

Wake Forest University
Alumni Personal & Career Development Center

Alumni Quick Guide

Build & Demonstrate AI Fluency for Your Career

A Strategic Roadmap for Deacs to Be AI-Ready for Work

This guide includes:

- Mapping your career industry's AI landscape and the skills & tools you need to learn
- Creating structured learning and intentional practice to build your AI toolkit
- Translating practice into actual proof of proficiency
- An action plan checklist



INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence is transforming the way we work. To remain competitive or make a bold career move, Wake Forest alumni must go beyond basic chat prompts. **You need to understand how AI transforms workflows, which specific tools drive value in your target role, and how to demonstrate measurable proficiency.**

Here's an analogy for you: Think of the general LLM (Large Language Model like ChatGPT or Gemini) as your **Swiss Army Knife** (handy for almost anything) and the domain-specific tool (unique to job industries and companies) as a **Specialized Power Tool** built for one specific job.

Your goal as a professional and job seeker is to understand how to use both the Swiss Army Knife AND the Specialized Power Tool needed for the role that you want or already have. Let's get started!



STEP 1: STRATEGIC DISCOVERY - MAP YOUR INDUSTRY'S AI LANDSCAPE

Before spending time learning a tool, identify where AI adds high-value leverage in your specific target role or industry. Do this with some basic research and talking to other professionals who are actually working in the field.

Analyze Job Postings & Target Companies

- **Keyword Search:** Identify job descriptions for roles you have an interest in. Use an AI tool to review the job descriptions and ask AI to find explicit mentions of AI software (e.g., Copilot, Claude) or implicit requirements (e.g., data automation, generative content strategy, automated reporting).
- **Company AI Footprint:** Use AI to research your target employers. Specifically, ask AI to find publicly published engineering blogs, case studies, or press releases about employers' internal AI adoption.

Conduct Informational Interviews with Alumni and/or Professionals in the Field

Connect with fellow Deacs on LinkedIn or through the **Alumni Career Advisers** program. Ask targeted questions:

- Where is your team using generative or predictive AI to save time or improve output?
- What AI tools or skills do you wish incoming hires had on day one?
- What are the 2 or 3 AI tools your team uses every week, and which ones are nice-to-have versus essential for someone in this role?
- Can you walk me through a recent task or project where an AI tool transformed how you got the work done?
- When interviewing candidates, what separates someone who just uses AI as a basic search engine from someone who uses it strategically?
- Are there specific certifications, courses, or thought leaders in our industry that you recommend following to stay ahead of the curve?

STEP 2: STRUCTURED LEARNING & INTENTIONAL PRACTICE

Moving from "curious user" to "proficient practitioner" requires **deliberate, project-based experimentation**. Use the information you gathered in Step 1 from researching companies and job roles and speaking with professionals in your target field to begin putting the AI tools you need to learn into practice.

Master the AI Basics

No matter your field, every professional needs three core habits to get reliable results from AI:

- **Clear Instruction - Provide Role, Context, and Task:** Learn how to talk to AI effectively. Give it a role ("Act as a project manager"), provide context ("Here is our project background"), and state a clear task ("Draft a 3-bullet update for leadership").

- **Smart Document Analysis:** Get comfortable attaching or pasting your own work - such as PDFs, meeting notes, reports, or spreadsheets - and asking the AI to summarize key points, find patterns, or answer specific questions about the text.

- **Daily Integration:** Connect AI to the tools you already use every day. Use built-in assistants in Microsoft Word/Excel, Google Docs, or Slack to speed up everyday tasks like summarizing email chains, drafting quick responses, or formatting data.

The 30-Day "AI Practice Plan"

Set aside 2 hours per week for one month to build true hands-on AI confidence. Begin by thinking of a work task or project that is more energy intensive than you would like it to be. An example of this could be analyzing a data set and then using the results to create a slide deck and an executive summary. You'll want to determine how long it originally took you to do the work without AI (i.e., 3-4 hours) versus with AI (i.e. 15-20 minutes). Here's a plan to get you started:

Week 1: Pick Your Tools. Choose one major assistant (like ChatGPT or Claude) to start with. Ideally you will choose an AI tool needed for your target role or industry as referenced in Step 1 of this guide. Explore the tool to ensure you know how it works before asking it to complete a task or project.

