NOVA | Northern Virginia Community College
Business Engagement and Career Services

Opportunities in Business & Finance



Career Resources Guide

Introduction

As students navigate their academic journey, understanding career pathways is essential for making informed decisions about their future. Career planning involves recognizing industry trends, identifying potential employers, and equipping oneself with the necessary skills and qualifications to succeed in their selected field. This guide aims to provide an in-depth exploration of NOVA's six key career fields—Business and Finance, Construction & Skilled Trades, Healthcare, Information Technology, Public Administration, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)—highlighting top employers, in-demand job titles, resume, cover letter, and interview strategies, as well as programs of study (majors) at Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) that lead to careers in each field. Beyond this guide, students can learn more information and opportunities in these key fields here.



Top Employers (by Number of Positions)

The following table lists the top employers in the business and finance industry based on number of available positions. These organizations are known for contributing to their industries and offering competitive employment opportunities. The data reflects the organizations identified through the analysis of labor market information provided by the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority (FCEDA) and Arlington Economic Development (AED).

1. Capital One	6. Fannie Mae
2. Freddie Mac	7. Mars, Inc.
3. Accenture	8. Wells Fargo
4. Amazon	9. Deloitte
5. Bloomberg Industry Group	10. The World Bank Group

Note. This table is illustrative and not exhaustive. For comprehensive and up-to-date information, please refer to the respective organizations' publications.

Sources:

"Top 200 Employers Report 2023," District of Columbia Department of Employment Services

"Top 200 Employers Report 2024," District of Columbia Department of Employment Services

"Key Industries," Arlington Economic Development 2025

Top Job Titles



Understanding the most sought-after job titles in the business and finance industry can help students tailor their career preparation. Below are some key job titles in the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV area, based on the latest data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

1. General and Operations Managers
   (high-level managers with broad responsibilities for overseeing business functions)
2. Business Operations Specialists
3. Management Analysts
4. Retail Salespersons
5. Accountants and Auditors
6. Managers
   (Specialized or smaller-scale management position)
7. Customer Service Representatives
8. Secretaries and Administrative Assistant
9. Office Clerks
10. Project Management Specialists

Note. This list is illustrative and not exhaustive. For comprehensive and up-to-date information, please refer to the respective organizations' publications.

Source:
May 2023 Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Area Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates for Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV, US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Resume and Cover Letter Tips

Resume and cover letter templates are widely available online, offering various options for different professional levels, including college students entering the workforce. Websites are available to provide resume and cover letter templates. When selecting a template, consider the following tips to ensure it highlights your strengths and aligns with your career goals:

Pick the Right Format:

- **Chronological:** Ideal for those with relevant work experience, as it highlights your job history. This format is popular among employers who value experience.
- **Functional:** Best for those with limited work experience or gaps in their employment history, as it focuses on skills rather than past positions.
- **Combination:** A balanced format that showcases both skills and experience. This is a good choice if you have some experience but also want to emphasize skills.

Know Your Audience: Different industries have different expectations. For example, a creative resume template may be suitable for graphic design roles, while a more professional template is better for industries like law or banking. When in doubt, choose a simple, clean design.

Play to Your Strengths: Choose a template that reflects your professional personality. The template should showcase your skills, interests, and experience in a way that feels authentic to you.

Ask for Feedback: Before finalizing your resume, seek input from the NOVA Career Services team. They can offer valuable perspectives on what works best.

Source:
Resume Templates, Hloom

Tailoring Your Resume and Cover Letter



Resume Tips

To craft a resume that appeals to finance employers, it is important to highlight expertise and accomplishments. A clear finance or accounting job target should be identified prior to resume development. Strengths and key qualifications should be summarized in the top half of the first page using a Professional Profile and Areas of Expertise sections. Skills in financial and strategic planning, Profit and Loss management, auditing and compliance, and budget development should be included. Finance certifications and licenses, such as CPA, CFA and Series 7, 63 and/or 64, should be highlighted. Under each employer, a brief paragraph describing job responsibilities, followed by bulleted list of accomplishments with quantifiable results should be presented.

Cover Letter Tips

A cover letter should convey an understanding of what the firm is looking for, skills, and articulation. The cover letter should be written like a letter including an address and a closing. The first paragraph should state the position you are applying for and how you became aware of it. Middle paragraphs should explain what attracted you to the work, why you are interested in the company, and why you would be a good fit. The last paragraph should thank the employer and say you are looking forward to receiving a response. It's important to avoid generic cover letters, and tailor each one.

Sample Resume & Cover Letter

Your Full Name

Your City, State, ZIP
Your Email Address | Your Phone Number | LinkedIn Profile

Professional Profile

Highly motivated business student with a strong academic foundation in accounting, finance, and strategic planning. Known for accuracy, problem-solving, and teamwork in academic and internship settings. Seeking an entry-level position in finance or accounting to contribute analytical and organizational skills to a dynamic business environment.

