

# NETWORKING

## research & relationships

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## WHAT IS NETWORKING?

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Most people associate the idea of networking with some degree of discomfort. At the same time, they realize it is touted as the single most effective tool for success in career exploration and searches for jobs and internships. We prefer to frame networking as a method of applied research, collecting information from individuals who are most likely delighted to share their knowledge and experiences, and offer advice if they have the time. It is actually quite rare for someone to be anything but flattered to be asked to do this.



Networking is not just researching career interests by meeting and talking with contacts. It is also building from one contact to another (and another), and maintaining relationships with them all throughout your career.

### **What is networking?**

**Maybe it is as simple as RESEARCH which builds a network or collection of RELATIONSHIPS.**

## NETWORKING STAGES AND STRATEGY

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There should be an awareness of, and distinction between, at least two levels of goals for networking for career interests:

Level 1: Early stages of career exploration.

Level 2: Seeking more in-depth internship and job search advice in a field of established interest.

It is important, when you reach out to individuals, to clarify which stage you are in and to *consider who the most appropriate contacts are for the stage you are in*. If you shoot too high up the ladder when you are just beginning to form your interest, you risk being unimpressive. Build up to more senior contacts after you have acquired a wealth of information about the field and how your interests and skill sets can apply.

For each stage, you want to be able to have a thoughtful response to:

*"Why do you think you might be interested in this field?"*

### **Did you know?**

**Approximately 80% of people hired each year previously had contact with the employing organization before their job was even posted.**

## **8 STEPS TO TAKE WHEN NETWORKING**

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### **1. Identify a field or type of work that has captured your interest.**

For some individuals this step is easy; they have had a field of interest for some time. For many others, exploration of how their interests may translate to the workplace will require some additional research. Counselors in the CCPA are here to help you engage in this process.

### **2. Gather early stage research of this field or type of work.**

Research your field of interest enough to be able to specifically explain, with specific examples, what about it captures your attention. General career information is available online through the CCPA. Attending an alumnae/i panel, networking event, or employer information session can also provide a good start.

### **3. Identify and start a list of people who are working in your areas of interest.**

Inventory your memory and ask friends and family for potential subjects. Browse alumnae/i lists. Consider people who may have engaged in studies, athletics, or other co-curricular activities in which you participate. Make it a habit to ask people what their work involves. You never know who will turn out to be a valuable contact, and most people will be flattered by your interest.

### **4. Have a resume completed and reviewed before reaching out to contacts.**

While you must always make it clear that you are seeking information and advice (and never ask for help finding an internship or job), you should also have a resume ready. A contact will appreciate having information about your background, since it can demonstrate your interest and guide them as to what advice may be helpful for you. Never miss an opportunity to look prepared!

### **5. Reach out to ask if you can talk with the contact to learn more about his/her work.**

We highly recommend your first couple of meetings be with people with whom you already feel very comfortable, so it feels less risky to you: a close family member, a recent grad you already know, a friend's parent, etc. Remember to consider what level of knowledge you have about a field when selecting who to reach out to, and always be able to articulate why the field interests you.

### **6. When possible, meet in person in the contact's workplace.**

You will always learn the most by speaking with the contact in the workplace. This can also give you a chance to start becoming comfortable engaging with professional settings. Dress appropriately for the environment, which usually means business professional attire.

### **7. Always thank your contact for his/her time and advice within 24 hours by email.**

A thank you note need not be long, but it does need to be prompt and checked carefully for spelling and grammar. Do not advertise sloppiness; it will not get you anywhere.

### **8. Nurture the relationship. Never burn bridges.**

Follow up with contacts. Tell them periodically how your effort is progressing. Report if you met with someone they suggested, thanking them again for that contact. If a contact plays a part in any breakthroughs for you, be very sure to let them know and thank them again.

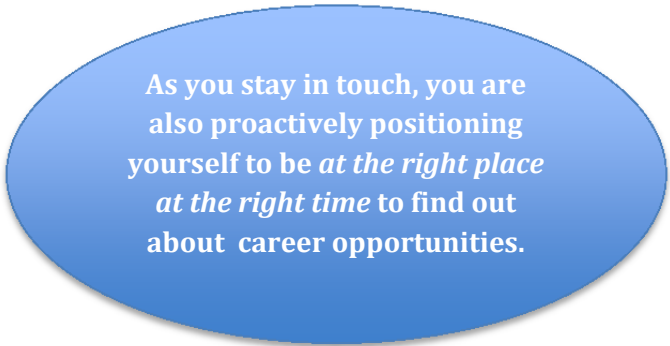
## RESEARCHING INFORMATION FROM FIELD EXPERTS

*The informational interview: the job seeker's strongest career research tool.*

When starting to explore a particular field of interest, or when seeking more in-depth advice and information, INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS are the way to learn more about an industry from professionals in that field. View it as research.

