

Writing a Vita For a Higher Education Job Search

A Vita or Resume?

For higher education positions, employers frequently want a vita instead of a resume. The difference between a vita and a resume is a distinct one based on the following definitions:

A resume is an individually designed summary (usually one or two pages) of personal, educational, and experience qualifications intended to demonstrate fitness for a particular position or type of position. A resume focuses attention on an individual's strongest qualifications and develops them to fit the specific or general purpose for which the material is provided. (For more in-depth information see the UCS handout "Writing Resumes.")

A Vita is a comprehensive biographical statement (generally three or more pages) emphasizing professional qualifications and activities. Often, vitas are requested specifically. Unless requested by name, it is usually unwise to send a vita in a first contact. If a resume is requested, send a one- or two-page, tightly drawn document with the notation that a vita (and/or references) will be sent later upon request. It is far better to start out with a one- or two-page resume than it is to stifle the reader's interest by prematurely sending an overly long vita.

For most young job seekers a resume is all that is needed. However, it may be useful to develop a vita as you further your education and complete additional writing and professional assignments.

Vita Uses and Headings

Besides serving as a job search tool, your vita can be used in many other ways, such as: 1) a supporting document with a grant or contract funding proposal, 2) a requirement for an annual review by your employer, 3) a requirement with an application for membership in a professional society or organization, or 4) a background statement for an introduction at an important convention presentation.

It is obvious that you would not necessarily use the same copy for all purposes. So you should decide who your reader or readers will be and develop a vita to meet the specific purposes for which it is to be used. It is, therefore, vital that you keep accurate and up-to-date information on hand so you can adapt it to fit a variety of needs. Indeed, many candidates develop a different vita for different jobs. If you are in higher education, you would not use the same vita for tenure and

promotion in your own institution that you would to seek a new post in a large national corporation or a recently created staff position with a state government bureau.

The use of headings is a way to keep your vita sharp and clear. There are a few standard headings which can be used. Sub-headings also can be used. Sub-headings can be a help in highlighting some of the important things you have accomplished. The usual headings are:

- *Personal Data
- *Educational Background
- *Employment Experience
- *Professional Affiliations and Honors
- *Publications and Creative Works
- *Civic, Religious, and Service Activities
- *Other important items

Content Areas of a Vita

The following areas can be developed in your vita:

- 1) *Identifying Information*: Name, phone numbers, address (campus/temporary and permanent/home) and email (if applicable).
- 2) *Career Objectives*: (Optional).
- 3) *Summary of Educational Background*: Listing of earned academic degrees beginning with the most recent, continuing education courses, etc., and institutions, dates of completion of degrees or certificates, GPA, major/minor, areas of concentration, titles (underlined) of master's thesis and doctoral dissertation.
- 4) *Summary of Relevant Work Experience*: Listing of positions (part-time, full-time, temporary and permanent) which relate to the type of work sought. Descriptions should include position, department/firm/agency, city, state, dates of employment, and type of employment. The information should be listed in reverse chronological order. Areas of responsibility should be described with active verbs.
- 5) *Listing of Publications Authored or Edited and Creative Work*: Bibliographic citations of articles, pamphlets, monographs, chapters in books, research reports, etc. that have been published. Description of recitals, art exhibits, etc.
- 6) *Papers Presented at Conferences*: Description of paper, title, name of conference, dates and location, and perhaps two categories: presentation by competition; and presentation by invitation and consulting. List in reverse chronological order. Also list workshops conducted in this category.

7) *Professional Association Memberships*: Names of local, state, regional and national professional associations in which you have current membership (in alphabetical order).

8) *Professional Service*: Leadership positions you've held in associations at any level: memberships on major committees, task forces, boards; elected offices you've held, etc. Give dates.

9) *Special Awards and Honors*: Membership in professional honorary societies; receipt of competitive assistantships, scholarships, fellowships, etc.; teaching or research awards. Give dates.

10) *Recent and Current Research* (if applicable): Description of research projects recently conducted or in progress: type of research, purpose, etc.

11) *References and Placement File Information*: At the end of the vita, you should indicate that you will arrange to have your permanent placement file sent. You can use this statement: "Placement file forwarded upon request."

