



Making Break Professionally Meaningful

Top career development strategies for winter break, spring break, or summer break.

1. **Get major-specific experience, if possible.** See the CSE [Get Experience guide](#) for more information.
Due to economic changes, lack of individual qualifications, or other factors out of one's control, students may have a hard time finding summer opportunities to use and develop skills related to their major. If this is the case for you, don't panic! Do what you can and make purposeful choices about the things you can control.
2. **Identify your professional interests and goals** through introspection and career exploration (See *Conduct Career Exploration*). What are your strengths? What do you enjoy working on? What are you curious about? What are you looking for in a career? A deep analysis of your goals and interests now will help guide your job search in the future.
 - a. To learn about yourself, CSE Career Services offers access to PathwayU an assessment that can help you explore your interests, values, workplace preferences and personality. [Schedule an appointment](#) to get started.
3. **Conduct [career exploration](#)** so you know what positions to look for during the next campus recruiting cycle (early fall & spring semesters around the Career Fairs) or whenever you start your next job search.
 - a. Review our [What Can I Do with a Major In](#) guides for employment outlooks and alumni interviews.
 - b. Explore the [CSE department websites](#) to uncover cutting-edge research topics, events, and more.
 - c. Connect with professionals through networking and [informational interviews](#). Read *CSE Student News* emails and use Handshake's *Events* to find employer networking events.
 - d. Read books or articles, listen to podcasts, or follow social media related to industries/topics of interest.
4. **Develop transferable skills through "non-professional" work** and volunteer experiences such as customer service at a retail store, stocking inventory at a warehouse, or helping out at a food pantry. *Transferable* skills (e.g. communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership) are among the top skills employers seek. Any type of work (paid or not) can allow you to build transferable skills that directly apply to your science/engineering career.
5. **Update your resume and LinkedIn profile** so you're prepared for your next job search. Consider how you developed or used transferable skills in your past and current experiences. Evaluate how your resume describes your transferable skills and see "skills statement" examples in our [undergraduate](#) and [graduate](#) resume guides.
6. **Build professional skills**, both technical and transferable. Start by identifying gaps in your current skill set by reading job descriptions for positions you're interested in and reflecting on what you may have learned from career exploration and informational interviews. Common "skill gaps" include programming languages, methodologies, techniques, and understanding of current research topics.
 - a. Find resources to fill your skill gaps such as webinars, articles, lectures, and online courses:
 - i. [Coursera](#) (free) is a great learning platform
 - ii. Resources listed on [department websites](#)
 - iii. Digital academic papers (free through [the U of M libraries](#)) about topics you're interested in
 - b. Learn a foreign language with apps like [Duolingo](#)
 - c. Practice your growing skills through personal projects - be creative!
 - d. Consider a [pre-internship](#), [externship](#), [projects](#), and [micro internship](#)
7. **Consider short-term coursework** such as a summer class or a short-term study abroad. Talk to [your Academic Advisor](#), the [CSE Study Abroad program](#), or the [U of M Learning Abroad Center](#) to explore year-round options.