

# STUDENTS & ALUMNI CAREER NETWORKING — ALUMNI GUIDE

The Students & Alumni Career Networking Night is a unique opportunity to connect alumni with current undergraduate and graduate students as well as recent graduates from the tri-campus helping them navigate their career journeys while strengthening the alumni-student bond within the University of Toronto community. This event facilitates both personal and professional growth, as alumni have the chance to mentor, share industry insights, and contribute to the development of emerging talent.

As alumni, you play a vital role as a co-educator for our participants – their learning is a direct result of their experience with you. Although we support students in understanding career development concepts, it is when the students speak with you that they truly understand how these concepts will impact their career development.

Some of the key career development concepts we're focusing on are:

- 1. Careers are often Non-Linear:** It's useful for students to learn about how your skills and knowledge are transferable and helpful when you are developing your own career path. This way students can think about the various ways in which their education will support them on their own path.
- 2. Planned Happenstance:** The goal of planned happenstance is about creating, recognizing, and embracing unexpected opportunities in career development. Since we can't predict everything that will happen in our careers, accepting this uncertainty can help reduce anxiety about having a long-term plan. In other words, you can plan but keep it flexible. Encourage students to take small steps and get involved, as this increases the chances of encountering unexpected opportunities. These experiences can help students gain clarity on their goals and better position them to seize new opportunities when they arise.
- 3. Hope Centered Career Development:** You play a big part in helping students see the importance of resiliency by sharing your experiences overcoming difficulties on your career path.
- 4. Social Networks:** Developing a personal network is instrumental in career development. Think about how your social networks – your communities of support - have impacted your career development and share these stories with the students you meet.

## Event Audience

Students in attendance will be at various stages of their education, including:

- Recent graduates beginning their job search and career exploration process
- Undergraduate students in their final year and graduate students; keen to develop their networks, professional skills, and deepen their industry knowledge
- Undergraduate students from earlier years (1-3) who are interested in learning how to navigate through their academic experience to better prepare them for their career pathways

## Goals & Objectives for Students

- Cultivate meaningful connections and a supportive community with U of T students and alumni
- Develop clear career direction and goals by integrating self-awareness, academic knowledge, and career insights
- Reflect on and explore how individual identities can influence and strengthen students' career exploration and direction

## What does it mean to network?

Networking is about more than discussing job titles and career paths. It's about building rapport and forming meaningful connections. Encourage students to share about what they're passionate about and reassure them that they don't need to stick to "typical" career conversations.

### Express what you're passionate about!

- Don't feel like you need to stick to 'typical' career conversations. Interested in sports? Crafts? Puppies? Build rapport by initiating conversation based on shared interests first.

### Share how your identity has been a strength for you in your career and workplace

- Discourse pertaining to careers and identity tend to surround the barriers/challenges identity can create. Identity is not often seen as a strength for many students. Although completely valid, you can play an influential role in re-writing this narrative and changing students' perspective to one of hope and excitement in navigating careers while sharing how you have and continue to overcome barriers in the workplace

### Prepare questions you are curious about

Before the event, consider what you'd like to learn from the students:

- What are their academic interests and career aspirations?
- What do they hope to gain from networking with alumni like you?
- What challenges or concerns do they have about joining the workforce?

### Focus on what you can offer

- Is it career advice, connections, resources, or tips? Don't be afraid to say you're not sure; students don't expect you to have all the answers. They're just excited to have space to share their questions and concerns and to learn about your unique career path and how that might help them navigate their own career decision making

## Sample Questions you might be asked:

1. How did you feel upon graduation (anxious, worried, hopeful, optimistic)?
2. What was a challenge you faced as an early career professional? How did you overcome it?
3. How did you find your first position in your industry? Do you have any advice or tips for students entering your industry today?
4. Which skill do you use most frequently in your day-to-day work? What is one specific undergraduate experience you had that helped you develop this skill?
5. What industry trends do you see impacting the availability of positions within your field in the next few years?

## Sample questions you may want to ask:

1. What interested you in this event?
2. What is your favourite part of your academic program? Why?
3. What are some careers you are exploring?
4. What does identity mean to you for your career? It's ok if you're not sure!
5. What do you like to do in your free time?
6. How do you feel about networking?

## After the Event: Staying Connected with Students

Staying in touch with students after the event is key to nurturing relationships and offering ongoing support. Although there's no need, should you wish to, staying in touch with students after the event is key to staying connected:

1. **Send a Follow-Up Message:** After the event, follow up with a brief message to students you connected with. Reaffirm the connection by referencing something specific from your conversation.
2. **Connect on LinkedIn:** Sending a connection request on LinkedIn is a great way to keep in touch professionally. You can continue offering advice or share industry news through this platform.
3. **Share Resources:** If there are articles, books, or job opportunities that you think might be valuable, feel free to share them with students. It shows you're invested in their success.
4. **Periodic Check-Ins:** Every few months, check in with students to see how they are progressing. A simple "How's everything going?" can help keep the connection alive.