode:	In-person
Time/location:	Wednesdays, 9am – 10am / B30 Taylor Hall
Semester:	Fall 2025
Duration:	15 weeks
Prerequisites:	AAE 721
Instructor:	Jordan van Rijn, PhD
E-mail:	vanrijn@wisc.edu
Office:	318 Taylor Hall
Office hours:	Tuesdays 2pm–3pm & Wednesdays 10:30am–11:30am
Class website:	

Please contact me by e-mail if you have any questions or concerns. I commit to responding to e-mails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on weekends/Holidays. I also encourage you to stop by my office hours in person or via Zoom.

2. Course description

A career in economic analysis requires skills that go beyond standard technical economics training. The development of a broad set of communication and professional skills is critical for success. Examples of the latter include career planning and management, expertise packaging and marketing, networking capabilities, leadership development, and other ‘soft’ skills that distinguish successful professionals. This course focuses on professional development for applied economists in sequential contexts. Examples include understanding and preparing for the professional economist job market; preparing and packaging job search materials; technical and non-technical interactions with potential employers and clients; understanding different career paths within economics; examining professional ethics and norms; and gaining exposure to trends in professional development. Students will develop career skills by completing stand-alone activities, and by coordinating soft skill development tasks.

3. Learning Objectives & Outcomes

Students will learn the importance of acquiring a broad set of professional skills as a complement to their technical training. They will develop several specific skills necessary for early career success, including understanding different career paths for applied economists, construction of a job market package, honing interview skills, and identifying and applying for jobs. More generally, students will learn how the ‘doing’ of applied economics involves combining technical analysis with a wide range of interpersonal and communication activities. These goals will lead to the following learning outcomes:

- 1) Students will be able to *summarize* different career paths for applied economists.
- 2) Students will *develop* the components of a job market package and *produce* a suite of written materials, including a resume, curriculum vitae and online webpage.
- 3) Students will learn to *identify and apply* for specific jobs, including writing targeted cover letters.
- 4) Students will *organize and apply* strategies for in-person interviewing by participating in practice interviews.

4. Materials

- *Required:* [What Color is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers](#) by Richard Bolles
- *Required:* [80,000 Hours: Find a Fulfilling Career That Does Good](#) by Benjamin Todd. (You can get this book for free at this website: <https://80000hours.org/book/>). I have also added a PDF version of the book in Canvas.

5. Grading

The distribution of points for your final grade in this course is as follows:

Resume and CV	25%
Online professional profile	15%
Job Summary	10%
Cover Letter or Personal Statement	25%
Mock interview	25%

Grades will be allocated as follows:

A	94% - 100%
AB	87% - 93%
B	80% - 86%
BC	74% - 79%
C	68% - 73%
D	60% - 67%
F	< 60%

6. Assignments

6.1 Resume and Curriculum Vitae

Fundamental to any job search is the resume and curriculum vitae (CV). Students will prepare a brief two-page resume and a 3-5-page CV. Your resume should include at least your educational background, professional experience, volunteer/other experience, skills, languages and a header with your name and contact information. Your CV should include all of the above as well as any publications, awards, teaching experience, grants or fellowships, and more detailed information regarding your educational background (such as thesis or dissertation topic, advisor, major fields of study, etc.).

You will submit a draft resume and CV by **October 8th**. I will provide feedback and edits, and you will update the resume and CV and turn in a final version on **December 10th**.

6.2 Linked In or Other Professional Website

In today's job market there is a very good probability that your potential employer will search your name online. It is important for you to have a professional website. For this assignment, you will create *either* a [Linked In](#) page or other professional website (such as a [Google Site](#)). Either way, your online site should include at least the following: professional headshot, overview/summary, employment history with details for each position, educational history, skills, other/volunteer experience. If it is a Google Site, you should also link to or upload your resume or CV.

This is due by **November 5th**.

6.3 Identify a Job & Write a Cover Letter

In this class you will gain experience in searching for an “ideal” job that fits with your skills, interests and experience. Then, you will practice applying for this job by writing a cover letter and interviewing for it.

First, you will identify a job by searching through job listings online. You can try general career sites such as [Indeed](#), [Monster](#) or [Glassdoor](#), or sites that are dedicated to careers in economics, such as [NABE's career site](#), [Econ-Jobs](#) or [Inomics' job site](#). There is also a job board by [80,000 Hours](#) for jobs that focus on solving global problems: <https://80000hours.org/job-board/>.