In addition to such a statement, you could add this statement, "The following persons have written letters of recommendation on my behalf..." You would then proceed to list the names, titles, departments, and institutional addresses and phone numbers of those individuals. This can be important since the search committee members may know the persons under whom you have worked and may be impressed by your list. They can then call these individuals to ask about you without waiting for your credential file to arrive to see who has written recommendations for you. More and more, the telephone is used, even if letters of recommendation have been written for a placement file.

Organization

If you are inconsistent, the reader may think you are careless or confused. Do not leave this impression--you don't have to. Be consistent in the following ways:

First, don't mix styles in any category. If you are annotating entries under your employment history, then do it for every entry--not just a few. Likewise, show who was the senior project author or director for all activities, not just a few. Leave no doubt about any entry.

Second, do not use double entries. This means do not list a citation or activity more than once. Some people think these multiple listings of essentially the same activity strengthen their vita. Actually, they weaken it because they create the appearance of loading up and repeating the same information to impress the reader--it usually does the opposite!

Third, do not mix chronological orders. If you are starting with your present employer in the employment history section, list each preceding position in reverse chronological order. Do this throughout the vita. List more recent publications and degrees first--then proceed to list earlier items.

Form and Style

There are several technical aspects of vita development and preparation. First, the length is determined by the content. The more work applicants have done, the longer their vitae are likely to be. In academia, it is acceptable for persons with master's degrees to have three- or four-page vitae. However, good vitae are still summaries and contain no complete sentences and little punctuation. Photos cannot be required and probably should not be used. All vitae should be professionally word processed and photocopied on white or light-colored paper.

Everything on the vita should be up-to-date and true. Because a vita quickly becomes obsolete as you complete various research projects, join professional associations, and progress in your academic studies, it is imperative that you carefully review your vita every month to improve and update it. Include the date your vita was written or updated (month and year) on page 1.

Follow these simple rules for form and style for best results:

- *Style: Short phrases; succinct word choice; action verbs
- *Paper size: 8 1/2" X 11"
- *Margins: 1" X 1 1/2"
- *Grammar: parallel, consistent
- *Typing: error free
- *Font size: 10-12
- *Reproduction: clear photocopy
- *Ink: black
- *Name and page number on each page (no page number is needed on first page)

SHARLA E. UNIVERSITY

Permanent Address

000 East Main Street
Norfolk, VA 00000
(804) 000-0000

Current Address

000 Jefferson Park Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22900
(804)000-0000

August, 1990

EDUCATION

Ed.D, Educational Administration

University of Virginia, August, 1984 GPA: 3.5

Dissertation: "An Investigation of the Designs and Practices of Teacher Evaluation in Virginia Public Schools"

Course Concentrations in Public Policy and Program Evaluation.

M.S., Supervision, Longwood College, 1975

B.S., History Education, Hampton Institute, 1973

WORK EXPERIENCE

Elementary Principal, Cumberland County Schools,
Cumberland, Virginia. July 1981-July 1983.

- * reorganized an instructional program for an 800 pupil school
- * supervised a staff of 50 professional and 25 paraprofessionals
- * evaluated personnel and arranged for staff development
- * established a cooperative plan of student discipline and counseling service
- * prepared state and local administrative reports
- * initiated strategies to improve school-community relations

Adjunct Professor, Longwood College, Farmville, Virginia.
January 1980-July 1983.

- * taught graduate courses entitled "Supervision of Instruction" and "Advanced Applied Techniques of Supervision of Instruction"
- * administered comprehensive examinations to masters degree candidates

Assistant Secondary Principal, Prince Edward County Public Schools,
Farmville, Virginia. July 1976-June 1981.

- * supervised 65 professionals and 20 paraprofessionals
- * managed instruction for an 850 student comprehensive high school with a vocational-technical center
- * developed a computerized scheduling and student mark reporting system
- * organized and conducted meetings for the coordination of instructional programs
- * developed strategies for improved service to special populations
- * recruited, selected, assigned, and evaluated personnel
- * developed and implemented division policy
- * budgeted, selected, and managed material resources

Assistant Elementary Principal, Prince Edward County Public Schools, Farmville, Virginia. July 1975-June 1976.

