

THE CAREER COUNSELOR'S GUIDE TO PINTEREST

by Shannon Conklin



3 CREATING A STRONG PROFILE AND PERSONAL BRAND ON PINTEREST
Elements of a Profile

6 NETWORKING AND CONNECTING PROFESSIONALLY ON PINTEREST
To Pin or Not to Pin?
Searching on Pinterest
Who to Follow
What to Pin and How to Engage Your Followers
Pin Descriptions

11 FINDING JOB AND INTERNSHIP LISTINGS ON PINTEREST
To Examples of Organizations on Pinterest



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Pinterest offers a distinct, visual platform to enhance a student's personal brand, network, and career or internship search. According to Pinterest's "About" section, it is a "tool for collecting and organizing the things you love." This is at the core of anyone's professional identity—what they love to do—and this network creates a unique way to organize and promote just that. There are several ways for students to leverage Pinterest for professional purposes. When working with students to use the platform, here are some key questions to consider throughout your discussions:

Visual Identity—How can students convey their brands through a visual medium? Ask them what draws their eye and attention.

Instant Messaging—Images convey a message instantly. What messages do students want to spread instantly?

Content Curation—Pinterest is a virtual pinboard to collect and organize one's world. What do students want to aggregate across various social media platforms and the web?

Visual Engagement—How can students engage their networks or prospective employers through images?

Leads to Conversion—Where are students leading or sending their Pinterest followers through images? How can they convert their followers from viewers into engaged followers who like, repin, and connect?

With these five questions in mind, this guide will help you work with students and address how to create a profile on Pinterest, how to develop a strategy to promote their brand and engage their network, and how to leverage the platform for a job and internship search.

CREATING A STRONG PROFILE AND PERSONAL BRAND ON PINTEREST

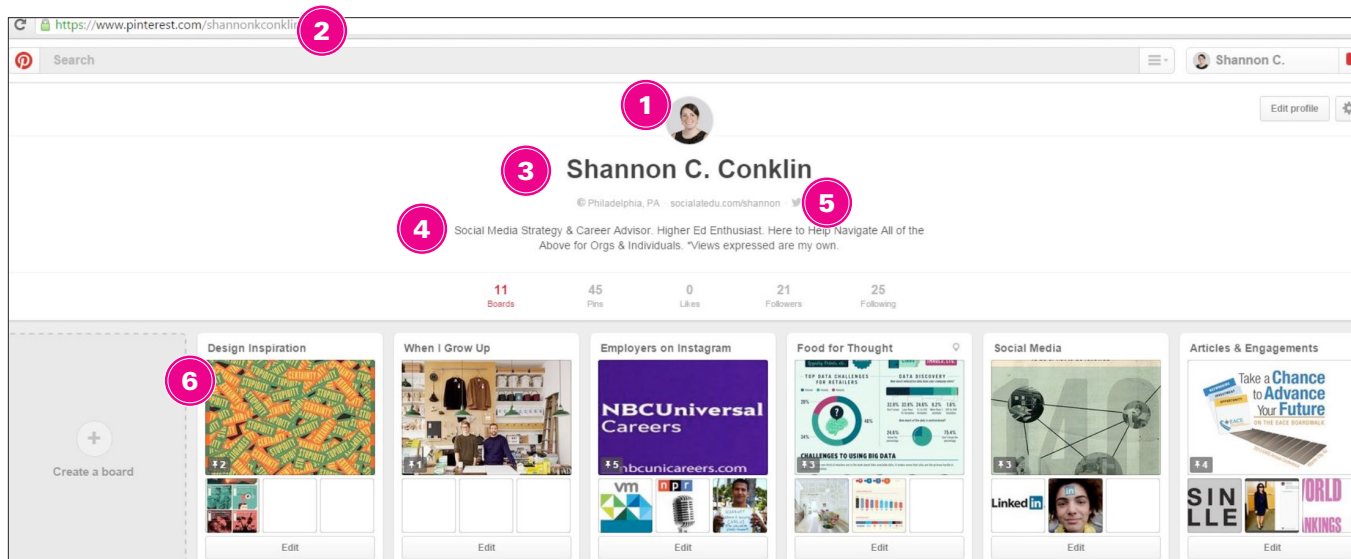
To create a strong profile on Pinterest, remind students to develop or reflect on an existing social media strategy, but with a visual state of mind due to Pinterest’s distinct qualities. Students must be consistent with their messaging, brand, and the content they curate on Pinterest, just as they are with any other social media or online tools they use. Consistency will help others find the student on Pinterest.