Next, you will write a 2-3 paragraph summary of the job and why it is a good fit for you. Include reasons why you would enjoy this job, how your background, experience and education meet the requirements of the posting, and any particular skills or expertise that might help you stand out from other candidates. Be sure to reference your list of priorities and why this is a “dream job” for you (e.g., culture, meaning, fit, location, compensation, work-life balance, etc.). Please include the link to the job posting. This will be due by **October 1st**.

Finally, you will write a 1-2-page cover letter for this particular position. The cover letter should highlight your reasons for being interested in the position, and how your education, experience and skills meet the requirements of the job. Also include any particular skills, expertise or personal anecdotes that might make you stand out from other applicants. This will be due by **October 15th**.

Note: If you are interested in applying for PhD programs instead of a professional job, you can provide a website for your preferred PhD program and a personal statement instead of a cover letter. Your summary can be about the PhD program instead of a particular job. However, you will also want to think about your career after the PhD and why that position is a good fit for you.

6.4 Practice Job Interview

A final critical skill that you will develop is the ability to prepare for and interview for a job. Typically, potential employers will interview at least 3-5 candidates for a job, and as many as 10-15. There are often at least two stages to the interview process, including initial interviews (often by phone), and more in-depth in person interviews (often with skills assessments). This is your opportunity to practice your soft skills, such as social skills, interpersonal skills and communication. Unfortunately, many



great candidates often do not get hired because they do not do well in the interview, for various reasons.

You will each meet with me one-on-one for a 15-20-minute practice interview. The interview will be for the job (or PhD program) you identified in your cover letter (or personal statement). Interviews will be held during our regular class time from **October 8th to December 3rd** (in Taylor Hall room 318). Please sign up for a time slot using this [link](#), and be sure to include a link to the job position or PhD program you will be applying for.

I strongly recommend preparing for the interview, such as by thinking up answers to potential interview questions, researching the company you are applying to, and preparing to answer questions about your experience, interests and career goals. You may also want to practice with a friend or colleague before the mock interview with the instructor.

Late Assignments: For assignments that require an uploaded document in Canvas, you may turn them in past the deadline, but I will deduct 10% of the total grade for each day that they are turned in past the deadline for up to three days. After that, you will receive a zero on the assignment. If you do not show up for the practice job interview, you will be deducted 20% of the assignment's grade and must reschedule it as soon as possible. However, please let me know if you have any extenuating circumstances—especially if you are ill or have a health or family emergency—and I will do my best to accommodate your situation.

7. Course Outline

Date	Activity	Assignment Due Dates	Readings
Sept. 3 rd	Introduction / Syllabus Review / Econ Job Market		Todd Chs. 1 - 3
Sept. 10 th	Choosing a Career / Career Paths in Economics		Todd Chs. 4 - 6
Sept. 17 th	Searching for Jobs / Resume & CV Writing		Bolles Chs. 1 - 3
Sept. 24 th	Cover Letters / Interviews / Salary Negotiation		Bolles Ch. 4, 6
Oct. 1 st	Speaker: Alumni Panel	Job Summary	Bolles Chs. 7 - 8 / UC Davis Career Site
Oct. 8 th	One-on-one Mock Job Interviews	Draft Resume & CV	
Oct. 15 th	One-on-one Mock Job Interviews	Cover Letter	
Oct. 22 nd	One-on-one Mock Job Interviews		
Nov. 5 th	One-on-one Mock Job Interviews	Professional Website	
Nov. 12 th	One-on-one Mock Job Interviews		
Nov. 19 th	One-on-one Mock Job Interviews		
Nov. 26 th	One-on-one Mock Job Interviews		
Dec. 3 rd	One-on-one Mock Job Interviews	Final Resume & CV	

8. Econ Job Sites & Other Resources

1. [AEA Jobs Listing](#)
2. [NABE Jobs](#)
3. [Econ Job Market](#)
4. [UW Economics Career Development Office](#)
5. [American Economic Association Careers in Economics Site](#)
6. [UC Davis Internship and Career Center](#)
7. [80,000 Hours Job Board](#)

9. Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in



disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/.

10. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform me of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with the you or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. <http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php>

11. Diversity & Inclusion

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world. <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>