

STUDENTS & ALUMNI CAREER NETWORKING – STUDENT AND RECENT GRADUATES GUIDE

The **Students & Alumni Career Networking Night** is a unique opportunity to connect with alumni and learn from their career experiences. This event is designed to help you explore career pathways, gain industry insights, and develop professional relationships that can support your career journey.

This event will help you:

Build meaningful connections with alumni who share your career interests

Gain career insights that integrate your academic knowledge with real-world experiences.

Reflect on your career direction and the influence of your individual identity on your professional journey

How to Prepare for the Event

1. Reflect and Get to Know Yourself:

- a. Building self-awareness by reflecting and identifying
 - i. What are your interests?
 - ii. What are your strengths and skills?
 - iii. What are your workplace values?
- b. Reflect on Your Identity
 - i. How does your identity play a role in shaping my experiences?
 - ii. Think about how your identity has shaped your academic and career experiences. How has it been a strength, and how do you think it might influence your future career? Use this reflection as a conversation starter.

2. Clarify Your Objectives:

- a. Think about what you hope to gain from this event. Are you seeking specific career advice? Are you interested in learning about a particular industry or profession? Having a clear idea will help guide your conversations.

3. Craft Your Introduction:

- a. Be ready to introduce yourself in a concise and engaging way. Include:
 - i. Your name, academic program, and year of study.
 - ii. Your career interests or goals.
 - iii. A hobby or interest that's unique to you.

4. Prepare Questions:

- a. Having prepared questions will make conversations flow more naturally. Here are some examples:
 - i. What was your career path after graduating?
 - ii. In what ways did your academics support your career journey?
 - iii. What were some transferable skills?
 - iv. What advice do you have for someone just starting out in [specific industry]?
 - v. How did your network help you in your career journey?
 - vi. What are some industry trends you are seeing now?

5. Practice Active Listening:

- a. While it's important to share about yourself, also take the time to listen to the alumni. They have valuable insights that can help shape your career decisions.

Making the Most of the Event

- **Don't Be Afraid to Ask Questions:** Alumni are there to help, and no question is too simple. Asking thoughtful questions will show your engagement and eagerness to learn.
- **Engage in Conversations Beyond Careers:** Start by finding common ground. You can build rapport by talking about shared interests, such as hobbies or favorite books.
- **Take Notes and Follow Up:** After the event, reflect on what you learned and consider following up with the alumni you connected with. Knowing some alumni may or may not be able to connect beyond the event, a simple thank-you message or LinkedIn request can go a long way in keeping the conversation going.

Sample Questions for Alumni

Here are some additional questions you might ask alumni during your networking conversations:

- What helped you transition from university to your first job?
- What skills do you find most important in your day-to-day work?
- Have you ever shifted career paths in your journey? If yes, how did you navigate the career transition? What skills did you find transferable from [x] industry to [y] industry?
- How can I better prepare myself for the job market?
- Can you tell me about a challenge you faced early in your career and how you overcame it?
- What advice would you give to your younger self, just starting your career?

After the Event: How to Stay Connected with Alumni

Building a professional network doesn't end when the event does. After the networking event, it's important to maintain the connections you made and nurture those relationships over time. Although some alumni will not be able to connect beyond the event, it is worthwhile to connect. Here are some tips on how to do that:

1. Send a Thank-You Message:

- a. Within 24-48 hours after the event, send a short thank-you message to the alumni you spoke with. This can be done via email or LinkedIn.
- b. Mention something specific from your conversation to remind them of who you are and to make your message more personal.

2. Connect on LinkedIn:

- a. LinkedIn is a great tool to keep in touch professionally. When sending a connection request, include a personalized note mentioning where you met and how the conversation was helpful to you.

3. Follow Up Periodically:

- a. Stay in touch by checking in every few months. You could share updates about your academic progress, ask for advice as you explore new career opportunities, or send an article you think might interest them.
- b. This shows that you value the relationship and helps you stay top of mind without being too intrusive.

4. Attend Future Networking Events:

- a. Many alumni attend multiple networking events. By attending more events, you'll reinforce your connections and expand your network further.

5. Offer Help Where You Can:

- a. Networking is a two-way street. While you may feel like you're at the beginning of your career, don't hesitate to offer help if you come across opportunities or resources that might be of interest to the alumni you've connected with.

6. Clear Intentions:

- a. Relationships take time to build, so approach networking with authenticity and patience. Consider why you want to stay connected and how to make that connection meaningful for both you and the alumni. What specific opportunities for connection and learning are you hoping to gain beyond the event?

By staying in touch, you'll not only keep the relationship going, but also have a resource for advice, opportunities, and mentorship as you progress through your career.

Final Tips for Success

- **Be yourself.** Authenticity is key to building genuine connections.
- **Stay open-minded.** You may learn something unexpected or find a new career interest.
- **Take initiative.** It's your career journey—make the most of every opportunity to engage and ask questions.