“Pins” rely on images. Therefore, any content one wants to bookmark or share through this platform must have an image present on the particular page or item to curate. Again, consider how to integrate the defining characteristics of Pinterest—images and content curation—into an overall social media job-search strategy. Take the questions from the introduction and break them down even further with the student. Ask:

- What are the colors, pictures, or logos that represent you?
- What information do you want to convey instantly?
- What are your interests?
- How can you showcase your experiences with pictures?
- Where do you want to lead others—to websites, to blogs, or to an organization of interest or affiliation?

ELEMENTS OF A PROFILE

There are six key elements to a profile on Pinterest—profile picture, username/domain, name, bio, links, and boards. In this section, each element is discussed in detail to review what students must consider and learn how to make their profiles stand out.



1. Profile Picture—Use a professional-looking picture, preferably the same one used on other online platforms, such as LinkedIn and Twitter.

2. Username—The username is the domain address. This should be concise, reflect the

student’s name, and be consistent with domains for other social media platforms. For example, if a student is listed on Twitter as @janedoe, use pinterest.com/janedoe here.

3. Name—First and last name. If a student has

a particular name on other platforms, or wants to reinvent his or her professional identity somehow, then consider something different than the given name. Again, the key is consistency.

4. Bio—Create a concise bio that reflects the student’s professional goals and brand. Ask students who they are, why they are using Pinterest, and what their interests and professional aspirations are.

5. Links—Remind students they must think about where they want to lead their followers on Pinterest. The platform can sync up with Facebook and Twitter accounts, and will automatically link to both networks. They can also add links to other networks or a personal website if they would like.

6. Boards—This is the final and most important piece of a profile. The boards are where content is organized and accessed. Pins are curated within the various boards a student creates based on categories. Each board consists of a name, description, and category. Be strategic with the name of a board and make sure the description reflects its goal.

The categories are predetermined by Pinterest, so “pinners” must do their best to fit each board within these established options. There is no career category, so think about each board in a larger context. Is the board educational? Is there a design element? Are there quotes that are inspirational? Is this board relevant to a particular location? Should this board be private or collaborative?

For example, the board below can be populated with organizations a student is interested in for employment. It is under the “Education” category because the student is learning about these organizations. There are various options available to make the board more dynamic:

- **Map**—Also known as “Place Boards,” it lets you affiliate a location with a pin and aggregate pins by their location.

- **Secret**—This prevents followers of an account on Pinterest from seeing the board or the content. This is useful if students or recent graduates would like to keep certain content private, especially if they are currently employed, but are interested in a new job.

- **Collaborators**—Allows you to share the board and have more than one individual add content.

For more information on getting started with Pinterest, refer students to the network’s “About” section at <http://about.pinterest.com/>.

The screenshot shows the 'Create a board' form on Pinterest. The form is titled 'Create a board' and has a close button (X) in the top right corner. It contains the following sections:

- Name:** A text input field with placeholder text: "Like 'Places to Go' or 'Recipes to Make.'"
- Description:** A larger text area with placeholder text: "What's your board about?"
- Category:** A dropdown menu with the placeholder text: "What kind of board is it?"
- Secret:** A toggle switch currently set to "No". Below it is a link: "Learn more".
- Collaborators:** A search input field with placeholder text: "Enter email". Below it is a button with a person icon and the text: "Choose from contacts".

At the bottom of the form are two buttons: "Cancel" and "Create".

NETWORKING AND CONNECTING PROFESSIONALLY ON PINTEREST

TO PIN OR NOT TO PIN?