- * coordinated the instructional program for a K-7 multi-unit school of 1450 students
- * coordinated and supervised the selection of instructional materials
- * supervised a staff of 85 professionals
- * developed teaching schedules and assisted with pupil assignments
- * served as primary building administrator for a grade 7 annex of 150 students

History Teacher, Prince Edward County Public Schools, Farmville, Virginia. January 1973-June 1975.

- * taught world history, American history and Afro-American history
- * served extensively on school-based and division-wide faculty committees
- * supervised and sponsored academic extracurricular activities
- * assumed full clerical duties for homeroom students

PRESENTATIONS:

"Using Graduation Competency Tests as an Incentive for Instructional Program Improvement," Presented at the Virginia State Testing Conference, Fredericksburg, Virginia, 1981.

Southside Regional Social Studies Conference, Keysville, Virginia, 1981.

MEMBERSHIPS

Phi Delta Kappa, Virginia Piedmont Chapter, President, 1983. Virginia Review Committee for Family Life Education, 1983-Present.

Portsmouth City Administrative Review Team, 1982-1984 Piedmont Geriatrics Hospital Patient Advocate, 1982.

Longwood College Vocational Advisory Committee, 1981-1983. Witness for N.I.E. National Hearings on Minimum Competency Testing, 1981.

Energy Education Steering Committee for Virginia, 1980. Longwood College National Alumni Directorate, 1979. Virginia Advisory Committee for Minimum Competency Testing, 1979.

AWARDS AND HONORS Graduate Fellowship, University of Virginia, 1983-1984.

Graduate Assistantship, University of Virginia, 1983-1984.

NAESP Fellowship, Florida Institute of Technology, 1983.

National Science Foundation Fellowship, Virginia State University, 1979.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Service Award, 1977.

Academic Scholarships, Hampton Institute, 1969-1973.

Bachelor of Science with High Honors, 1973.

REFERENCES

Professor Edgar Shannon, Jr., Department of Education, University of Virginia, (804) 924-0000

Professor J. C. Levenson, Department of Education, University of Virginia, (804) 924-0000

Professor Martin C. Battestin, Department of Education, University of Virginia, (804) 924-0000

Professor Cecil Lang, Department of Education, University of Virginia, (804) 924-0000

Professor Catherine A. Regan, Department of Education, Longwood College, (804) 924-0000

CREDENTIALS

Complete placement file available from the University Career Services, Garrett Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903

[SAMPLE RESUME]

SHARLA E. UNIVERSITY

Permanent Address
000 East Main Street
Norfolk, VA 00000
(804) 000-0000

Current Address
000 Jefferson Park Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22900
(804)000-0000

EDUCATION

University of Virginia, Ed.D in Administration, August, 1984. GPA: 3.5.
Longwood College, M.S. in Supervision, 1975.
Hampton Institute, B.S. in History Education, 1973.

WORK

Elementary Principal, Cumberland County Schools, 1981-1983. **EXPERIENCE**
* reorganized instructional program for 800 pupil school
* supervised a staff of 50 professionals
* initiated a plan to improve school-community relations
* established a cooperative plan of pupil discipline

Assistant Secondary Principal, Prince Edward County Schools, 1976-1981.
* supervised instruction for 850 pupil school
* developed computerized scheduling and mark reporting
* conducted faculty sessions for instruction
* recruited, selected, and assigned faculty members
* developed and implemented curricula
* assisted with student discipline and counseling

Adjunct Professor, Longwood College, 1980-1983
* taught graduate courses entitled "Supervision of Instruction" and
"Advanced Applied Techniques of Supervision of Instruction".
* administered comprehensive examinations to masters degree candidates

MEMBERSHIPS

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. President, Kappa Rho Omega Chapter
American Association of University Women
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Phi Delta Kappa Education Fraternity, President, Virginia Piedmont Chapter
Virginia Association for the Education of the Gifted

**RECOGNITION
AND AWARDS**

NAESP Fellowship, Florida Institute of Technology, 1983
Virginia Review Committee for Family Life Education, 1983
National Science Foundation Fellowship, Virginia State University, 1979.
Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Service Award, 1977.
Academic Scholarships, Hampton Institute, 1969-1973.
Bachelors of Science with High Honors, 1973.

REFERENCES

Available upon request