AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES... What Careers Can I Consider?

The undergraduate degree program in AfroAm provides many important skills to begin a career path. A major or minor in this area will provide an invaluable foundation in skills that form the core of a liberal arts education such as:

- Gathering Information
- Identifying and Solving Problems
- Research Skills
- Expressing Ideas
- Listening Skills
- Persuasion
- Public Speaking
- Written Communication
- Cultural Understanding
- Multi-tasking
- Analytical/Critical Thinking
- Strategic Planning/Visioning

- Consider doing internships before you graduate –

To gain a sense of what fields you have interest in, and to gain credentials and credibility, consider doing two to three internships before you graduate. As an AfroAm major, you can earn up to 18 credits of internship to help you fit them into your schedule. Your career advisor can help you find an internship and Career Services can help process any paperwork for internship credits.

Some places UMass Amherst AfroAm students have interned: NBC Sports, MASSPIRG, Amherst Media, Capitol Records, Vibe Magazine, Daily Hampshire Gazette.

Career Planning Resources & Websites

For those who are not sure of their career direction, consider looking for general themes and/or specific goals by completing assessments in applications such as:

- FOCUS (access code: goodell)
- The Keirsey Temperament Sorter II
- Jung Typology Test
- The Entrepreneur Test

For those who know what they want to do, here are some resources to do some further research:

- Occupational Outlook Handbook
  Maintained by the U.S. Department of Labor, this site allows you to explore different professions and learn about the training and education needed, earnings, expected job prospects, what workers do on the job, and working conditions. Some AfroAm major-related careers are:
  - Postsecondary Teachers
  - Social and Human Service Assistants
  - Social and Community Service Managers

- America's Career InfoNet
  Allows users to explore careers, salary and benefit information, education and training, as well as career development resources.

You can make an appointment with your career advisor to go over these results or discuss any other career concern. Call 413-545-6152 or go the HFA Advising and Career Center, E202 South College, to schedule an appointment.
**What Can You Do with a Bachelor’s Degree in Afro American Studies?**

- Some of the following careers may require licensure, certification, or further education -

**Business and Management**
Advertising, Consulting, General Management, Human Resources, Marketing, Entrepreneur, Cultural Resources Manager, Human Resources

**Communication and Media**
Editor, Public Relations, Publisher, Writer, Journalist, Linguist/Interpreter/Translator, Media Relations Specialist

**Education – Teaching and Administration**
Preschool/Head Start Teacher, Elementary and Secondary Education Teachers, Adult/GED Education Teachers, College Prep Advisor, Educational Researcher, Educational Administrator, Professor, Student Affairs Officer, University Administration

**Health**
Health Educator/Counselor, Health Researcher, Doctor, Nurse

**Non-Profit/Advocacy**
Peace Corps Staffer, Program Administrator, HIV/AIDS Activist, International Aid Worker, Attorney

**Politics, International, Federal, State, and Local Government**
Foreign Service Specialist, Civil Service Specialist, Political Analyst, Federal/State/Local Government Administrator, Community Urban Planner, Public Affairs/Policy Advisor, Economic Affairs Officer, Politician, Attorney

**Performing/Creative Arts**
Artist, Musician, Performer, Playwright, Artist Manager, Curatorial and Archival Management

**Who Could You Work For?**

Depending upon your career directions or goals, most all fields and employers could be interested in AfroAm majors. You may still need to gain experience and credentials, but a degree in AfroAm forms a great base from which to reach out for further specialized skills.

**UMass Amherst Specific Job Search Resources**

[UMass CareerConnect](#)
UMass Amherst’s database of jobs and internships.
This site helps you link your major with potential careers.

What Can I Do With A Black Studies Major?
What careers people have with such a degree.

Related Job Search Links
- US African Development Foundation
- Chronicle of Philanthropy
- Non-Profit Jobs.org
- H-Net Job Guide
- Idealist.org
- InterAction American Council for Voluntary International Action
- International Career Employment Center
- International Development Jobs
- Usajobs.gov
- Commonwealth Employment Opportunities

Professional Associations
- African Studies Association
- African Politics Group
- National Consortium for Study in Africa

Additional Job Search Tips

How to get a job and start a career
People hire who they know and who they like. While there are lots of websites with lots of jobs listed, there are far more people than you can imagine looking and applying for each and every job that is posted on those sites. If you do choose to apply for an online job advertisement, send a customized resume and cover letter and keep right on job searching. Employers are overwhelmed with responses to most every job posting and may not reply to each application.

If applying online to job websites doesn't get you anywhere
1. Decide what skills you want to use in the workplace.
2. Learn what jobs utilize those skills.
3. Find the top ten companies/organizations where those jobs live and where you might want to work.
4. Monitor their employment pages and apply for any jobs that appear - BUT –
5. Spend more of your time getting known and liked; by networking, volunteering, and interning at one or more of these top ten companies.

About networking
Call it making new friends if the word networking makes you groan. Talk to everyone through every media. Create a great LinkedIn profile and learn how to use it. Make sure any other online reference to you is scrubbed clean and “grandmother approved.” Learn how to do face-to-face Informational Interviews. Talk with family, friends, professors, classmates, and random people on the bus. You have no idea who knows whom or how they might help you.
You must customize application materials
Employers are overwhelmed with applicants, and many have purchased and use applicant tracking systems (automated systems that pre-screen application materials). Even if there are human eyes on each and every resume, there are still too many applicants for employers to read your materials carefully. The average first read-through of a resume is said to be between two and 10 seconds, which is the amount of time you have to convince a reader not to throw you away permanently.

How to customize application materials
Steal language and priorities from the “qualifications” section of a job ad, research the company on the web, talk to people who already work there (use LinkedIn and more traditional networking practices to find contacts), or make an intelligent guess as to which parts of your experiences and skills are most relevant to them. Order these clearly and consistently in a resume and talk about them in a narrative fashion in a cover letter. Pick references who can speak to these relevant skills and experiences of yours, and if asked for a writing sample, consider writing one on a topic that might interest this potential employer. Always have other people read over your materials before you send them out, because typos and misspellings scream “I don’t care!” to an employer – and in return they will not care about your application.

How to prepare for an interview
Luck favors the prepared. Do not assume that your potential interviewer has been trained to interview, as most are called away from their everyday jobs and put in a room with you with the added pressure to “somehow find someone good.” As you have already customized your application materials (see above), you know which skills and experiences you need to talk about with them. Package these into three sound bites that are relatively unique to you, and rehearse the phrases so that even through any nervousness you can be sure to leave even the most inexperienced interviewer with an understanding of how you can solve the problem they have and why they should hire you in particular. Either find a friend to practice with or rehearse in front of a mirror.

Other interview tips
Dress one step better than they dress everyday (sometimes this involves research or guessing). Learn how to give a good handshake before you go. Bring a copy of your application materials and five questions to ask them about their company or the job. Be gracious and polite to everyone. Send a thank-you to everyone you meet. (Seriously.) Email is acceptable.