Relationship Building (Networking) and Informational Interview Tips for International Students

Networking
Your actual search for a job can begin in an obvious, yet not so obvious place...with the people you know. The concept of networking simply ties into a human trait – the desire to help others. Never underestimate the knowledge and influence of people you know.

- A network is a series of interlocking connections with people who may be helpful to you in your job search
- Begin building a network by first contacting members of your family, other relatives, neighbors, personal friends, general acquaintances, professors, work associates, and colleagues. Do not set limits on who should or should not be a part of your network
- Let everyone know that you’re looking for a job and what type of job you’re looking for
- Determine if they can provide you with information about a certain type of job, provide you with information about a particular organization, or refer you to others who know about a career field or specific organization
- Maintain these contacts by checking back with them periodically

Informational Interviews
- The goal of informational interviewing is to gather information
- Like networking, informational interviewing is based on the premise that people are a tremendous source of information
- Its purpose is to gain information about a career field upon which to base some career decisions and to put you in touch with possible job leads
- Being with people you know (your network contacts)
  - Choose from this group those who are in career fields to which you aspire or people in related career areas
- Take advantage of your student status
- Professionals tend to want to help students who show a genuine interest in their field of expertise
- Do your homework and research about the individual, company, and industry
- Schedule an appointment for a specific amount of time
- Ask thoughtful questions
  - What are the various jobs available in this field?
  - What types of training do companies offer those who enter this field?
  - What is the typical entry-level salary in this field?
- What do you find unique about your career field?
- From everything that you’ve observed, what problems can you site regarding working in this career?
- What skills or personal characteristics do you feel contribute most to success in this industry?
- If limited work experience, highlight academic project skill sets you can bring to an employer
- Follow up:
  - Always ask for a referral to someone else
    - Ask the person with whom you are speaking to refer you to others who would be good sources of information
  - Evaluate what you have been told critically. Are there trends developing from one person to another?
  - Don’t forget to follow up after the informational interview and send a thank you note!

**Gathering information**

- **Research industry or field**
  - Economic trends
  - Future growth areas
  - Potential for new markets
  - Problems and areas of concern
  - Competition and main players
- **Where to find this information:**
  - Vault/Career Insider
  - Informational interviews
  - Industry blogs
  - Trade magazines

- **Research the organization**
  - Products and services
  - Organizational structure
  - Reputation
  - Career paths within company
  - Professional development
- **Where to find this information:**
  - Employer website
  - Employer info session
  - Informational interviews
  - Google News

**Things to avoid**

- Avoid asking for a job
- Don’t go unprepared
- Don’t dominate conversation
- Don’t hand out your resume unless requested