NETWORKING & INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

WHAT IS NETWORKING?

- Networking is one of the most effective job and internship search strategies. Networking means building meaningful connections and maintaining those relationships because you never know when an opportunity might come your way.
- Have conversations with people in your field of interest to learn what employers value and how you can best market yourself.
- You never know who might connect you to the right person. Networking can greatly increase your chances of landing a job/internship opportunity.
- Networking isn't just valuable for finding jobs and internships. The connections you build can also develop into meaningful mentorships - ongoing professional relationships where someone offers guidance, support, and advice to help you grow in your field over time.

RESEARCH YOUR INTEREST AREAS

You do not need to have your career path fully decided before networking, however, narrowing your interests can help you decide the types of professionals, industries, companies, and events you may want to target. Before reaching out, take time to reflect on:

- What industries or companies interest you?
- What positions appeal to you, and what skills do they require?
- What are your career goals?
- What skills and strengths do you want to highlight to employers?

NETWORKING STRATEGIES

- Connect with professionals in your field through **LinkedIn** and other professional networking platforms.
- Attend networking events, career fairs, and professional conferences to meet new people.
- Get involved in on-campus organizations and professional associations related to your interests.
- Volunteer with organizations that align with your passions and career goals to build relationships and gain experience.
- Stay in touch with former supervisors, colleagues, professors, and classmates.

POTENTIAL NETWORKING CONTACTS

- Professional and Community organizations
- Professors, Career Coaches, UTampa Staff
- Family, friends, and neighbors
- Current and former classmates and co-workers
- Current and former professional colleagues
- Recruiters, Talent Acquisition, Human Resources and professionals in the field
- UTampa alumni

FIND CONTACTS ON HANDSHAKE

1. Log in to Handshake through your MyUTampa dashboard
2. Click on "Employers"
3. Type company name in "Search" and/or click "Filters" and select "Industry"
4. Click on companies of interest and scroll down to find contacts listed under "People"
5. Message contact on Handshake and connect with them on LinkedIn!

USE LINKEDIN TO CONNECT & NETWORK

- **Connect with employers and grow your professional brand.** Join LinkedIn groups that match your interests (Marketing, Accounting, Event Planning, Music, Nursing, Medicine, etc.) and follow companies of interest.
- **Engage with group members.** Start connecting with people in those groups, explore the companies they work for, and follow those organizations if they align with your career goals.
- **Use the LinkedIn Alumni tool.** Search *The University of Tampa* LinkedIn page, click **Alumni**, and narrow down filters by company, location, major, etc. to find UTampa alumni working in industries that interest you. Review their profiles, connect, and **always add a personalized note** explaining why you're reaching out and why you'd like to connect further.

Check-out the "LinkedIn Checklist" located in the Job-Search Toolbox for more tips!

SENDING LINKEDIN CONNECTION REQUESTS

Always personalize your connection request by clicking "add a note" before sending your connection request. In your note, mention why you're reaching out or highlighting something you have in common. Remember, you only have *200 characters maximum* for the length of your note.

PERSONAL NOTE EXAMPLES

Alumni:
Hi (Name),
I see you're a fellow University of Tampa alum working in (Industry/Company Name).
I'm exploring this field and would love to connect. Open to a brief call next week?
Thank you, (Your Name)

Industry Professional:
Hi (Name),
I'm very interested in working for (Company) and your role as (Job Title). I'd value the chance to learn more about your work. Would you be open to a brief call next week?
Thank you, (Your Name)

WHAT IS AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

- An informational interview is a focused conversation with a professional which helps you explore a field of interest and learn from their experiences.
- You initiate the meeting and come prepared with thoughtful questions.
- Informational Interviews are a chance to gain career insights, gather advice, and build your network, not a time to directly ask for a job or internship. Use it as a learning opportunity to help shape your career plans.

HOW TO SET UP AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

- Reach out to family, friends, professors, colleagues, alumni, or other professionals. Send an email or give them a call to set up a time to talk.
- Use **LinkedIn** to research companies and employees, then connect with people in roles that interest you and send them a personalized message requesting to chat.
- When you contact someone (by email or LinkedIn message), explain that you're requesting a brief informational interview and make it clear you're seeking information, not a job.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR MESSAGE

(See "Sending LinkedIn Connection Requests")

- A short introduction about yourself, your interests, and why you're reaching out. Also acknowledge if they are a UTampa alum or you have mutual connections.
- A request for their availability to meet (via phone, virtually, or in-person) and a few days/times that work for you (be flexible.)

BEFORE THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

- Prepare as if it were a real job interview: research the professional and the company/industry.
- Bring a padfolio and a tailored resume in case they ask to view it. If the conversation is going well, you can ask for feedback from their industry perspective.
- Prepare thoughtful, open-ended questions that show genuine interest in their career journey, company, or industry. You may also seek advice or express interest in mentorship.

DURING THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

- First impressions matter. Depending on your field of interest, dress business casual or business professional.
    - *Hint: When in doubt, dress in business professional*.
- Arrive early, make eye contact, stay engaged throughout the conversation, give a firm handshake, and take notes.
- Show enthusiasm and knowledge to leave a strong impression. They may remember you if opportunities arise.
- Stick to the agreed upon time, avoid asking for a job, and try not to ask basic questions you could easily find online.
- Remember, most people don't have jobs to offer, but they do have valuable insights, advice, and connections!

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- *What do you enjoy most about working at this company?*
- *How did you get started here?*
- *What is your educational background?*
- *What are your day-to-day responsibilities?*
- *What positions or classes helped you prepare for this job?*
- *What challenges do you see in this field?*
- *Is there anyone else you recommend I connect with?* **(One of the MOST important questions to ask!)**

AFTER THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

- Review your notes. How can the information gathered help you move forward?
- Follow up on any suggestions, such as readings, meetings, or contacts.
- Send a thank you email expressing appreciation for their time and insights.
- Stay connected over time. Keep in touch through email, LinkedIn, or coffee chats, and share updates on your career progress, especially if you're job-searching or seeking mentorship.