

Dickinson

ADVISING, INTERNSHIPS & CAREER CENTER

Student Guide

NETWORKING AND INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING



WWW.DICKINSON.EDU/CAREER

THE ADVISING, INTERNSHIPS & CAREER CENTER aims to ensure students make the most of their Dickinson experiences and learn how to best draw on those experiences after graduation. The center will help students identify and pursue their authentic interests and simultaneously deepen students' understanding that a liberal-arts education is also powerfully career enhancing.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US:

- Dedicated and experienced professionals who will help you develop a plan of action regarding your career goals.
- Access to career information resources, assessments, résumé and cover letter guidance, interview tips, networking opportunities, programs and information sessions, and year-round job and internship listings, among other things.

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU:

- Start early and actively engage in the process.
- Utilize resources and attend programs.
- Ask questions!

Table of Contents

NETWORKING..... PAGE 2

Networking

TO MANY PEOPLE, NETWORKING IS AN INTIMIDATING TOPIC. MOST STUDENTS DO NOT HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH IT AND THUS MAY BE RELUCTANT TO GET ENGAGED.

Others may not be clear about what it is or why they should do it. In a nutshell, it is a way of acquiring information you might not have found elsewhere, getting advice and feedback from people who can help you, and identifying more people to connect with going forward. Networking is about building relationships, not about asking for a job.

It is important to understand what networking can do for you and how it should be done. Whether you are seeking advice, wanting information about a career field, organization or graduate and professional program, networking is one of the best, if not the best, ways to get this information.

There are many ways you can practice networking. Start by getting to know other students and becoming involved in campus organizations. When guest speakers come to campus, introduce yourself. Attend campus social events, lectures, conferences, and career fairs. Other tips for networking include participating in leadership activities and alumni career presentations. Gather what you can from internship experiences by maintaining contact with colleagues and supervisors.

A major goal while networking should be to make yourself known. When networking effectively your contacts should better understand your skills, goals, and experiences. Additionally, after any networking conversation, be sure to ask yourself (a) Did I get the information, advice or feedback I was looking for? (b) Did I get additional contact names? (c) Did I increase my online connections?

In the information that follows, you will find details about informational interviews and using social media. Both are elements of successful networking.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Conducting informational interviews is an effective way to learn more about a field or organization as well as an opportunity to develop your network. In an informational interview, you will get frank advice about a profession or industry and learn subtleties about work environments that you will never read in a book. Once you have researched careers and have narrowed down your career interest areas, informational interviewing is an excellent next step to determine if a career is right for you. Informational interviewing should not be a starting point for your career research—it should supplement what you have already learned. For those of you beginning a job or internship search, this can be a valuable tool to help you learn about the profession and locate contacts or job leads.

It is important to remember that in asking for an informational interview, you are asking for a favor of someone's time and expertise. Not everyone you approach will be willing or have the time to meet with you, but some will. You may already know of people who work in a particular field. You might identify names through organizations' websites, your personal and professional contacts, faculty or deans, alumni, family friends, or panels/presentations on campus.

An email to an individual you wish to interview is appropriate. Introduce yourself; indicate why you are interested in speaking with him/her and how long you anticipate your discussion to be. You can also request a telephone interview (if the person does not live nearby) or an observational visit (sometimes referred to as a job shadow) to help you explore the field in greater depth. The informational interview may be quite short or last an hour or more. It may take place in someone's office, informally at a coffee shop, or over the telephone. As the interviewer, it is critical that you be prepared by researching the field and preparing questions to ask. Focus on what you want and need to know.

Review the examples on the following pages to get an idea of how to structure your email. For assistance in generating contact ideas and in drafting correspondence with alumni or other professionals, schedule an appointment or come in during open hours.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

In preparation for your informational interview, develop a list of topics to discuss. Below are sample questions to get you started.

