

Northwestern Career Advancement

Investment Banking Four Year Career Plan

First Year - If the area of investment banking is a strong career consideration, use your first year to learn and explore the industry, as well as even gain experience.

ASSESS

- Reflect on which activities and experiences you've enjoyed in the past and why.
- Identify your interests, values, and skills by taking the career and personality assessment offered at NCA.
- Consider the alignment between your skills, values and interests, and a career in investment banking.

EXPLORE

- Get involved in student organizations where you can explore your interests and build your skill set through different committees or positions (i.e. Investment Banking Club, Investment Management Club, Minority Business Association, Women in Business).
- Enroll in courses that will allow you to gain relevant knowledge and skills.
- Attend campus events sponsored by NCA, academic departments, and/or student organizations to explore the finance industry and investment banking roles.
- Speak with upperclassmen you know pursuing careers in investment banking to better understand the industry, position functions, and preparation.
- Build your awareness of markets and financial news using resources like: The Wall Street Journal, Morning Brew, Finimize.

DECIDE

- Consider opportunities (research, internships, part-time work) that will introduce you to a professional work setting and help you develop new skills. Be open to experiences outside of investment banking as they may help you develop skills relevant to your pursuits.
- Attend NCA events sponsored by employers in the financial service/investment banking industry.

ACT

- Convert your high school resume into a professional document; enhance your document using VMock and meeting with a career adviser.
- Utilize Northwestern Network Mentorship Program to find a mentor with a career in investment banking.
- Conduct informational interviews with Northwestern alumni, industry experts, and/or personal contacts.
- Enhance your Excel/spreadsheet skills through training, events, and/or hands-on experience.
- Actively use Handshake to create a public profile, indicate your career interests, review postings and explore events (in order to receive the NCA Finance Newsletter, be sure to select "Financial Services" as one of your career interests).
- Attend early identification programs sponsored by investment banks.
- Pursue opportunities (i.e., internships, research) using targeted resumes and cover letters.

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Sophomore Year - For those students pursuing investment banking, the sophomore year is focused on recruitment. You can expect to be pursuing two searches simultaneously, one for your sophomore year summer and also your junior year summer.

ASSESS

- Reflect on your first year of college, specifically on what you learned about yourself and your skills, interests, and values.
- Evaluate how your skills and interests align with a career in investment banking.
- Begin to develop a professional introduction and career narrative (the story you want others to know about your interest and pursuit of a career in investment banking).

EXPLORE

- Use LinkedIn and OurNorthwestern to view profiles of alumni who studied your major and work in investment banking.
- Conduct a high volume of informational interviews with alumni, industry professionals, and personal contacts.
- Enhance your leadership experience within your student organizations by chairing a committee, initiating a project or managing a budget.
- Build your awareness of markets and financial news that impact industries/divisions of interest to you via resources like: The Wall Street Journal, Morning Brew, Finimize.
- Review employer career pages to explore company missions and read about position functions. Be able to differentiate between firm specialities and organizational structure, as well as internship program defining characteristics.
- If coming from an underrepresented background, consider early-identification programs focused on diversity. Some of these applications can begin in Fall and early Winter quarter.

DECIDE

- Meet with a career adviser to discuss a strategy for gaining related experience.
- Declare an academic major(s), minor(s), and certificate program(s); meet with University Academic Advising if you are considering an interschool transfer.
- Prioritize maintaining a strong academic record, including course selections and GPA.
- Determine opportunities, during academic year and summer, to pursue and develop a strategic approach.

ACT

- Create a recruitment strategy that includes time for exploration and networking in advance of applications opening. Tip: Search when a company's application was posted the year before, and this will help you manage how long you have to prepare.
- Update your resume, Handshake account and LinkedIn profile to reflect your experiences and impact.
- Create a career profile with the firms you are interested in, in order to stay-up-to-date with recruiting timelines and events.
- Prepare and practice for various types of interviews (i.e. technical) and formats (phone, virtual, in-person) during the summer and fall quarters in preparation for recruitment.
- Target alumni that have graduated within the last 3 years for your networking calls/engagement, it is important that you engage with someone within the NU recruiting team.
- Participate in employer-hosted events throughout the year. Info sessions or coffee chats can take place in the fall, winter or spring.
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- Apply for opportunities using targeted resumes and cover letters. When searching for roles on Handshake, apply filters on the Jobs page in order to help narrow down your search for investment banking opportunities.
- Consider your options and finalize your plans for gaining experience during the academic term and summer.

Junior Year/Senior Year - The Junior Year internship in investment banking serves as a strong and direct pipeline to full-time opportunities.

ASSESS

- Reflect on your experiences (academic, organization, internships) and what you learned about the industry and yourself over the course of last year.
- Engage with your career adviser to work on an effective internship search strategy that will showcase your experiences and accomplishments.
- Examine internship/job descriptions to determine what skills you want to develop or strengthen as a way to better position your candidacy.
- If offered a full-time role, consider the opportunity and assess if it matches career needs for the future.

EXPLORE

- Research a variety of organizations and differentiate between their work specialties and cultures.
- Evaluate opportunities for gaining experience and their respective application timelines.
- Identify what skills you want to develop and use in your upcoming internship and consider what job functions prioritize that skill set.
- Connect with your peers to learn about their summer experiences, their employers, and resources they are using to support their search.
- If you did not secure an investment banking internship, enhance your knowledge of specific finance opportunities and examine work settings.
- Engage in networking at employer information sessions, coffee chats, career fairs, etc.

DECIDE

- Identify employers to pursue based on the perceived skill set requirement and cultural fit.
- Determine “must-haves” as they relate to the opportunities you’re exploring.
- Identify employers to pursue for internships based on your understanding of the organization, position function, skill set requirements, and cultural fit.
- Consider alternative summer plans.
- If applicable, consider a full-time employment offer from summer internship experience.

ACT

- Prepare for various types of interview questions (behavioral, technical) and formats (phone, video or virtual, in-person).
- Update your resume to reflect new experiences (i.e. internship, leadership and courses), and showcase outcomes and impact.
- If you missed the on-campus recruiting cycle, consider applying directly via the companies’ websites by creating a career profile and applying to opportunities offered.
- Grow the financial technical(s) you need to develop by taking on projects, reviewing resources, and self-education.
- Continue to network with alumni via LinkedIn, Our Northwestern, and the Northwestern Network Mentorship Program.

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- Attend career events to make connections and learn more about specific employers.
- Coordinate with your faculty member to discuss any potential overlap between finals' schedules and internship/full-time start dates.
- Apply for full-time positions in advance of their deadlines - the earlier the better - using Handshake and employer websites.
- Follow up with employer contacts from past career fairs, information sessions, and informational interviews.