



PERSONAL IDENTITY AND YOUR BRAND

Your identity, whether based on your gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, culture, faith, or another element of your background, is fundamental to who you are. Deciding when and/or how to integrate your identity into your brand and job search can be a meaningful part of navigating your professional life.



In the Career Center, we often work with students and alumni who ask about the risks and benefits of sharing personal details about their identities. Whether it's a recent alum who is non-binary, or a single mother who returned to school to complete her degree after spending years caring for her children, every individual has the power to shape a specific and compelling authentic professional identity that includes (or does not include) personal information.

While we understand that identities are intersecting and not binary, below are some general tips that we hope are helpful in navigating discussions around career development.

✓ *Connect who you are to what you do.*

If your identity or background links to why you have selected a career path or professional interest, you can differentiate yourself from other applicants with a “why statement,” which illustrates your personal commitment to that role or career. For example, in a cover letter, you might include a statement like this:

“As a first generation college student navigating the opaque space of higher education without the insights of parents or a network of college-educated adults, I am passionate about providing support to under-resourced students, helping them succeed academically and thrive socially.”

“I am particularly interested in this role because I recently returned to college to complete my degree in Health Sciences after providing care for my disabled sister for five years. This experience taught me the value of a holistic approach to caregiving, and I am eager to use these skills to enhance the patient experience at Good Samaritan.”



✓ *Educate yourself about diversity-focused recruitment initiatives*

Be aware of the employers and foundations that put resources into providing career entry points for students and emerging professionals from diverse backgrounds. For example, the T. Howard Foundation funds internships to promote diversity in media and entertainment. Microsoft has a program that's focused on attracting talent and building an inclusive approach to support individuals on the autism spectrum. Pepsi's Ready to Return is a 10-week paid program designed to kick-start your career if you've taken a break for more than two years.

These are all different examples of the kinds of opportunities you'll want to map out for your personal career path. With careful consideration, you can integrate your identity into your brand and job search in a way that contributes to your career.

✓ *Employers are candidates, too*

The uniqueness of background and perspective you bring to the job are a big part of the value you have to offer. Your task: Find the employer that sees—and celebrates—that value. To you, employers are candidates to become **your** employer.

✓ *Do some research*

Visit a prospective employer's website and search them on sites like LinkedIn and Glassdoor. Does the employer publish a Diversity and Inclusion policy? Do they recruit for diversity? Do they offer diversity and inclusion training for employees? Identity-friendly benefits? Do they appear in identity-specific rankings from organizations such as DiversityInc or Out Leadership?

✓ *Do some networking*

Networking is a critical part of any career strategy. DePaul's Alumni Sharing Knowledge (ASK) Network is a great place to start. The ASK Network is a tool for tapping into individuals with backgrounds that are similar to yours.

Professional associations are a good avenue as well. Nearly every identity group has a professional network or association to support its members and advance its interests. An identity-centered professional association can be a great source for information, advice and contacts.