

# Self-Managed Credential Files

Northwest Career Services announces the transition to self-managed credential files beginning September 1, 2009.

## ***What is a Credential File?***

A credential file is a packet of information, sent to prospective employers or graduate programs during a candidate's application process. Credential files may be used by candidates of any major. Education majors have traditionally made use of these files to pursue teaching positions.

## ***Why have a Credential File?***

Credential files provide a professional, convenient and dependable aid in the application process. It is a way to organize and send your application materials to potential employers and graduate schools. It also eliminates the time-consuming process of continuously compiling the necessary documents for various applications. Finally, it allows your information to reach the employer in one complete package.

## ***How to establish a Self-Managed Credential File?***

For self-maintained credential files *you* collect, manage, and send documents directly to prospective employers or graduate schools. Documents may include but are not limited to:

- Resumes
- Curriculum vitae
- Statement(s) of purpose
- Writing samples
- Dissertation abstracts
- Transcripts
- Letters of recommendation
- Teaching certificates
- Anything that supports the application process

## ➤ ***Whom should I ask to write a letter of recommendation? (If required with application)***

You should consider collecting a typed letter from any of the following:

- A cooperating teacher (Important for new teachers)
- A site supervisor (Important for new teachers)
- A field experience teacher
- Principal(s) or superintendent(s)
- Teachers or administrators who observed you teaching
- Mentor teachers
- Department heads
- University faculty from your subject area
- A current or former employer from a related employment experience
- A current or former director/supervisor of volunteer experiences
- A leadership or community service affiliation

## ➤ ***What should a letter of recommendation look like?***

A letter of recommendation should be typed or computer generated - nothing handwritten. Writers should limit their comments to one page. Writers are encouraged to use official letterhead. It is important that the writer dates the letter and includes his/her signature and contact information. Your letters of recommendation should come from those who can speak directly to your skills and abilities in reference to the work environment. These career-related references, not character references (friends, family, significant others), are most useful to employers.

## ➤ ***How many letters should I collect?***

It is suggested that you limit the number of recommendations to 6. Most candidates have 3-6 letters in their files.

## ➤ ***How do I obtain letters of recommendation?***

You may obtain letters of recommendation by requesting them directly from the writer. The following suggestions are also recommended:

- For the writer's convenience, enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope.
- After you have received the letter of recommendation, it is appropriate to send a thank you letter to the writer.
- References may provide a letter of recommendation to the candidate on their organization's letterhead. Reference letters should be no more than 1 page in length.
- Candidates should always retain the original letter of recommendation and only send copies to the employer.
- It is important that you maintain current letters of recommendation. Northwest Career Services does not recommend the use of letters more than 4 years old in your job search.

## ***How and when do employers/graduate schools receive my self-managed credential file?***

You, as the applicant, are responsible for supplying your credentials when requested by the employer. Typically, this occurs during the application process. In some instances, employers do not request credentials until they have completed their initial screening process. It is very important that you follow whatever process the employer indicates in the job posting. All application materials, including credentials, should be sent in a 9x12-inch envelope. Address labels should be typed. Keep a record of when and where you have sent your applications materials.

## ***What does a complete self-managed file "look" like?***

A complete self-managed file would include a cover sheet. It is very important that your documents have a polished, professional appearance. Following your cover sheet make sure to include all of your application materials, which may include:

- A cover letter
- A resume
- A copy of your transcripts
- An application
- 3-6 letters of recommendation
- Anything that supports the application process

## ***Can I mail all of the above in one envelope?***

Yes. Nationally, many application processes suggest this.

## ***What if the advertisement asks for "official" credentials?***

Send your self-managed set.

## ***Where can I obtain a copy of my student teaching evaluation if I want to include it in my credential file?***

A copy of your student teaching evaluation can be obtained by contacting Educational Leadership at 660-562-1231.

## ***Where can I get a transcript?***

Your official transcript can be obtained from the Registrar's Office, 660-562-1151/1152 or <http://www.nwmissouri.edu/registrar/transcript.htm>.

## ***Can Career Services assist me with questions I might have about self-managed credential files, the job search or graduate school application process?***

Absolutely! We want you to be successful in your job search. We are pleased to meet with you individually to answer any questions you may have about self-managed credentials, resumes, cover letters, job search strategies, or career information. For a meeting with a professional staff member, call 660-562-1250 for an appointment. If you are out of town, email us at [career@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:career@nwmissouri.edu). Our office hours are M-F, 8-5.

## ***Additional Important Information from Career Services:***

- **Hire A Bearcat** is free to all Northwest students and \$20/year for Northwest Alumni.
- Northwest's Education Expo is held each spring. Candidates should check the Career Services' Web site for details.
- Northwest's Career Day is held twice a year, fall and spring. Please check the Career Services' Web site for details.
- The staff of Northwest Career Services is available to help you with all aspects of your job search including; resume critiques, cover letter critiques, job search strategies, mock interviews, and career decision-making strategies.



**Career Services**  
*"Bringing Talent and Opportunity Together"*

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