To build a network through Pinterest, students need to think about who they will follow and what content to pin to draw in their networks and encourage those connections to look at boards, click through the content that has been curated, and even collaborate. As a result, you may find students debating whether they should pin links and images from websites, blog posts, tweets, or other resources. Students need to remember that, as they pin, they should check to make sure they know where the pin leads and that the site is professional. Another way to discover content to pin is through the search function (discussed below). Consider the following questions based, again, on the student’s brand, visual identity, and message:

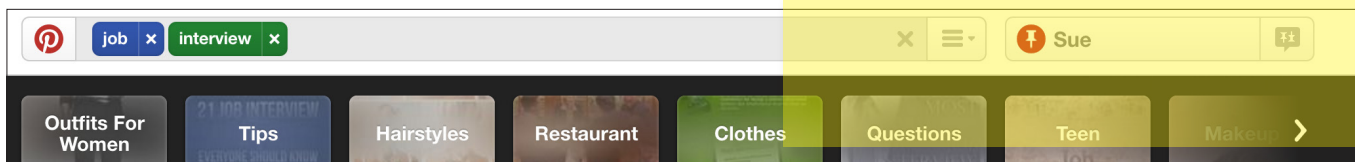
- What individuals or organizations interest you?
- Is the content educational or meaningful? And,

should it be bookmarked for ease of access and reference?

- Do you want an organization or individual to see that you found their content?
- Would the content be valuable to others?

SEARCHING ON PINTEREST

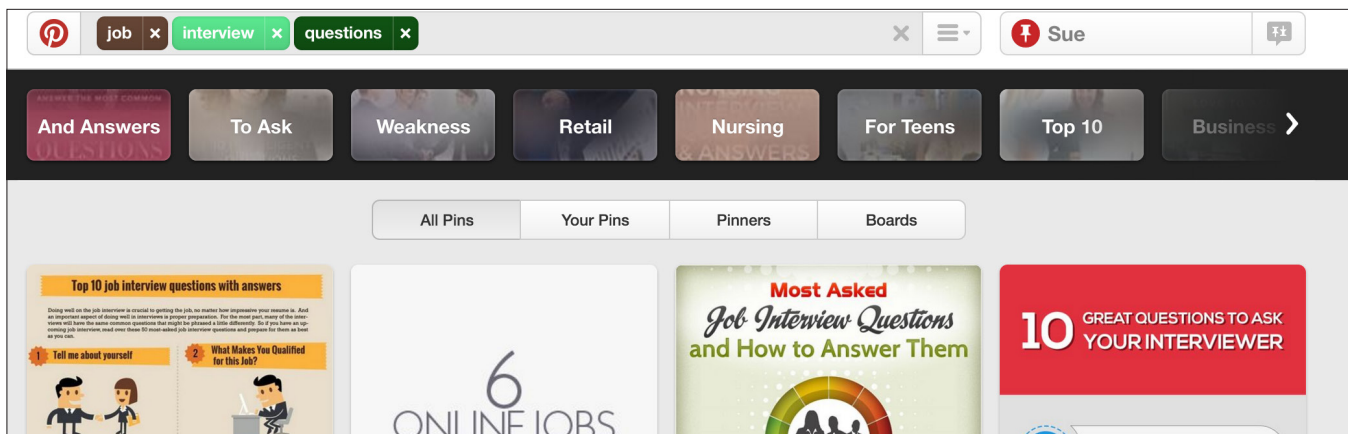
The search function on Pinterest is dynamic and has become more robust as the platform has grown in popularity. When students set out to build their networks and find content to pin, they should use this tool. It is also useful to gather ideas of what to pin, as well as ways to engage with an individual or organization, by “liking” a pin or adding a comment. Use keywords in a search, such as “interview,” “job,” or an organization of interest. Pinterest will pull up pins, boards, and pinners, or individuals and organizations that match the various criteria.



The search functionality mirrors the likes of Google and Amazon. It is smarter and full of results that can streamline any user’s search. As shown above, it will suggest categories and break apart your search to

help you focus in on the results you’re seeking.

Here is an example of using the keywords “job” and “interview,” and the selection “questions” based on the search:



WHO TO FOLLOW

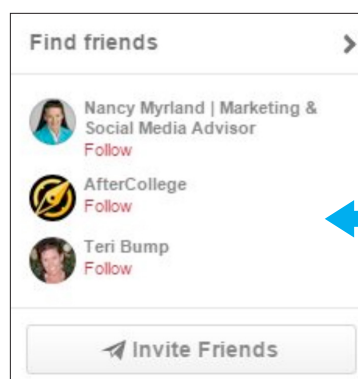
On Pinterest, users follow individuals and organizations, similar to Twitter. One’s home page on Pinterest is populated with the newest pins from their network. Now, with the smarter search functionality, it also includes recommended pins.