Week 2: Try a Real Work Task. Take an actual task from your work - analyzing data, designing a marketing campaign and content, creating a slide deck - and do it using AI to see how it performs.

Week 3: Double-Check the Work. Practice reviewing the AI's output. Check for missing facts, tone, or incorrect details, and practice giving it follow-up instructions to fix errors. Or, you might ask the AI to keep moving forward and creating additional content related to your task or project.

Week 4: Track Your Time & Results. Compare your results. Did AI save you 30 minutes or several hours? Did it help you generate better ideas or outputs? Keep a quick mental note or bullet list of your wins to talk about in interviews and add to your resume and LinkedIn profile.

STEP 3: DEMONSTRATE PROFICIENCY BY TRANSLATING PRACTICE INTO PROOF

Employers rarely hire someone just because they listed "AI" on a resume. They hire candidates who demonstrate how AI makes them **faster, smarter, and more effective** for that particular job role. Here are a few ways you can actually show (and not just tell) that you are AI proficient.

Build a Mini "AI Work Portfolio"

Create 2-3 tangible examples you can present during interviews or upload to your LinkedIn profile, such as:

- **Before-and-After Workflow Case:** Document a manual process that used to take five hours and show how you redesigned it using AI tools to take 45 minutes, while also checking over the work yourself.
- **Prompt Library/Custom GPT:** Build a reusable custom GPT or system prompt designed for an industry-specific challenge. Instead of typing out instructions from scratch every single time you open ChatGPT or Claude, write down a saved formula that tells the AI exactly who to act like, what rules to follow, and how to format the final answer.
- **Deliverable Sample:** Share an AI-assisted deliverable alongside a brief note detailing how you directed, edited, and validated the output. This could be a project that you've been working on in your current job role or one that you've created for yourself.

Update Your Resume & LinkedIn Profile

Shift from generic buzzwords to **impact-driven statements**:

Weak: *"Experienced in ChatGPT and AI tools."*

Strong: *"Leveraged Claude and custom prompt workflows to accelerate market research synthesis, reducing project turnaround time by 35% while maintaining strict data governance standards."*

Ace the AI Interview Conversation

Be prepared to address AI thoughtfully during interviews:

- **Demonstrate Critical Thinking:** Emphasize that you view AI as a ***co-pilot***, not a crutch. Mention how you handle data security, fact-checking, human-centric skills, and ethical considerations.
- **Show Your Learning Agility:** When asked about unfamiliar tools, say: *"While I haven't used [Software X] directly, I have mastered [Software Y] and understand the underlying logic of prompt structuring and workflow automation, so I can ramp up within a week."*

ACTION PLAN CHECKLIST:

Use this step-by-step checklist to begin the learning process and track your progress:

- [ ] **Target Role Audit:** Identify 3–5 core AI skills/tools listed in job descriptions for target roles (or your current role, if applicable).
- [ ] **Alumni Outreach:** Reach out to 2-3 Wake Forest alumni and/or professionals in target roles to ask and learn about their daily AI tools and usage.
- [ ] **Tool Selection:** Pick 2 tools to focus on - one for general everyday tasks, and one made specifically for your field.
    - 1 primary general LLM (Large Language Model): Choose one major, all-purpose AI assistant that handles general writing, brainstorming, and research such as ChatGPT, Claude, or Google Gemini.
    - 1 domain-specific tool: Select one specialized tool designed specifically for the actual work done in your role or industry such as Midjourney (for graphic design) or GitHub Copilot (for coding).
- [ ] **Practice Project:** Complete a hands-on project solving a real work scenario using the AI tools identified above.
- [ ] **Showcase Your Efforts:** Document the process, prompt logic, and quantifiable time savings. You might create an online website/portfolio to showcase this work or upload documents to your LinkedIn profile.
- [ ] **Resume Updates:** Add bullet points highlighting AI-driven efficiency and impact.
- [ ] **Interview Prep:** Draft a 2-minute narrative explaining how you use AI responsibly to drive business outcomes. Prepare 2-3 examples of how you've used AI tools, along with your own business acumen and human judgment, to solve a problem or complete a project.