

NETWORKING & INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING TIPS

NETWORKING BASICS

Networking is the process of developing relationships with working professionals to exchange information, advice, and professional support. This informal process often leads you to unadvertised jobs and professional opportunities.

- Networking is a gradual, on-going process which continues as your circle of contacts grows.
- Always be prepared with a few short sentences about yourself and your career goals that you will weave into conversation as the topic turns in this direction. See the CEO's handout "Your 30 Second Personal Pitch" for help in getting started.
- Successful networking is an art that you will develop over time. You will become more comfortable with it through practice.

WHERE TO EXPAND YOUR NETWORK

Networking can take place anywhere because there are people who are potential resources wherever you go.

- Family, friends, and neighbors
- Classes and seminars
- Social gatherings
- Professors and staff members
- Internships and volunteer experiences
- Job fairs
- Professional conferences and association meetings
- Professional listservs and newsgroups
- Informational interviews
- Religious organizations
- Goucher Alumnae/i, by joining a Career Community, attending Coffee Chats and Career Exploration Nights, and using the People Search and Groups in LinkedIn. Go to Alumni and Family Connections on the CEO homepage to learn more.

THE NETWORKING PROCESS

When you network with contacts you already have, such as internship supervisors, professors, and neighbors, you can directly remind them that you are looking for professional contacts in your field who may be able to provide you with career information and job leads. When you are networking with new contacts at a professional or social gathering, clearly introduce yourself and use a firm handshake. Start conversations with neutral comments, such as discussing the event that is taking place. Do some research prior to an event so you know the type of people who will be there. Ask the host/hostess to introduce you to new people. Sit with new people at social gatherings and stretch past your comfort zone to make conversation. Ask people what type of work they do or where they work, and let the conversation steer towards your interests and goals. Ask if your contact knows anyone in your professional field with whom you could speak.

With all types of networking, remember these tips:

- Smile and show enthusiasm.
- Maintain a professional tone.
- Exchange business cards or contact information.
- Follow up with all referrals to arrange informational interviews or apply for specific job leads. Always mention the name of the contact referring you.
- Maintain a log of contacts and correspondence.
- Always send thank you notes when your contacts help you.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING BASICS

Informational interviewing is a method of obtaining information on career fields and uncovering jobs that are not publicly advertised. It is a network building, information-gathering phase of a job search with a professional in a target career. Informational interviews are an excellent opportunity to connect with professionals in your field, develop an understanding of that field and expand your awareness of the job market. Through this process, you will often find job opportunities without specifically asking for a job.

- Begin by making a list of contacts in your career field from your current network, using the brainstorming ideas above.
- If you know no one in a particular field, you can begin by targeting employers. For help in researching employers review the Career Management section of the CEO webpage.
- Prepare a short script, called a Personal Pitch, that introduces yourself and explains that you are currently exploring career options. Practice this script several times before you call so that you feel comfortable. See the “30 Second Personal Pitch” handout.
- Contact your list by email or phone and ask for 15-20 minutes of their time to discuss their career path. If you do not hear back from someone you contacted by email, you may try to contact him/her by phone in several days.
- Research the organization and industry prior to your interview so that you can express your knowledge and interest to the interviewer.
- Dress professionally and bring a copy of your resume. You could ask your contact to offer feedback. It should not be offered with the expectation that they will pass it along on your behalf.
- Demonstrate enthusiasm by making strong eye contact, a firm handshake, and smiling. Remember a key to any interview is establishing a good rapport with the interviewer, and through your interest and enthusiasm in the field, interviewers will often ask to look at your resume and offer guidance on your career search.
- Ask questions about the company and field, as listed below.
- Be prepared to talk about your own career goals and interests. Prepare for this as if you were going on an actual interview. See the CEO handout on “Preparing for an Interview” for additional tips on interviewing techniques.
- Ask for additional contacts and always follow up with a thank you note.

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

- How did you begin in the field? What type of education/qualifications did you have?
- What are some of your challenges and rewards about your job/field?
- Are you active in any professional organizations that you would recommend?
- What is your typical day like?
- What is the career progression in your field/job?
- What do you think the employment outlook is in this field?
- What types of positions are in your company? What degrees or qualifications are required for them?
- Given my qualifications, what type of positions do you think I would be most qualified for?
- What types of responsibilities do you have in this company?
- What are starting salaries in this field?
- Do you know of other companies I should explore that do this same type of work?
- Do you have other people that you think would be helpful for me to talk with? May I use your name when contacting them?

CONNECTING WITH GOUCHER ALUMNI

Goucher’s **Career Communities** are a new way to think about and explore career options. At Goucher, we know your major does not always determine your career path and that your career interests may or may not directly align with your studies—that’s why our five communities are organized by industries, not by majors. Communities are collections of people—students, alumnae/i, employers, faculty, staff, and family members—with shared career interests that fall into broader industry or occupational categories. Each industry-based community serves as a place to engage in career education, share industry-specific resources, and foster meaningful relationships with others in the career communities. Learn about the different communities and join one or more of them at www.goucher.edu/careercommunities

There many ways to connect with alumni, both on and off campus, such as Coffee Chats, Job Shadow and LinkedIn. Go to the Alumni and Family Connections from the CEO homepage. Additionally, you may take advantage of the career communities virtual networking page found on the CEO homepage.

For other tips & questions contact the CEO at 410-337-6191 or visit the CEO website at www.goucher.edu/CEO