When a student creates an account, he or she will be prompted to follow at least five accounts. The student can follow all boards belonging to an account or just one. One recommendation you can make to students is to follow all the boards for a particular pinner in the beginning. As the student sees what pins are added, he or she will get ideas of other pinners to follow, as well as what to pin, based on interests, message, and the value pins add to their Pinterest strategy. Eventually, students can elect to unfollow particular boards or pinners.

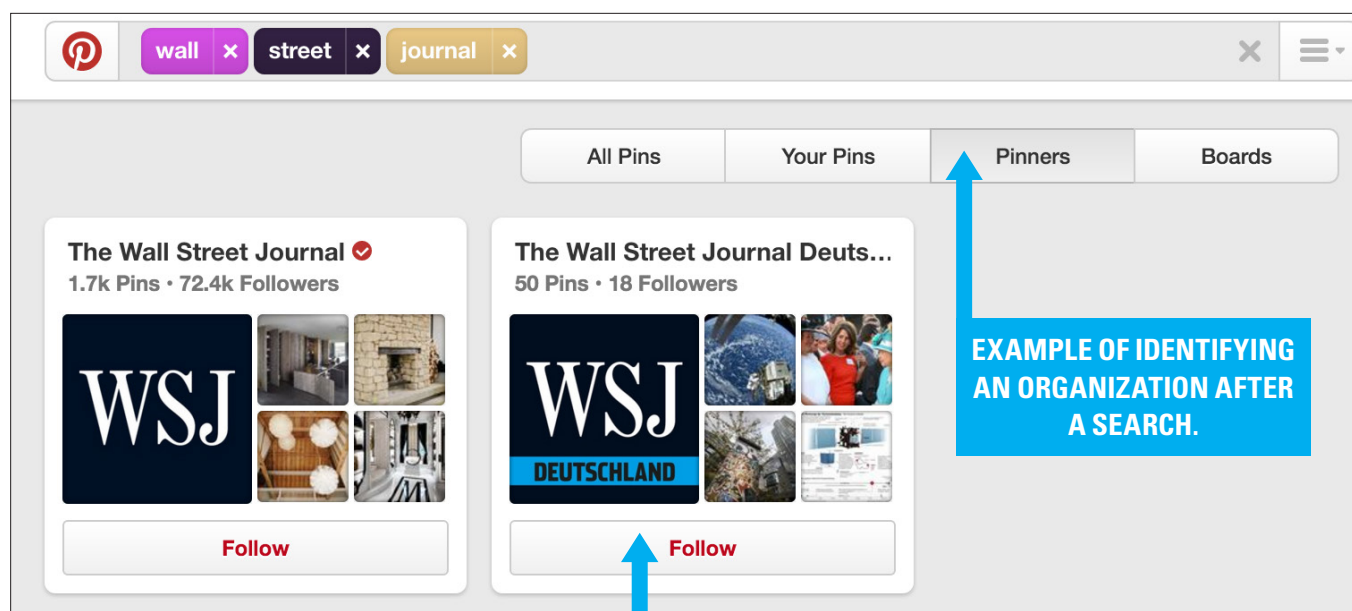
Another way to find accounts to follow is through the “Find friends” option (pictured below), or use the search function. When a search is conducted, remember that “pinners” are actually people or organizations. Therefore, if a student wants to see if someone in particular is on Pinterest, look for

them under the “pinners” tab after the search is complete. Below are a few suggestions of who to search for and follow:

- Career advisers and experts
- Career services offices and career centers
- Colleges and universities
- Prospective employers
- Professional associations
- Organizations of interest (volunteer/causes)
- Peers
- News journals
- Thought leaders



FIND FRIENDS



EXAMPLE OF IDENTIFYING AN ORGANIZATION AFTER A SEARCH.

SELECT THE “FOLLOW” BUTTON AFTER A SEARCH TO FOLLOW THEIR PINS.

NETWORKING AND CONNECTING

If students have an established account and want to rebuild, Pinterest may suggest starting fresh. They would be prompted to select the “Rebuild my feed” option. This reflects how “smart” Pinterest has become over the years.

Not loving the Pins you're seeing?

Rebuild your home feed by instantly clearing out everything you follow and starting over from scratch.

