

YOUR GUIDE TO NETWORKING

Networking is the process of building and maintaining relationships with people for mutual support. **Experts estimate 65-85% of all job leads come from people you know**, making your network one of your most powerful job and internship search tools. However, **networking helps you do more than find opportunities**. Building meaningful relationships with people in careers, industries, and organizations of interest to you, also provides you access to

useful information that can help you make informed academic and career decisions.

This sheet covers some networking basics. **For more networking information or assistance, visit the Office of Career Services website (careers.cua.edu) or schedule an appointment with a career counselor (see FAQs on the bottom of this page).**

QUICK TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE NETWORKING

BE PREPARED

Networking can happen anywhere, so you should always be prepared to give your “elevator pitch”. That is, you should be able to speak about your academic and professional achievements and goals in 30 to 60 seconds. Additionally, if you are attending an event, prepare relevant talking points and questions you can use to start conversations.

BUILD RAPPORT

The quickest way to kill a conversation and make someone feel defensive is to start with “What do you do?” Rather than discussing work first, begin by talking about the event, venue, speaker, where the person is from, or what drew them to the event. During natural conversation people will often reveal their job and where they work.

BE INTENTIONAL AND SINCERE

Networking is a mutual relationship. It is just as important to sincerely listen to others’ interests and accomplishments as it is to share your own. Learn names, make eye contact, listen intently, ask questions, and **focus on how you can help others** (by sharing resources, contacts, etc.). Most importantly, follow through when you offer help. When you are sincere, people will be more willing to reciprocate with their own information and contacts.

NETWORKING FAQs

WHAT ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR SHY PEOPLE OR INTROVERTS AT EVENTS?

Large networking events can be intimidating, however, are not the only way to meet people. The back of this sheet has networking methods that may suite your strengths. Also, when networking, it is important to recognize most people are intimidated by the idea of starting conversations with strangers. By preparing questions and talking points ahead of time, you may feel more confident.

DO I NEED BUSINESS CARDS?

We highly suggest business cards as they **make exchanging contact information quick and easy and allow you to show your personality** through personalized designs. Make sure to include your name, contact information, and any links to professional websites (e.g. LinkedIn URL, portfolio, etc.). You can also add the degree you are working towards and a brief description of yourself similar to a LinkedIn headline.

COLLECT BUSINESS CARDS AND TAKE NOTES

When a natural break appears in the conversation, acknowledge how you have enjoyed the conversation and ask if they have a business card so you can follow-up on LinkedIn. **After exchanging business cards, make a quick note on the back of theirs** of the date, where you met, and conversation details. This will help you remember details for when you follow-up.

FOLLOW-UP AND MAINTAIN THE RELATIONSHIP

After the event, **set aside time to connect on LinkedIn and send emails to your new contacts**. Reintroduce yourself, mention how you met, express how you enjoyed the conversation, share any resources or information you offered, and ask for a time to talk more (see the section on informational interviews on the back of this sheet). Maintain relationships by periodically keeping in touch both in-person and online. Set up times to meet, send relevant articles and resources, and share your successes and congratulate them on theirs.

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR CONTACTS

Using a notebook, spreadsheet, or other tool to create a system to keep track of contact information, conversation notes, and when you were last in contact with the person. As your network expands, it is helpful to have this written record to maintain the relationship.

WHAT SHOULD I SAY IN A NETWORKING EMAIL?

In the Cover Letter and Professional Correspondence guide, you can learn about what to include and view samples of networking emails and LinkedIn requests. You can find the guide on the Office of Career Services website (bit.ly/CatholicUCLGuide).

HOW CAN I GET MORE HELP WITH NETWORKING?

- For more information see the Office of Career Services website (careers.cua.edu).
- **Schedule an appointment** by visiting 102 McMahan or calling 202-319-5623 between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM.
- For a quick résumé critique or question, **visit us during walk-in hours** Monday-Thursday 3:30-4:15 PM.
- **Check out the resources and tips featured on our blog** (catholicucareers.wordpress.com)

WAYS TO BUILD YOUR NETWORK

Professional connections are important, but **we all have different personalities and prefer to connect with people in different ways**. Thankfully, organized networking events are not the only way to make new contacts. The following are some ways you can build your professional network.