Clearly identifies target role (accountant)

Areas of Expertise

- Financial Reporting & Budgeting
- Strategic Planning & Analysis
- Profit & Loss Tracking
- Auditing & Compliance Awareness
- Microsoft Excel & QuickBooks
- Team Collaboration & Communication

Notes areas of expertise

Education

Northern Virginia Community College – Annandale, VA
Associate of Science in Business Administration (Expected: [Month, Year])

- Relevant Coursework: Financial Accounting, Managerial Accounting, Business Statistics, Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Business Law
- GPA: [Your GPA if 3.0 or higher]
- Honors: Dean's List (if applicable)

Experience

Finance Intern – [Company Name], Fairfax, VA
[Month, Year] – [Month, Year]
Assisted accounting team with data entry and reconciliation of accounts; participated in monthly financial report preparation.

- Reduced data processing errors by 20% through careful cross-referencing
- Assisted in preparing quarterly budget projections and expense summaries
- Collaborated on expense tracking using Excel pivot tables

Includes bulleted list of accomplishments

Cashier & Sales Associate – [Retail Company Name], Alexandria, VA
[Month, Year] – [Month, Year]
Managed daily transactions, balanced cash drawers, and provided excellent customer service.

- Maintained 98% accuracy rate in cash handling
- Recognized for upselling and meeting weekly sales goals

Certifications & Training

- QuickBooks Online Certified (if applicable)
- Microsoft Excel – Intermediate to Advanced Proficiency
- [Any business or finance-related certificate or seminar]

Your Full Name
Your City, State, ZIP
Your Email Address | Your Phone Number

Date: [Insert Date]

[Recipient's Name]
[Recipient's Title]
[Agency/Organization Name]
[Address]
City, State, ZIP

Dear [Recipient's Name],

I am writing to express my interest in the [Job Title] position at [Company Name], as advertised on [Job Board or Company Website]. I am currently pursuing an Associate of Science in Business Administration at Northern Virginia Community College and am eager to apply my academic background and growing experience to a dynamic and mission-driven finance team.

My coursework in financial accounting, business law, and managerial economics has equipped me with a strong foundation in business principles and financial analysis. I am particularly drawn to [Company Name] because of your commitment to innovation in financial strategy and ethical investment practices. These are values that align with my career goals and personal standards.

Demonstrates alignment between firm's needs and applicant's skills

During my academic career, I have developed skills in budget planning, financial reporting, and data analysis through group projects and internships. I am a quick learner, comfortable with financial software such as QuickBooks and Excel, and I have demonstrated my ability to communicate clearly and solve problems efficiently in both academic and part-time work environments.

I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to your team and continue developing my skills in a professional finance setting. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the possibility of discussing how I can contribute to [Company Name].

Thanks employer and shows enthusiasm for the opportunity

Sincerely,

Your Full Name

Interview Tips

When interviewing for a finance position, it is important to be up to date on financial news and understand the cornerstones of finance. Analytical skills are important to highlight, taking time to consider answers to demonstrate how you think. Interviewers will expect candidates to be commercially savvy, aware of key business challenges, and passionate about the business world. Preparation is key, especially regarding basic questions about the company. Common interview questions include discussing your CV, knowledge of the company, and reasons for wanting to work there.

Sample questions for Business & Finance Interviews:

1. What, in your opinion, makes a good financial model?

2. If you were CFO of our company, what would keep you up at night?

3. Walk me through the three financial statements.

4. If it were up to you, what would our company's budgeting process look like?

5.What is goodwill? How does it affect net income?

6. What major factors drive mergers and acquisitions?

7. What does success mean to you?

Source:
"Finance Interview Questions," Corporate Finance Institute
"Sample Finance Interview Questions," Layota University

NOVA Programs of Study

Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) offers specialized programs that align with workforce needs. These programs prepare students for entry-level positions and further academic advancement. The following information highlights the NOVA's programs of study that lead to the six career fields (NOVA, n.d.):

Business and Finance:

- Accounting, A.A.S.
- Accounting, C.S.C.
- Accounting: Accounting Information Security with Data Analytics, C.S.C.
- Accounting: Bookkeeping, Certificate
- Business Administration, A.S.
- Business Management, A.A.S.
- Business Management: Business Information Technology, C.S.C.
- Business Management: Digital Marketing, C.S.C.
- Business Management: Entrepreneurship, C.S.C.
- Business Management: Leadership Development, C.S.C.
- Business Management: Promotion and Public Relations, C.S.C.
- Contract Management, A.A.S.

Construction & Skilled Trades:

- Construction Management Technology, A.A.S.
- Construction Management Technology: Construction Supervision, C.S.C.
- Construction Management Technology: Site Development, C.S.C.

Healthcare:

- Health Information Management, A.A.S.
- Health Information Management: Clinical Data Coding, C.S.C.
- Health Information Technology, C.S.C. (Discontinued Fall 2024)

Information Technology:

- Computer Science, A.S.
- Information Systems Technology, A.A.S.
- Information Systems Technology: Application Programming, C.S.C.
- Information Systems Technology: Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics, C.S.C.
- Information Technology, A.S.

