Successful human resource professionals are business-minded and well-rounded. Cultivate “hard skills” such as technology and statistics along with “soft skills” such as mediating and advising. Develop excellent communication skills, both verbal and written, and the desire to work with people of various backgrounds and educational levels. Be prepared to start in entry level positions within organizations and advance to positions of greater responsibility, while developing an area of expertise along the way. Obtain internships in an area of interest such as human resources, training, or organizational development. Participate in related co-curricular activities and obtain leadership positions to broaden skills.

Join professional associations such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and network with professionals. Ensure familiarity with different types of related technologies. Areas including Big Data Analytics and cloud-based applications are becoming popular for managing risk, identifying trends, and centralizing data. Utilization of social media platforms and mobile applications to recruit candidates is increasing, and technology continues to advance.

Graduate education including MBA, MS, or JD qualifies one for higher level positions in human resource management.

AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

- Selection and Placement
- Recruitment
- On-boarding/Orientation
- Retention
- Career Planning
- Benefits
- Compensation
- Payroll
- Employee Relation
- Program Development
- Dispute resolution
- Risk Management
- Regulatory Compliance
- Occupational Safety
- Equal Employment Opportunity
- Diversity Issues
- Policy Development
- Human Resources Information Systems

COMMON EMPLOYERS:

- Financial institutions
- Hotels, restaurants, and retail chains
- Manufacturing firms
- Hospitals and healthcare organizations
- Transportation companies
- Educational institutions
- Employment and staffing agencies
- Professional employment organizations (PECs)
- Other medium and large size organizations
- Nonprofit organizations
- Labor unions
- Federal government agencies:
  - Department of Labor
  - Employment Security Commission
  - Bureau of Labor
- Local and state government agencies
- Consulting firms

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Academy of Human Resource Development
- American Management Association
- American Society for Training and Development
- American Staffing Association
- Association for Talent Development
- International Association for Human Resource Information Management
- National Human Resources Association
- Society for Human Resource Management

STRATEGIES ON ENTERING THE FIELD

- In smaller organizations, human resources professionals are generalists and wear many hats. In larger organizations, human resources staff members are more specialized.
- Be willing to start in an entry-level human resources or benefits assistant position and advance with experience.
- After gaining two years of professional experience in human resources, prepare to take the Professional Human Resource Exam (PHR) to increase job opportunities and earning potential.
- Research specialized certifications such as the Certified Employee Benefit Specialist (CEBS).
- Earn a graduate degree in human resources, business, or law to reach the highest levels of human resource management.
- Develop strong computer skills including spreadsheets, databases, and HR-related software.
- Gain related experience through internships in human resources.
- Participate in the student chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management and participate in programs. Seek leadership roles in campus organizations.
- Become comfortable communicating and working with people from diverse backgrounds. Strong interpersonal skills are valuable in this field.
- Cultivate strong analytical and decision-making skills and develop an eye for detail.