The Gamecock's Handbook for
AI CAREER GUIDANCE

LEVEL UP YOUR CAREER WITH AI
A USC GUIDE

Generative AI is reshaping how we learn, work, and prepare for our career, including the ways we explore opportunities, present ourselves to employers, and develop essential skills. Career competencies like communication, critical thinking, professionalism, leadership, teamwork, and technology remain vital across every industry. AI does not replace them, but it can enhance how we apply them. This guide is designed to help you understand AI's role in career development, use it ethically and effectively, and critically evaluate its strengths and limitations.

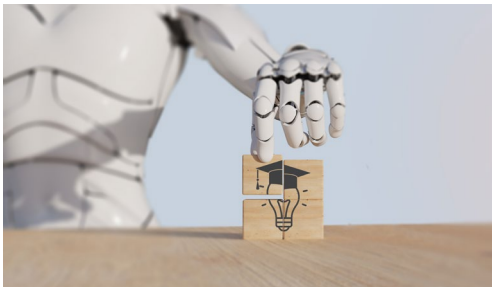
ETHICAL USE OF AI

AI tools like ChatGPT and similar platforms can be powerful partners in your career development, helping you brainstorm ideas, organize your thoughts, and critique and refine your work. However, they should enhance, not replace, your voice, skills, and judgment. The materials you submit, whether a resume, cover letter, or portfolio, must be authentically yours.

Just as you would when collaborating with a person, approach AI with a critical and ethical mindset:

- Use it to generate ideas, edit drafts, or polish language, not to copy and paste ready-made text directly into your application materials.
- Carefully review and personalize all AI-generated content to ensure accuracy, authenticity, and alignment with your story.
- Be mindful of privacy; avoid sharing sensitive personal or institutional information.
- Recognizing the nuances and complexities of AI use is essential; ethical questions rarely have one "right" answer. AI raises significant issues around intellectual property (such as the use of copyrighted material in training data), social impact (including bias, misinformation, misuse, access issues, and privacy), and environmental impact (due to the large energy demands of AI model training and operation).

Ultimately, AI should be a collaborator, not a shortcut. Using it responsibly ensures you uphold the highest standards of professionalism and integrity, in line with the expectations of the Carolinian Creed. It requires ongoing reflection, open dialogue, and adaptability as technologies, regulations, and societal expectations evolve.



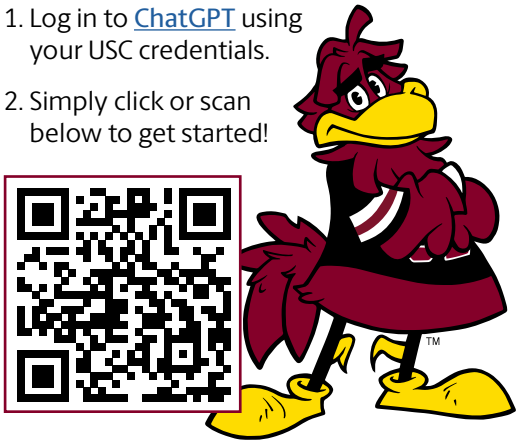
CRITICAL POINTS TO REMEMBER

AI cannot replace human judgment, creativity, or lived experience. These tools often repackage information from the prompts and sources provided, sometimes producing content that is inaccurate, misleading, or disconnected from your actual background and skills. **It is important to develop critical/ethical judgment when using AI and make sure your true experience and perspective are reflected. Employers can tell the difference between copy/paste from AI or using AI to highlight your true story.**

COCKY CAREER READY

Cocky Career Ready is your on-demand guide for career readiness and professional development. Whether you need quick tips on building a résumé, receiving guidance for interviews, pursuing experience or standing out in the job market, Cocky Career Ready is here to help — anytime, anywhere. Follow the steps below to access Cocky Career Ready!

1. Log in to ChatGPT using your USC credentials.
2. Simply click or scan below to get started!



Career Center
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

7 WAYS TO OPTIMIZE YOUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT USING AI AVAILABLE TO YOU AT USC

It is important to recognize that individuals hold different philosophies, perspectives, and comfort levels when it comes to engaging with AI. If you are ready to use AI, it can be a powerful partner in your professional growth — helping you explore options, strengthen your materials, and prepare with confidence. With well-crafted prompts, you can pair AI's capabilities with your own insight, creativity, and judgment.

1 EXPLORE AND INVESTIGATE

Investigate industries, roles, and organizations in specific geographic areas to guide your search and exploration strategies. At USC, you have access to ChatGPT.edu for career exploration and brainstorming. For deeper reflection and planning, meet with your career coach.

Simple Prompts:

- "What are some career paths for someone with a degree in education?"
- "Here is my resume (without personal details). What 10 career fields might I explore or transition into?"
- "What industries are a good fit for someone studying [insert major]?"
- "What are the top companies hiring for [insert industry] in Los Angeles?"

Advanced Prompts:

- "Please generate a detailed guide for career opportunities in the [insert industry] industry, with an emphasis on [insert location]. Include qualifications, career paths, and emerging trends. Suggest strategies for entry-level roles and long-term growth."
- "I am studying [insert major]. Identify 5 career fields I may not have considered, along with relevant certifications or experiences that would make me more competitive."

2 PREPARE FOR INTERVIEW

Practice with real interview questions, get AI-powered feedback on your responses, and build confidence before the big day with VMock.

Simple Prompts:

- "What are common behavioral interview questions for a [insert job title] role?"
- "How should I answer the question, 'Tell me about yourself'?"
- "Based on this job description [insert text], generate 5 likely interview questions and sample responses."
- "What are five thoughtful questions I can ask to learn more about company culture?"