**What is an informational interview?** As you personally meet or talk to people in an industry or field in which you may hope to work, you have a chance to learn from “those on the inside” about current market issues and trends, both industry-wide and in a particular organization.

**How do I get started?** Through INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING, you begin a relationship with a potential advocate for your future. So, do your research online and make a list of organizations that you would love to work for some day. Identify someone in a department you are interested in, and reach out to request a meeting. A great way to begin is with family and friends, and alumni (the CCPA can explain how to tap into the alumni network).



As you stay in touch, you are also proactively positioning yourself to be *at the right place at the right time* to find out about career opportunities.

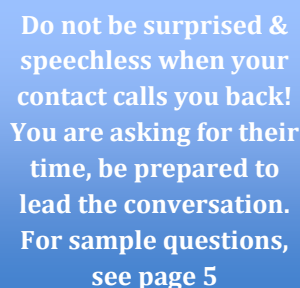
## SETTING UP THE MEETING

Now that you have identified potential contacts, it is time to contact them. While there are always exceptions, email is the best first outreach. This way, you can carefully craft your message in advance:

1. Introduce yourself (err on the side of formality).
2. Say how you got their contact information.
3. Be clear about what you are seeking and state what you'd like to have happen. The art is in how you ask—you want to be concise, direct and considerate of their time and position.
4. Tell them you hope to gain career information and advice or information about their work environment, etc.—not help finding a job!
5. Meetings are most effective when conducted in person, especially in the contact's workplace, but can happen over phone, Skype or by email.
6. Double-check spelling, grammar and tone. *For sample correspondence, visit pages 8-11*

### **Does reaching out make you feel uncomfortable?**

You are not alone. It is important to listen to this feeling. Ask yourself the following questions; if the answer is YES, then go for it! If not, you may want to re-frame how to approach the contact, most especially if they are a 'dream contact.' You don't want to make a bad first impression.



Do not be surprised & speechless when your contact calls you back! You are asking for their time, be prepared to lead the conversation. For sample questions, see page 5

- In 10 years, if someone were asking these questions of me, would I want to respond?
- Have I researched beforehand?
- Do I have a carefully written email to seek their advice and information, with appropriate spelling, grammar and tone?

## THE MEETING

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### Preparation

- Before the informational interview or meeting, thoroughly research the person you are speaking with, as well as their organization. Coming to the meeting with a basic background shows you are prepared—neglecting to learn basic information may indicate to your contact that you are not taking the interview seriously.
- Have your introduction and questions prepared ahead of time.
- Dress professionally. Meet the professional standards of the field you are exploring.
- Arrive early. Few things give a worse impression than showing up late. Being on time means arriving 10-15 minutes early. Make sure you leave plenty of time to allow for unforeseen travel problems.
- Turn off your cell phone!
- Greet your contact with a firm handshake, warm smile and direct eye contact.



#### RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

Be very professional from start to finish. The key is preparation, attention to detail and follow-up.

### During the meeting

- Begin by introducing yourself and thanking your contact for making time to meet with you. Confirm that the plan to meet for the time allocated still works for them. This shows you are professional and respectful of their time. Watch the clock. Make sure you don't go over the time you requested.
- Have the appropriate number of questions for the time available.
- Work through your list of questions methodically and, unlike an interview for employment, take brief notes. Write down contact information of people they suggest to build your network.
- It is not appropriate to ask for a job in an informational interview. The goal is to learn about the contact's job and role in the organization, how they chose their career path or field of work, and their advice for preparation and entry into the field, and to share information about yourself and your career aspirations.

#### Dress Tips:

Open-toe shoes or a wrinkled golf shirt may be in your go-to wardrobe, but they are not appropriate in the workplace.

Be thoughtful about how you dress!

- It is okay to ask for advice on what kinds of organizations are likely to have summer internships or job opportunities so you can conduct a better informed job search for yourself.