- Why did you choose this field?
- What is the typical day like? How much does this vary by week? By month?
- What skills and personal qualities are most important for success in this job/field?
- What do you enjoy most about your job? What would you change?
- What experiences, classes or specialized training would best prepare me for this kind of work?
- What are some growth areas in this field and what impact are they likely to have on job opportunities?
- What resources would you recommend for finding internships or job opportunities?
- Is there anyone else who you think that I should talk with to further my career goals? (*Very important. Always save time for this question*)

FOLLOW UP

After any conversation with a networking contact, whether your conversation was via email, on the phone, or in-person, it is important to always thank the person for their time and expertise. If they gave you names of others to contact, let them know about those subsequent conversations. You never know when your connection will be of help to you in the future, so it is always best to maintain a connection with them through periodic email updates or phone calls.

UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA

CONNECTING ONLINE IS QUICKLY BECOMING ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO NETWORK, AS LONG AS IT IS DONE CORRECTLY. See the following information for tips on how to network using Email, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook.

EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

Email is a quick form of communication. Do not write a lengthy message; instead be clear and concise when using email as a networking tool.

While you may not be accustomed to proofreading your emails, you should always reread and spell-check them. You are writing to a professional and want to use formal writing and appropriate grammar and punctuation.

ALUMNIFIRE

Alumnifire is a free tool harnessing the power of connections between Dickinson alumni and students who want to grow the value of their networks. In Alumnifire, you can connect with other students and alumni to create conversations for informational interviews. Our alumni post internships and jobs on the site too. You can also use it to read our Bulletin Board or preview alumni employer profiles. Alumnifire can be found through your Dickinson Gateway.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is currently the leading professional online networking site. LinkedIn enables you to connect with others in your field of interest, search for job openings, and join online professional associations, among other things.

When creating a profile on LinkedIn it is important to complete it in its entirety, including uploading a profile picture. This will increase your search ranking and give employers a strong impression before you meet in person. Make sure to use keywords that will attract a recruiter's attention (industry-specific words, leadership terms, and strong action verbs).

On LinkedIn you can connect with individuals you already know (your friends, young alumni, past supervisors, people you have met at networking events, etc.), as well as with those you have not yet met. There are multiple ways of searching for Dickinson alumni who majored in your discipline or who are working in an industry or for an organization you have an interest in. Try using the Advanced Search feature, the Find Alumni feature, or even a keyword search. When sending a connection request to individuals you have not yet met, be sure to include a personalized message to give context to your connection request. Some Dickinson alumni have identified themselves as individuals who would like to serve as a career mentor to students. In the keyword search field, enter "Dickinson career mentor" in quotations or Dickinson College Career Community.

In addition to connecting with individuals, be sure to also join LinkedIn groups. Beneficial ones to join include groups related to Dickinson College (such as the Dickinson College Career Community group, which all Dickinson students are eligible to join), professional associations, and volunteer organizations.

Utilize the Company Search and Job Search features. Job postings are found on both and are high quality, professional positions. Schedule a "Career Advising" appointment with a Career Advisor for a LinkedIn profile review. In your session, you'll receive feedback on your profile and tips on ways to make your profile more dynamic and stand out to potential employers.

TWITTER

Twitter is an excellent tool to use when networking. Besides connecting you to others in your field, it can provide you with information from industry experts, access to insider connections, a way to build your personal brand, and the opportunity to share and receive professional advice.

Twitter is based on small pieces of information. Be sure to include a link to a site where employers can get more information about you, such as your LinkedIn profile, personal blog, or website.

FACEBOOK

Facebook can be an effective networking tool, if used correctly. It goes without saying that before you utilize Facebook you should be sure that your profile, pictures, status updates and posts are all appropriate. Ask yourself, “would I want a future employer seeing this post or picture?”

Status updates can be a great way to remind connections of your job search. This can help to keep your job hunt on the forefront of people’s minds. It is also a great place to promote your blog or website. Add a link to your profile, create a note about it and write a status update with a link when you create a new blog post.

PINTEREST/WORDPRESS

For arts majors, a new way to draw attention to your work and gain a free portfolio is by sharing your work on Pinterest or WordPress. Employers have reported that this is one of the tools that arts students, in particular, have used to catch an employer’s attention via a link on their résumé. Scan and upload your work to better highlight your talents and abilities.