I'm good

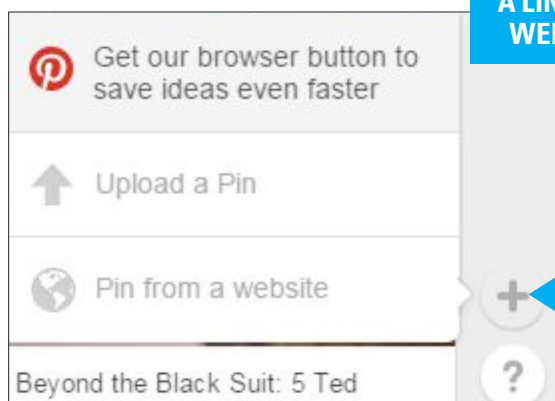
Rebuild my feed

WHAT TO PIN AND HOW TO ENGAGE YOUR FOLLOWERS

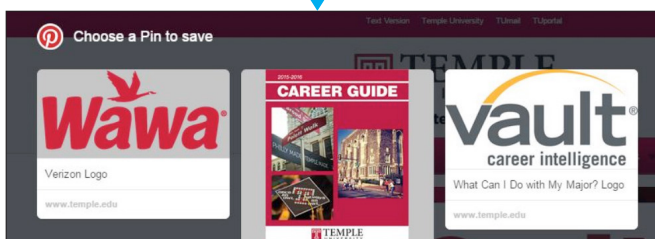
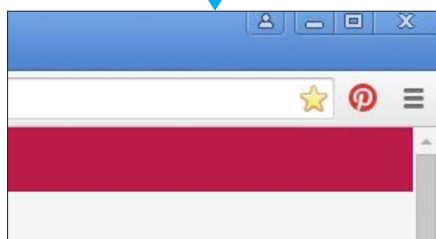
The content a student pins, similar to the pinners they follow, should reflect their interest, goals, and brand. Pins are images with an embedded link. The pinned image is a bookmark and leads to a website or other resource. Pins can be original content a student created, such as a creative resume he or she would upload from his or her computer. Additionally, they can use the “Bookmarklet” tool or look for “Pin-It” widgets on websites. Finally, they can also repin content found while exploring Pinterest.

The pinning tool is always available on one’s homepage—hovering in the lower, right-hand corner.

UPLOAD AN ORIGINAL PIN OR ADD A LINK TO A WEBSITE.



THE “BOOKMARKLET” OR “PIN IT” BUTTON, AND THE PIN SELECTION.