LEVERAGE EXISTING CONTACTS

You already have a vast network of classmates, alumni, relatives, family friends, neighbors, advisors, faculty, mentors, coaches, colleagues, supervisors, etc. Even if these people do not work in your field of interest, they often know someone who does and would be willing to introduce to you.

USE ONLINE RESOURCES

LinkedIn is the premier online tool by which you can grow and maintain your professional network (see Career Service's LinkedIn handout for more). However, **LinkedIn is not the only way to build and maintain professional connections online**. You can also join professional interest Facebook groups, go to Meetups (meetup.com), and engage on Twitter with professionals, recruiters, and organizations. Before you do, make sure to have a professional social media presence.

VOLUNTEER

By volunteering at events and with organizations related to your field of interest, you often meet like-minded individuals with a diverse range of skills, experiences, and unique resources (while contributing to a good cause). By meeting people from different backgrounds than your own you increase the value and reach of your network. Begin by checking out the service opportunities offered by Campus Ministry (service.cua.edu).

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

WHAT IS AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

An informational interview is an informal conversation (in person, over the phone, or by e-mail) with someone doing something in an area of interest to you. **The goal is not to find job openings, but to gather first-hand information and professional advice** about industries, career paths, positions, organizations, etc.

WHO TO INTERVIEW

You can arrange interviews with alumni, supervisors, faculty and staff, other personal contacts, and anyone doing anything relevant and interesting to you. Not sure where to start? Begin with family, friends, advisors, or other people who are easy to talk to. You can search for Catholic University alumni with the same major or doing something interesting and/or relevant to you using LinkedIn's alumni feature (linkedin.com/school/11521/alumni/).

ARRANGING AND PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

To arrange the interview, call or email the person. In your message, introduce yourself, tell them how you got their contact information and why you are contacting them, and ask for a convenient 20-30 minutes to talk. **Prior to making contact, make sure to research the individual, their organization, and the industry.** Use your research to prepare open-ended questions before contacting them in case they ask to talk on the spot. Your research and questions will also help begin and guide conversation during a scheduled interview.

CONDUCT INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

For those who prefer one-on-one conversations, asking individuals to talk for 20-30 minutes over the phone or over coffee may be preferable. See the Informational Interviews section below for more on how to arrange and conduct informational interviews.

JOIN STUDENT OR ALUMNI ORGANIZATIONS

Being involved with organizations allows you to **make connections with students and alumni with similar interests**. Organizations will also often hold professional development events (e.g. panel discussions and employer site visits), which will allow you to meet alumni and local professionals. Use The Nest (nest.cua.edu) to search student organizations (or start your own – sorc.cua.edu) and visit the Office of Alumni Relations website (engage.alumni.edu) to find alumni groups.

JOIN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Professional organizations often have a student chapter or reduced student membership fee. Get involved with campus, local, and national chapters through leadership or volunteer opportunities and by attending conferences and events. By doing this you have the **opportunity to engage with a network of professionals already in the field** who are willing to help students and other professionals.

ATTEND LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, AND PANELS

Take advantage of educational events on and off campus. Often these events are smaller and attract like-minded people, **making it easier to strike up conversations with other attendees about the speaker or topic**. Check Handshake (bit.ly/CUAHandshake) and The Nest (nest.cua.edu) for upcoming events.

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Like a job interview, dress appropriately, arrive on time, be prepared to give an overview of yourself (your experience and career goals), and take notes. **Use your prepared open-ended questions to guide the conversation, but also let the dialogue flow naturally.** End the interview by thanking them for their time and asking if you may contact them again in the future. You can also ask for the names and contact information of individuals who they believe may be helpful to your information gathering.

NOTE: Bring your resume, but do not offer it right away as it may come off as looking for a job. Once you have gained rapport, ask if they would be willing to look at your resume and offer input.

FOLLOWING UP AFTER THE INTERVIEW

After the interview write down and reflect on what you learned. How may the knowledge and advice shared with you impact your academic and career decisions? Like a job interview, **send a thank-you note or email within 24 hours**. In this note, make sure to attach any documents (e.g. your resume) they may have requested. Make sure to also nurture the relationship by engaging with them on LinkedIn and periodically keeping in touch both in-person and online. Set up times to meet, send relevant articles and resources, and share your successes and congratulate them on theirs.