Networking is the process of making connections and building relationships that provide you with information, advice, and further contacts, all to enhance your ability to make informed career decisions and tap into unadvertised internship/job vacancies.

These relationships have the potential to be mutually beneficial, especially in the long term. Networking can take place in a group or one-on-one setting.

Making the Most of Your Contacts

There are a number of ways you can ask for support from those who already know you, even if your direct contacts do not work in the field you want to pursue. You never know who they might know or how they might be able to help.

Consider all the people you know and the people they know as part of your existing network, which may include the below, reaching out to learn more of their positions and career path:

- Loyola Alumni and classmates
- Relatives (and their friends)
- Former colleagues
- Friends (and their relatives)
- Neighbors and community members

Networking Strategy

As you begin to network, please consider the following suggestions:

- Have a clear idea of what industry or career areas are of interest to you, so you can appropriately develop your list of contacts (e.g., people whom you would like to know about your job search and gain information from).
- Make sure you know as much as you can about your contact's industry and position in the organization, so that you can ask informed questions and convey serious interest.
• Approach contacts, either in person or email, with an explanation of how you received their contact information and your interest in meeting/speaking further.
• Join professional organizations and listservs to meet people in the industry you hope to enter.
• Ensure you have a resume ready for meetings and to email upon request.
• Devise a list of questions and be clear about what information you need from each individual.

Sample Questions for One-on-One Meetings

• What are the qualifications you look for in a new hire?
• How did you become interested in this field?
• Could you describe a typical work day?
• What aspect of your job do you find most challenging?
• What do you think of the experience I have so far, in terms of getting into__________?
• What are your thoughts on my resume? Would you suggest any changes?
• What would you recommend I read to help me keep abreast of developments in this field?
• Do you have a recommendation for whom I should talk to next in the field? May I use your name?
• If you could do it all over again, would you choose the same path? Is there anything you would change?

Networking Events

Most of us are not born networkers. Practice and preparation will help you develop the skills it takes to be effective at a networking event, conference, or other industry specific opportunities.

Below are tips to help you make the most of a networking opportunity:

• Set a goal for yourself - think about what you want to achieve at this event and what types of connections you wish to make.
• Find out in advance who will be attending - review the attendee list before the event, typically located on the event’s landing page.
• Practice your “30-second” introduction - be ready with an interesting self-introduction, focusing on your experience and interests. Prepare questions or
comments about the event’s topics or news of the day that might be of relevance to people in attendance.

- **Bring plenty of business cards and a pen** - have them easily accessible; for career fairs bring copies of your resumes.
- **Prepare for professional attire** - check with the event organizer or online for the dress code and if uninformed, always go with business attire.
- **Follow-up with new contacts immediately** - send an e-mail or a LinkedIn message telling them you enjoyed meeting them and make reference to a topic you discussed or request for further contact; connect on LinkedIn and consider setting up a Google News Alert on those who work for companies you want to follow.

### Avoiding Obstacles and Common Pitfalls

The following are recommendations for dealing with unexpected obstacles and situations that you may encounter while networking.

*You feel uncomfortable:* Networking is not asking for favors; it is a mutually beneficial interaction. Many of the people you contact will be excited to share information about themselves and the industry and might have helpful suggestions. If you do your research and respect the time of your contacts, you will discover that networking is a great tool.

*Silences:* Create and refer to your list of open-ended questions that cannot be answered with a yes/no response.

*You ask for a job and the conversation seems to end:* Networking is best used to develop relationships, not simply to identify job prospects. Use networking meetings to gain information, develop further contacts, and seek advice.

*You become the interviewee:* If in the middle of the informational interview an actual job is presented to you, you may choose to be interviewed formally on the spot. In this case, it is appropriate to ask more questions about the job, such as what skills or experiences are relevant, before answering interview questions. If you are uncomfortable, ask whether you can return to be interviewed as you would like time to prepare.

*Failing to follow up:* In order to keep connections fresh, send thank-you letters, provide updates on progress, and ask for names of other individuals you can contact.

*Poor record keeping:* Keep a record of your calls, conversations, and meetings. You may find that a spreadsheet or journal may be helpful for tracking. Once you begin to contact a large number of individuals, it may be difficult to recall all of this information.