EXAMPLE NETWORKING EMAIL

TO: john.t.smith@americanart.org

SUBJECT: Dickinson Connection

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am a sophomore Art History major at Dickinson College, with a specific interest in early American folk art. I am eager to learn more about possible career options in the museum field, and to hear about the career experiences of someone who has taken a similar path. My professor, Dr. Jane Doe, gave me your email address and encouraged me to contact you to inquire about your work at the American Folk Art Museum in New York City. Would you be willing to speak on the phone with me so that I may ask you a few questions about your experiences and the American folk art field? I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,
Bill Biddle

! When emailing a contact, be sure to explain in the first sentence or two why you are writing.

! Be sure to mention where you got their contact information.

EXAMPLE LINKEDIN CONNECTION REQUEST

Dear Mr. Smith: As an Art History major at Dickinson, with an interest in American Folk Art, I am eager to learn about career options. I see that you are an American Folk Art Museum curator. Could we connect so that I may ask you a few questions about your experiences? Thank you, Bill Biddle

! You are confined to 300 characters in a LinkedIn connection request message, so it’s important to be tactful and professional, but also brief.

Thank You and Follow-up Emails

THANK YOU EMAILS AND NETWORKING FOLLOW-UP EMAILS ARE BOTH HIGHLY VALUABLE TO YOUR JOB SEARCH. FEW PEOPLE SEND THEM, SO DOING SO WILL HELP YOU STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD. NOT DOING SO MAY MAKE PEOPLE RELUCTANT TO HELP YOU IN THE FUTURE.

THANK YOU EMAILS

After an interview, plan to send a thank you email to each person with whom you met, personalizing the note to mention specific topics that were discussed. Reiterate your interest in the position, briefly discuss specific aspects of the company and/or position that appeal to you, and thank them for the chance to interview. Your thank you note should be received and read before hiring or second round interview decisions are made, as your letter—or lack of one—may sway the employer’s decision. For that reason, thank you emails should be sent within 24-48 hours of your interview.

Thank you notes should also be sent after informational interviews to show appreciation and solidify future networking relationships. Sending periodic update e-mails to networking connections and references is highly recommended to maintain and nurture those connections.

NETWORKING FOLLOW-UP EMAILS

Networking follow-up emails can be used after a phone conversation with a potential employer, a networking event, or other conversation with a person who has indicated an interest in assisting you in your job or internship search. These emails provide the opportunity to reiterate your interest, highlight specific related skills and experiences, and most importantly, remind your contact about your conversation. Follow-up emails can be especially helpful when sent to recruiters after a career fair due to the high volume of students they meet.

NETWORKING FOLLOW UP – BEYOND THE “THANK YOU” NOTE

For students that have started networking early in their college career, it is vital that you maintain the connections that you’ve made. One of the ways that you can maintain your networking connections is by adding the people that you meet to your LinkedIn community. Once you’ve done that, you can plan to engage with them and their content with intention throughout the year. Some of the ways that you can engage with intention are:

1. Like and comment on their posts. By engaging periodically with the content that they post you show that you’re still interested in the work that they’re doing.
2. Reach out to them throughout the year through messenger. When you’re networking it’s important to take notes and keep track of projects your contact is working on and any other notable things that they may say. If they tell you that they’re working on a 6-month long project that they’re really involved in, you can message them in a few months and ask how the project is going. If there are certain details of the project that you remember, you can ask about those specifically.
3. If you’ve completed an internship, externship, or job shadow in their field you can send them a message sharing your experience. Perhaps they gave you the advice that you should pursue an internship, you can share with them that you took their advice and let them know how the internship went. Keep your message short, make sure you include a specific example of a project that you worked on during the internship, and make sure to ask them about themselves/any projects that they’re working on.

EXAMPLE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW THANK YOU EMAIL

TO: joan.walters@ERG.com

SUBJECT: Thank You

Dear Mrs. Walters:

Thank you for meeting with me yesterday and discussing the teaching opportunities at private schools available through your organization. I appreciate the time and interest extended by you and your staff. It offered me the chance to learn a great deal about the services you offer and the qualities needed to succeed in a private school setting.

As I mentioned in the interview, I am excited about the opportunities that teaching in a private school will offer. In addition to using my French major and International Studies minor, I am looking forward to the possibility of coaching a soccer team. I would enjoy living in a residence hall with the students and facilitating their academic and personal growth. I believe I will be able to convey my excitement about the study of foreign languages and international relations to the students.

