

Networking & Informational Interviewing

What is networking? An association of individuals having a common interest, formed to provide mutual assistance, helpful information and the like (dictionary.com). Think of a network of computers; the computers are continually sending information back and forth to one another. The same is true for professional networking.

What is the goal of networking? To build mutually beneficial relationships that will help you learn about careers in a particular field/industry/employer and to identify potential opportunities. **80% of all jobs and internships are hidden and networking will help you to uncover potential opportunities.**

With whom do I network? You can start with friends and family, but be sure to maximize the time you have here at UD. Getting involved and getting to know your professors will pay off in the long term. The longer you remain in communication with these connections, the more likely you are to be referred to others or receive job leads. Below is a list of ideas for making connections at UD and beyond:

- Family friends and colleagues of parents
- Professors
- Peers through registered student organizations, fraternities, sororities, and classes
- Supervisors from jobs and internships
- Advisors, UD staff, deans, coaches
- UD Alumni
- Relevant online groups (such as the Blue Hen Career Network on LinkedIn)

Where & how do I network? Networking can occur at any time in any place, but here is a list to help you get started:

- Career Fairs, information sessions, and other Career Services Center events
- Networking receptions
- Professional organizations
- Online through LinkedIn and related virtual groups

Informational Interviewing While the events and activities above can facilitate the process of finding professionals to network with, the informational interview allows you to tap into the expertise and experience of those professionals. This process involves requesting a meeting with a professional (either in person or over the phone) where you can ask questions about their career path. This is your opportunity to gather data that can be useful in your career choice and/or job search. A list of potential questions that you might ask follows:

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- How did you choose your career path? What was your academic preparation?
 - What type(s) of positions do people with my major have in your organization?
 - What are some suggestions for someone who would like to work for an organization like yours?
 - What skills do you need to be successful in this job?
 - I am thinking of changing my major- what other fields match the skills and interests that people in this line of work generally possess?
 - Have you made a career change? If yes, what was it?
 - What is the hiring procedure when vacancies occur?
 - Do you know of anyone else with whom I should speak?

Remember: do not ask them for help in finding a job/internship. If they want to help you they will offer. Your goal is to get information to help yourself become marketable within the field.

30-second commercial When you are networking in-person, you will need a thirty-second “spot,” which tells the connection who are you and what you are seeking:

- Name, education and current or past career-related experiences
- Involvement on and off campus, internships and experiences
- Skills, strengths, and/or accomplishments
- Identify and establish connection with other person - ask open-ended questions

Introductory emails When introducing yourself to professionals to whom you were referred or are requesting an informational interview of, you will need to craft a brief introductory email. This email, and all other email communications with professionals, should convey appreciation and be written in a professional business style. Stay away from text language!

Sample Networking Email with UD Alumni:

Dear Mr. or Ms. _____:

As a junior at the University of Delaware majoring in exercise science, I found your profile on the Blue Hen Career Network in LinkedIn and noticed that you work in the same field that I am interested in entering. I would greatly appreciate an opportunity to talk with you for 15 minutes to ask some questions that I have prepared and obtain some career advice.

Would there be a convenient time for you to talk over the phone or in-person within the next two weeks? I would be grateful for any career advice you could share and look forward to hearing back from you.

*Sincerely,
Student Name*

After each informational interview, be sure to follow up with a thank you email. Your thank you message should be brief and touch on an aspect of your meeting that was particularly helpful to you and your goals. For more information see our [Follow Up Etiquette Resource & Sample Thank You Letter](#).

Networking Online In order to effectively network online, you will need to have a **personal brand**, which involves the following:

- **Review your online image.** This includes using the privacy settings for all social networking sites to which you belong. Use a site like BrandYourself.com to control what happens when your name is “Googled.”
- **Create your “professional brand.”** What do you want your online LinkedIn profile to say about you? Why should an employer hire you? Go to sites like studentbranding.com to learn more about how to build an effective brand.
- **Maintain your online image.** Update your profiles and statuses often. Continue to review all posts that “tag” you.

Now that you have a professional brand developed you can start networking online:

- **Explore the various networking sites that are available.** Use sites such as [Google+](#), [Zerply](#), [Re-Vu](#), and [Git](#).
- **Focus specifically on LinkedIn**
 1. **Develop your LinkedIn profile.** See resources on building your resume and LinkedIn profile to help you do this. Then, start finding your current connections and request that they connect with you on the site.
 2. **Build connections on LinkedIn.** As stated above, go through and find people to connect with that you already know, but remember that LinkedIn is not a social site; it is meant to be professional. As you are requesting to connect, make sure that you are using business professional language and that you are connecting with professionals, not just fellow students. Go through the connections of those that you are connected to and ask to be virtually introduced as well.
 3. **Polish your LinkedIn etiquette skills.** Remember, effective LinkedIn etiquette means that you should have at least one conversation with a professional before you ask them to connect with you. If you are inviting someone to connect with you that you just met, remind him or her of how and where you met. See link below to a resource about effective LinkedIn etiquette for more information:
http://university.linkedin.com/content/dam/university/global/en_US/site/pdf/TipSheet_NetworkingonLinkedIn.pdf
 4. **Use the Education Tool.** This tool is located under the Interests tab, which will allow you to see data on the career paths of 78,000+ University of Delaware students and alumni.
 5. **LinkedIn Groups.** Joining groups will allow you to efficiently network by locating professionals in your area of interest. We recommend that you start by building your UD alumni network through joining the [Blue Hen Career Network](#) and the [UD Official Alumni Group](#).

Networking Do's and Don'ts:

DO	DON'T
Send thank you notes and follow up often with your connections	Ask for jobs or internships, ask only for information
Be grateful for everyone's time	Treat an informational interview like a job interview
Reach out to referrals that come from your connections	Communicate with professionals like you would your friends
Request feedback on your resume	Make up informational interview questions on the fly
Ask to stay in contact and connect on LinkedIn	Be pushy or assuming. They will help you if they want to