Advanced Prompts:

- "Please create a full interview prep guide for the [insert job title] position at [insert company]. Include likely questions, strategies for tailoring my answers, and questions I can ask interviewers. Provide best practices for phone, virtual, and in-person formats."
- "Here is my draft response to 'Tell me about yourself.' Please critique it for clarity, tone, and relevance to a [insert role]. Suggest 3 improved versions."

3 COMMUNICATION AND BRANDING

Use AI to enhance your personal brand across platforms. Create LinkedIn headlines, refine emails, and prepare concise pitches.

Simple Prompts:

- "Create three LinkedIn headline options that highlight my skills in data analysis and leadership."
- "Draft a 300-character LinkedIn connection request tailored to [insert person's profile]."
- "Things to consider when writing a thank-you email after an interview."
- "Based on my resume, create a 1-minute elevator pitch I can use for networking."

Advanced Prompts:

- "Draft a LinkedIn strategy plan for me as a soon-to-graduate [insert major]. Include headline ideas, keywords, posting strategies, and sample outreach messages."
- "Generate three versions of a professional elevator pitch for networking events, job fairs, and LinkedIn, each tailored for slightly different audiences."

4 ANALYZE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Break down job postings to highlight key skills, themes, and qualifications for resumes, cover letters, and interviews.

Simple Prompts:

- "Analyze this job description [insert text]. What are the top 5 skills and responsibilities?"
- "Compare this job description with my resume [insert text]. Where are the gaps I should address?"

Advanced Prompts:

- "Please generate a skills gap analysis between my resume [insert text] and this job description [insert text]. Suggest specific improvements or additional experiences I should highlight."

5 REFINE YOUR RESUME

Refine your resume by tailoring it to jobs, improving clarity, and checking Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) compatibility.

Simple Prompts:

- "How can I tailor my resume for a [insert role] job?"
- "Where can I add metrics to better highlight my accomplishments?"
- "What are the best action verbs for a programmer role?"
- "Check the ATS keyword match between my resume and this job description [insert both]."

Advanced Prompts:

- "Please generate a comprehensive resume guide tailored to [insert industry]. Include formatting, sections to emphasize, and keyword strategies for ATS."
- "Here are 5 bullet points from my resume for [insert role]. Suggest improvements to make it more results-focused and measurable."

6 REFINE YOUR COVER LETTER

Get suggestions to make your cover letter more engaging and customized.

Simple Prompts:

- "Here is my draft cover letter. What improvements can I make?"
- "Based on my resume and this job description [insert both], what key points should I highlight when writing a cover letter?"

Advanced Prompts:

- "Please create a full guide for writing a cover letter tailored to the [insert industry], specifically for [insert job description] at [insert company]. Include structure, tone, and strategies for showcasing achievements."
- "Draft three alternate opening paragraphs for a cover letter that balance enthusiasm, professionalism, and alignment with company values."

7 SEEK INSIGHTS ON SALARY AND CAREER GROWTH

Seek feedback on communication, learn negotiation strategies, and plan for continuous growth.

Simple Prompts:

- "What are some strategies for negotiating a higher starting salary?"
- "How should I respond if asked about salary expectations?"
- "What are the best ways to continue developing skills in [insert field] after graduation?"
- "Create a professional development plan for my first year in [insert role/industry]."

Advanced Prompts:

- "Please create a salary negotiation script for an entry-level [insert job title] role in [insert location], with multiple ways to phrase my request depending on employer response."
- "Generate a career growth roadmap for my first 3 years as a [insert role]. Include suggested certifications, networking strategies, and professional development opportunities."

STANDING OUT WHILE COLLABORATING WITH AI

As AI becomes a common tool in job searches and professional work, many applicants will arrive with AI-polished resumes, cover letters, and interview responses. To truly stand out, students must learn not only to use AI effectively but also to highlight the distinctly human qualities that no algorithm can replicate.

Employers consistently emphasize that they value candidates who demonstrate:

- Critical thinking – analyzing information, identifying gaps, and making sound judgments.
- Emotional intelligence – showing empathy, self-awareness, and strong interpersonal skills.
- Creative problem-solving – generating original ideas, adapting existing ones, and approaching challenges from new angles.
- Adaptability – thriving in complex, fast-changing, and ambiguous environments.

MORE RESOURCES

USC Garnet AI Foundry

Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity at USC

The Art of the Prompt: How to Get the Best Out of Generative AI

Example 1 – Recapping an Interview with Insight
When writing a thank-you note after an interview, don't just thank the employer and restate your interest. Instead, show that you listened closely and can think critically about what you heard:

> "I appreciated our discussion about the company's expansion into new markets. It made me reflect on my own project experience, where I had to analyze unfamiliar data and quickly adapt our strategy. I believe that same adaptability and critical thinking would allow me to contribute meaningfully as your team navigates growth."

This demonstrates active listening, reflection, and analytical skills that AI cannot replicate.

Example 2 – Sharing Human Stories in the Interview
Employers are often more impressed by how you handled challenges than by perfect success stories. Share a time you struggled and how you worked through it:

> "In my sophomore year, I led a student project that initially failed because we underestimated the time required for research. It was frustrating, but I learned to step back, reassess priorities, and delegate more effectively. By the end, we delivered a stronger final product than expected, and I came away with a deeper understanding of leadership and resilience."

This kind of story highlights your self-awareness, growth mindset, and problem-solving ability — qualities that help you stand out in a pool of AI-polished applicants.

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