Public Administration:

- ·Paralegal Studies, A.A.S.
- ·Social Sciences: Political Science Specialization, A.S.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics):

- Computer Science, A.S.
- Social Sciences: Political Science Specialization, A.S.

Source:
Programs of Study, Northern Virginia Community College

NOVA Programs of Study Leading to Specific Careers in Business & Finance

Opportunities	Non-Transfer Tracks	Transfer Tracks
Programs of study to support entry into these employment opportunities are currently offered at NOVA	*These career paths allow you to enter the workforce immediately after graduation from NOVA.*	*These career paths require transfer for additional education beyond NOVA.*
General and Operations Managers	Business Management, A.A.S. | Business Management: Leadership Development, C.S.C.	Business Administration, A.S.
Business Operations Specialists	Business Management, A.A.S. | Contract Management, A.A.S.	Business Administration, A.S.
Management Analysts	Business Management, A.A.S.	Business Administration, A.S.
Retail Salespersons	Business Management, A.A.S. | Business Management: Digital Marketing, C.S.C. | Business Management: Promotion and Public Relations, C.S.C.	N/A
Accountants and Auditors	Accounting, A.A.S. | Accounting, C.S.C. | Accounting: Accounting Information Security with Data Analytics, C.S.C. | Accounting: Bookkeeping, Certificate	N/A
Managers	Business Management, A.A.S. | Business Management: Leadership Development, C.S.C. | Business Management: Entrepreneurship, C.S.C.	N/A
Customer Service Representatives	Business Management, A.A.S. | Business Management: Leadership Development, C.S.C.	N/A
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	Business Management: Business Information Technology, C.S.C. | Business Management, A.A.S	Business Administration, A.S.
Office Clerks	Business Management: Business Information Technology, C.S.C. | Business Management, A.A.S	Business Administration, A.S.
Project Management Specialists	Business Management A.A.S. | Business Management: Leadership Development, C.S.C | Contract Management, A.A.S.	Business Administration, A.S.
Marketing Professional	Marketing: Digital Marketing, C.S.C. | Marketing: Promotion and Public Relations, C.S.C.	N/A
Founders & Entrepreneurs	Business Management, A.A.S. | Business Management: Leadership Development, C.S.C. | Business Management: Entrepreneurship, C.S.C.	Business Administration, A.S.

Conclusion

Navigating career pathways requires careful planning, industry awareness, and continuous skill development. As community college students explore potential careers, leveraging available resources—such as NOVA's career services and industry connections—can significantly enhance employability. By understanding industry trends, aligning academic pursuits with workforce demands, and crafting effective job application materials, students can position themselves for long-term career success.



NOVA Career Resources



Career Development:

https://www.nvcc.edu/student-resources/career-services/career-development.html

Understand four key stages: understanding self, exploring careers & majors, decide & plan, and employment preparation. Students can use tools such as free career aptitude and assessment tests, Career Coach, Occupational Outlook Handbook, and Workforce - Labor Market Research to explore career options, set goals, and prepare for employment.

Career Planning System- Focus 2:

https://www.nvcc.edu/student-resources/career-services/focus2.html

FOCUS 2 is an online, interactive, self-guided career and education planning system that can help you select a program/major based on your interests and aspirations, discover occupations matching your personal preferences and attributes, map out your career plans, and make informed career decisions.

Handshake:

https://nvcc.joinhandshake.com/login

Sign in to Career Connection to search and apply to jobs and Internship, view and participate in career development workshops, career fairs, employer information sessions, and access resources such as the Resume Builder and Mock Interview practice tool.

Career Counseling:

https://www.nvcc.edu/student-resources/career-services/contact.html

Students can request an appointment with a Career Counselor by logging into Handshake, navigating to the Career Center page, and selecting “Appointments.”

NOVA Career Resources

Career Opportunities:

https://www.nvcc.edu/student-resources/career-services/career-opportunities.html

The Employer and Career Services Team is pleased to offer Career Opportunities for NOVA students and alumni! Review these opportunities and don't forget to log into Handshake to view more.

Coordinated Internships & Cooperative Education (Co-op):

https://www.nvcc.edu/student-resources/career-services/co-op/index.html

Coordinated Internships are an extension of Academic Services that provides work-based experiential learning opportunities through collaboration between academic departments and community employers. Students may enroll in Coordinated Internship course.

Career Events:

https://www.nvcc.edu/student-resources/career-services/career-events.html

View the Handshake Events Calendar for career development workshops, career fairs, employer information sessions, community hiring events (external) and more!

Additional Career Resources:

https://www.nvcc.edu/student-resources/career-services/career-resources.html

Contact Information

Questions? Feel free to contact novacareerservices@nvcc.edu.