- Close the conversation by thanking them for their time and tell them how valuable this opportunity was for you.

## INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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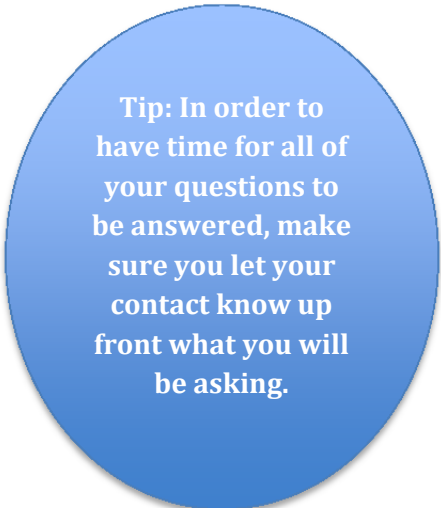
### **What type of questions should I ask in the informational interview?**

While there are limitless good networking questions to ask particular to each field, there are 5 basics to try to cover:

1. Briefly, what was your career path?
2. What do you do?
3. If you weren't doing this, what else would you have chosen?
4. What advice can you offer me as I prepare and seek to enter this field?
5. Is there someone else you recommend I speak with?

Ask questions and build the relationship. Let them be the expert. With these core questions in mind, you should pick and choose a few additional questions that feel authentic and interesting to you.

- What do you find most and least rewarding about your work?
- What classes, projects or other activities can I do to prepare myself for this career field?
- To your knowledge, are internships and/or entry level positions common in this field? If so, do you know of specific organizations to recommend I reach out to?
- What are current issues and trends impacting this field and how?
- How did you prepare yourself for this job/profession?
- What is the most valuable thing you learned in college?
- Knowing what you know now, would you take the same job again?
- What skills and/or personal qualities are necessary for success in this career?
- What are some related positions/organizations a person interested in this field might explore?
- What books, journals or web resources would you recommend that I read?
- Which professional associations should I join?
- What would be a typical next career move for someone in your position?
- What recommendations do you have for me regarding a job search strategy?
- What kinds of backgrounds do people in this organization (field) have?
- I've built a target list of organizations in this field. Would you be willing to look at my list and give me any suggestions you might have?
- Are there certain classes or training programs you would recommend for building related experience?
- How would you describe the culture of this field/employer?



**Tip: In order to have time for all of your questions to be answered, make sure you let your contact know up front what you will be asking.**

## **FOLLOW-UP AND MAINTAINING CONTACT**

*Always follow up an informational interview with a THANK YOU email within 24 hours.* In addition, handwritten letters are rare and therefore get noticed. It is important to let the contact know how much their time and help meant to you. It is not necessary for the letter to be long and elaborate.

Continue the relationship, keeping your contact in the loop by periodically making contact again by email or phone, if you spoke with someone they suggested or are successful in obtaining an internship or finding a job. This way, you keep them involved with your career plans, which may prove valuable to you in other ways later on in your career.

*Sample THANK YOU correspondence can be found on page 11.*

## **WORKING A NETWORKING EVENT – SOME BASIC TIPS**

- Have a reviewed and completed resume ready to take with you or to send as follow up.
- Have business cards. These are always easy to carry and give away.
- Dress appropriately – business casual or business professional. When in doubt, dress UP for the occasion.
- If it is possible to know who will be attending in advance, look over the list to see if there are particular people you would like to meet and then seek them out.
- Meet people with a firm, dry handshake.
- Have a short elevator pitch rehearsed and ready in your mind to introduce yourself and a few key points of your interests and experience.
- Have a few questions rehearsed and in mind to ask.
- Collect business cards and keep track of contact information from people you meet.
- For high levels of interest, you may want to ask them for a follow-up meeting in their office to learn more.
- Send follow-up email notes to people you meet who are prospects for further action.
- If it seems appropriate, by all means follow up by sending a resume as background for further advice.

## **STAYING ORGANIZED**

As you meet professional people, keep track of them for future reference.

*Remember, you are building relationships.*

- Keep business cards. It is helpful to make notes on the back of business cards with information you want to remember and when you met the person.
- Request to link with contacts on LinkedIn—this way you have updated contact information.
- Create and maintain a database including name, company, title, address, phone, email address, dates and any other information you want at a glance.