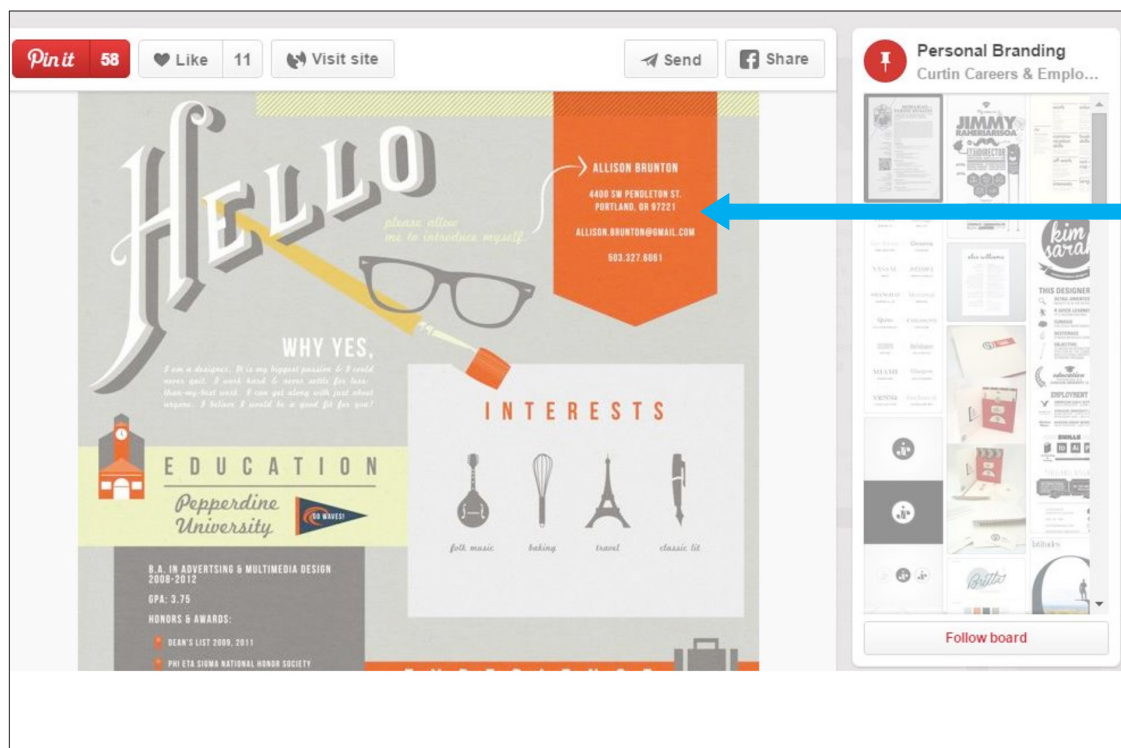


Returning to the questions in the introduction section of this guide, have students consider what draws their eye and attention. This will help draw others to the students' pins, especially on their respective Pinterest home pages, or encourage someone to repin content. More importantly, have students pay attention to where they send followers. This is an opportunity to drive traffic off Pinterest and to a LinkedIn profile, discover an organization of interest, or more. Here are suggestions for students on what to pin:

- **Organizations**—Where does the student want to work? What organizations inspire him or her? Or, which professional associations should he or she know about?
- **Causes**—If a student volunteers or is passionate about a subject, add content from respective websites or images that reflect that cause.
- **Blogs**—Does the student write a blog or follow one? Add links to posts.
- **Events**—Is your office hosting a panel or career fair? What about relevant networking events off-

campus? Pin the websites for these events.

- **Resumes**—Creative resumes are a new spin on traditional black and white, text-based versions. These resumes are image-based, with a mix of fonts and colors. Students, especially in creative industries, could develop a creative resume of their own, as well as pin examples for reference.
 - **Designs**—If students have online portfolios of work they designed, whether architecture, graphic design, websites, or logos, they can pin images that lead back to this portfolio.
 - **Advice**—There are many quotes on Pinterest. Use these to share advice or collect inspiration.
 - **Clothing**—Retail and fashion are among the most popular industries on this platform. Students can illustrate their professionalism by showing they know what's appropriate to wear for an interview or in the workplace.
- To encourage interaction and engagement among followers, students should pin often and interact. Add new content, like, comment, and tag pinners (discussed below in “Pin Descriptions”).

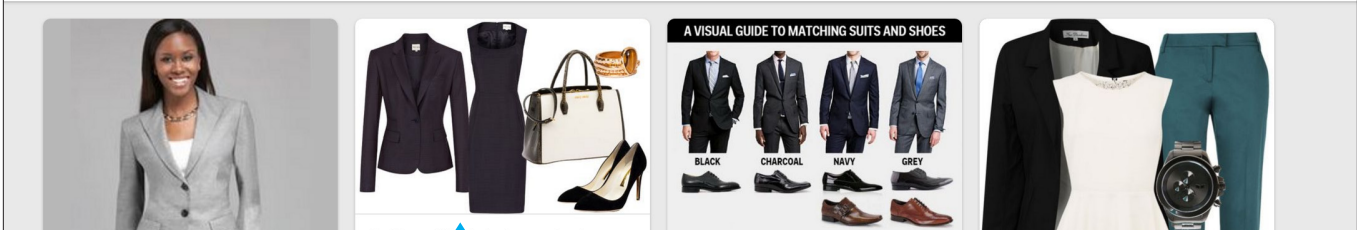


EXAMPLE OF A CREATIVE RESUME

Professional Attire

Present your best self by dressing professionally and appropriately. This board is to serve as inspiration and present ideas for professional attire.

Temple University Car... 20 Pins 64 Followers Follow board

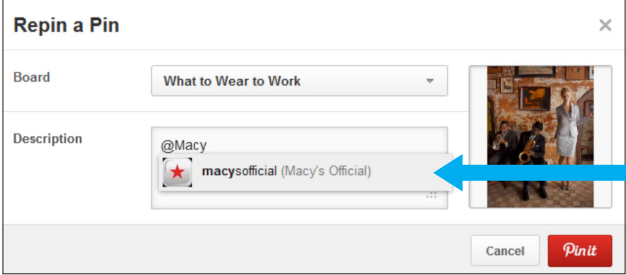


EXAMPLE OF AN APPROPRIATE WORKPLACE ATTIRE BOARD

PIN DESCRIPTIONS

To achieve the goal of drawing in individuals and organizations, as well as encouraging them to click a pin, the descriptions of pins must be clear and clever. A pinner also will want to make sure they tag the source or target audience whenever

possible. This grabs the source's attention, in addition to crediting them properly. To do this, use the "@" sign and type out the name. A list of account holders will be generated. This is similar to tagging someone on Facebook or Twitter.



HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF TAGGING MACY'S OFFICIAL PINTEREST ACCOUNT IN A PIN.

FINDING JOB AND INTERNSHIP LISTINGS ON PINTEREST

There are several ways to leverage Pinterest to find job and internship opportunities. This is an area of growth for the network, and one where there is room for creativity among organizations, pinners, and even career centers. Remember, Pinterest is part of a greater online strategy to help students set themselves apart from other applicants. Below are ideas on how to use the distinct qualities of the platform and lead the way:

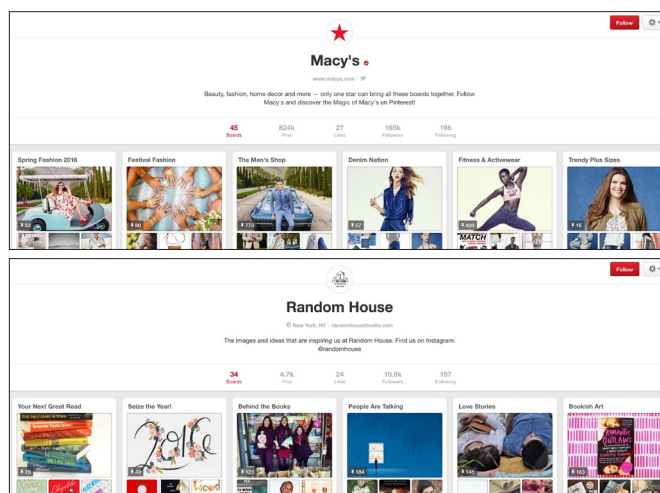
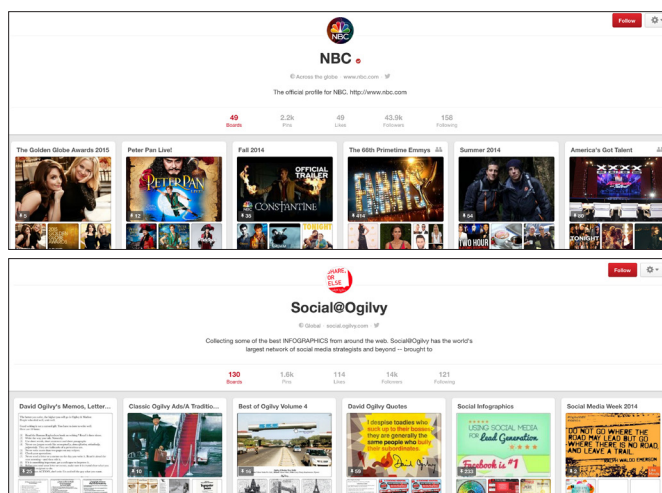
- Interact with or learn about an organization. Pin, repin, like, or comment on its content.
- Bookmark organizations and job/internship opportunities found on the web, as long as there is an image affiliated with the particular website.
- Post a traditional or creative resume on Pinterest.

• Pin a LinkedIn profile, website, or other platform that showcases qualifications and skillsets to attract recruiters.

With these elements in mind, it is important to recognize that certain industries leverage Pinterest more so than others. Industries based on creative communication and visual branding are among the most popular. These include fashion, retail, media, entertainment, communications, design, architecture, and food services. If you are interested in these areas, I would strongly encourage you to start pinning and interacting.

EXAMPLES OF ORGANIZATIONS ON PINTEREST

Below is a sampling of organizations and industries active on Pinterest:



Pinterest is a vibrant, unique platform that has taken the social media world by storm. It is one that can be leveraged for students' professional development, as long as they consider how to express themselves through this visual network. As you guide students in their use of Pinterest, remind them to consider their visual identity, showcasing their brand, and what organizations and individuals of interest they would like to highlight. Students can succeed on Pinterest—and career services professionals can help them—just remember to think with a visual state of mind.

Shannon Conklin is an associate director at the Temple University Career Center, where she focuses on technology, social media, and assessment. Connect with Shannon on [LinkedIn](#) or tweet her [@shannonkconklin](#).