## LINKEDIN & SOCIAL NETWORKING ADVICE

**Social networking:** a lot of great information can be harnessed online – including relationship development. The important thing is to set parameters and balance multiple ways to reach out to and maintain contact with different professional groups and contacts.

**LinkedIn:** *THE* hub for most professional relationship contact.

**Facebook and Twitter** are used more as research tools to learn about companies, marketing, buzzwords, and current events for most professions.

### **Social networking pointers and tips:**

- Use LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter to learn about organizations in which you are interested, as well as to build your network within professional groups and read news in your fields of interest.
- Learn how to use LinkedIn here: <http://learn.linkedin.com/students/step-1/>
- Complete your LinkedIn profile to 100%.
- Be mindful and keep up-to-date with privacy settings (*do not* put your address – including on your resume - on LinkedIn)
- Google yourself. Be proactive about what information is searchable about you online.
- Update your information regularly.
- If you choose to have a picture at all, be picky about what kind of professional photo you post.
- Use your intuition on what information you share – your instincts are very powerful tools.
- Make sure you join professional groups on LinkedIn including:
  - Haverford College's Official Career Connections Group
  - Haverford College Worldwide Alumni
  - Haverford and Bryn Mawr Bi-College Alumnae/i and sub-group affiliations
- Utilize complementary sites like Goalee: <https://www.goalee.com/>  
*Learn about Goalee here: <https://vimeo.com/41310287>*

### Did you know?

CareerBuilder's recent study of over 2,600 hiring managers found:  
*45% reported searching for information on candidates using a social networking site.*  
*11% reported that candidate screening by social media will be implemented in the very near future.*  
*35% reported that they found content on social networking sites which caused them NOT to hire a candidate.*

***The trick about using social networks for career exploration is to remain active!***  
**Started a new job or landed a scholarship? Post it.**  
**Found an interesting article pertaining to your field? Share it.**  
**This way you remain current, and in the minds of people in your network.**



## SAMPLE ONE: INTRODUCTIONS & BEGINNING CORRESPONDENCE

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Dear Ms. Lane,

My name is Ann Droid, and I am a Haverford College student considering a career in journalism. I am reaching out at the suggestion of Tess Mercer '01 whom I met this past weekend at reunion. She thought you might be a good person from whom to seek some ideas and advice about becoming a reporter after graduating with a B.A. in English. I was wondering if you would be willing to meet with me for about 20 to 30 minutes for an informational interview so I can learn more about your position as an investigative journalist.

Sincerely,  
Ann Droid '16

*Hi Ann,*

*I'd be delighted to chat! I'm on vacation until next week. Tuesday and Friday morning are best for me. How about 10 am either day at my office on Pine & 10<sup>th</sup>. Let me know what works best for you.*

*Lana '06*

Dear Ms. Lane,

Thank you for your prompt reply! Friday would work wonderfully. I so appreciate your time and wanted you to know in advance what I was hoping to learn from you:

- How did you get started in your career from HC to your current role?
- What did you find was most helpful in terms of preparation for your career academically/on campus?
- What is a typical day/week like?
- Do you have any advice for me in launching a career in this field?

Thank you again; looking forward to meeting you on Friday at 10am at your office.

Hope you have a great vacation!

Sincerely,  
Ann

## SAMPLE TWO: INTRODUCTIONS & BEGINNING CORRESPONDENCE

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Dear Mr. Nu:

I am a sophomore at Haverford College studying History and am very interested in learning more about the field of archiving. I was speaking with my roommate's father, Dennis Lawson, about my interests and he mentioned that you would be a good person to speak with in regard to different opportunities in the field as well as provide insight into other types of activities I should take advantage of while in college. I was wondering if you would be willing to meet with me for a 20 minute informational interview to discuss your career path and to learn more about your experiences at the National Archives.

Haverford has provided me with an excellent starting ground, as I am currently employed by the Special Collections division of our library, helping to preserve texts. This experience has been very beneficial and eye-opening to me, and I would like to learn how I can continue to expand my knowledge of the field. I have enclosed my resume, which provides additional detail about my other experiences and skills and may help frame any advice you can offer.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you. I will be in the DC area over fall break (the week of October 14<sup>th</sup>) and I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,  
Cordé Downes

*Dear Corde,*

*A friend of Dennis is a friend of mine. I'd be happy to speak with you. I'm hosting a conference the week of the 14<sup>th</sup>, so I'm afraid that won't work. I would, however, be happy to chat via Skype another time. Would next week on Tuesday at 7pm work for you?*

*Cheers,  
Timothy*

Dear Timothy,

Thank you for your willingness to speak with me – I'm really excited to learn more from you. Skyping on Tuesday next week at 7pm is great, if you'll please excuse my appearance as I'll be coming from soccer practice; we are mid-season! My Skype name is Corde.Downes5. I'm hoping you'll have time to address a brief history of your own journey into the field, what you like most and least about it, what professional organizations you suggest someone in my shoes being a part of and any other job search strategies you'd suggest I employ in addition to any candid thoughts you have about my resume.

I'm looking forward to your advice. Hope you have a great week.

Kind Regards,

Corde Downes

610-555-1212

Skype: Corde.Downes5

## SAMPLE THREE: INTRODUCTIONS & BEGINNING CORRESPONDENCE

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Dear Dr. Isley:

I hope you are well. I'm a Haverford student from the class of 2015 and learned about your work in the environmental field through the recent article in the alumni magazine. I'm excited to have the chance to get in touch with you because of your extensive knowledge and expertise in the environmental field through your work at Maryland's Department of the Environment.

I have spent the last summer in China completing an internship studying erosion control policy and how changes in that area are affecting the growth of the sector. I was extremely interested to read the Erosion and Sediment Control Report that was published by the Department of the Environment this June, and was heartened by many of the progressive recommendations included in it. If you have a chance in the coming days, I would welcome the opportunity to learn a bit about the projects that you are involved in as director of land management administration, and also hear what advice you may have on launching a career in this arena.

Would it be possible to schedule a conversation for 30 minutes? I'm beginning the job search in environmental research and would welcome your advice on how to best position myself. Please let me know if you're able to find time for a conversation; I would be grateful to engage with you.

All the best,

Dina Soar

A.B. in Geology (at Bryn Mawr) '15

610-555-1212

*Dear Dina,*

*It is great to hear someone so enthusiastic about an important cause from my Alma mater. Is Dr. Chan still teaching in the department? He was a favorite of mine. Here is a link to some of my current projects: [www.projects.com](http://www.projects.com).*

*I can talk this Saturday at noon. The number to best reach me at is 555-555-5555. Looking forward to talking.*

*Regards,*

*Ina*

Dear Dr. Isley,

I'm thrilled; Saturday at noon would be excellent. Thank you for the website, I'll be sure to read it before we talk. I'm including my resume for your background and would appreciate any and all feedback.

**(\*\*\*note: make sure your resume is reviewed by the CCPA first!\*\*\*)**

Thank you in advance for your time and I'm looking forward to talking soon.

Sincerely,

Dina

A.B. in Geology (at Bryn Mawr) '15

610-555-1212

## **SAMPLE FOUR:**

### **INTRODUCTIONS & BEGINNING CORRESPONDENCE**

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Dear Ms. Vernon:

My name is Leslie Adams, a recent graduate (English '13) from Haverford College. I read in the alumni directory that you are an architect in Philadelphia. When I looked at your website, I learned that your firm just gained the contract to design the new children's art museum, with plans to make it a LEED certified building. I'd like to talk with you about your work, this project, and your firm's commitment to environmentally conscious and sustainable design as they relate to my career interests. Would it be possible to schedule a time to meet with you to talk about your career path and your perspective on ways to enter the field? I'd enjoy hearing your story and appreciate any insight you could provide. Please let me know if there are any days and times that might work for you. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you very much for your time.

Regards,  
Leslie Adams '13  
610-555-1212

## **SAMPLE FIVE:**

### **THANK YOU CORRESPONDENCE**

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Dear Mr. Bailey,

I want to thank you again for the time you took to talk with me yesterday. Having this opportunity to ask you questions about my future career interests was very valuable to me. You've been very generous with your time, and learning more about ( field ) has helped me to better understand the things that will be most helpful toward getting relevant experience to enter the field.

I will stay in touch as I move forward and gain further opportunities to grow professionally. Again, many thanks. *(Don't be afraid to make your note more personal by including things you discussed in your conversation.)*

Sincerely,  
Sarah Dolan  
610-526-5174  
sdolan@haverford.edu