I look forward to hearing from you and from the schools to which you distribute my résumé. Thank you again for the hospitality you and your staff showed me. If you need additional information, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Rush
1 College St.
Carlisle, PA 17013
(717) 789-4321
Benjamin.Rush@dickinson.edu

! Personalize your thank you notes with specific information discussed with each interviewer. Even if discussions were the same, your thank you notes should not be. Putting the time and effort into personalizing notes shows that you were paying attention to the information conveyed by each interview and will benefit you when the interviewers compare notes (which they will do).

! Ben's thank you letter reiterates his interest in the position and mentions specific topics discussed in the interview that were particularly appealing to him.

! Ben briefly mentions past experiences that have prepared him for the responsibilities of the position, but does not readdress all his skills and experiences. Thank you notes should be primarily focused on your interest in the position and organization with less attention on reviewing your qualifications.

EXAMPLE NETWORKING FOLLOW UP EMAIL

TO: alex.brookbridge@children.org

SUBJECT: Thank You for Attending the Career Conference

Dear Mr. Brookbridge:

I enjoyed speaking with you at the Dickinson College Career Conference on October 8th and learning more about the opportunities available with the El Salvador Children's Foundation. After our conversation, I further researched the programs and learned about the efforts to improve the standard of living through education and health care in rural, economically disadvantaged regions of El Salvador. I am excited by the prospect of teaching English in El Salvador and assisting families in the Santa Ana region with accessing medical services.

Throughout my time at Dickinson College, I have completed in-depth analysis of political factors that contribute to the economic instability in countries through Central America, giving me an understanding of the uphill battle people are facing to obtain basic necessities and improve their standard of living. My studies and travel to various locations throughout South America have increased my proficiency in Spanish and Latin American cultures, and have given me a first-hand perspective of the challenges faced by children and young adults with uncertain futures and the need for education to help narrow the economic disparities among regions.

My experience managing a fundraising campaign to support international relief agencies engaging in similar projects has refined my interpersonal communication and leadership skills, both of which would be an asset to the advocacy role needed for the internship. In addition, I have tutored local teenagers in a variety of subjects and am aware of the trials and rewards of teaching, as well as ways to tailor the lesson to meet the diverse needs of learners.

I feel my skills and experience would lend themselves well to the opportunities with El Salvador Children's Foundation. Per your recommendation, I am enclosing a copy of my résumé for your review. Please contact me if there are additional materials I need to provide to complete my application. Thank you for your time and consideration, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Marybeth Bosler
P. O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013
(717) 789-4321
Marybeth.Bosler@dickinson.edu

! Make a connection in this letter. Why are you following up?

! Begin your follow-up letter by reminding the reader when and where you made initial contact.

! The remainder of the letter follows the format of a cover letter, elaborating on relevant skills and experiences.

EXAMPLE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW THANK YOU EMAIL

TO: megan.west@ABCcorp.com

SUBJECT: Thank You

Dear Ms. West:

I want to thank you for taking time to speak with me on April 15th about your career in corporate finance at ABC Corporation and sharing the knowledge of the field you've gained along the way. Your advice on work experiences and specific areas of study that most benefited you in building your career has helped direct my summer internship plans to those areas where I need further development.

I found your insights into future industry trends to be most interesting and have begun to research the articles and publications you recommended. Also, per your suggestion, I have arranged an informational interview with your colleague, Denny Althouse, and will be meeting him next week. Thank you again for that connection and I will follow up with you afterwards to let you know of the outcome. I look forward to seeing you again.

Best Regards,

John Rush
Dickinson College
HUB Box 12345
Carlisle, PA 17013
(123) 456-7890
John.Rush@dickinson.edu



For an informational interview thank you letter, discuss how you benefited from the experience and thank your contact for any referrals or other guidance he/she provided to you.



Always provide contact information so that the employer or contact can easily follow up with you.

EXAMPLE FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

TO: tdavenport@xyzhealth.org
SUBJECT: Career Plan Follow-Up

Dear Dr. Davenport:

While I shadowed you on several occasions at XYZ Hospital in March 20XX, it has been some time since I've spoken with you and wanted to update you on my plans.

I would like to announce that I will soon begin medical school at the ABC College of Osteopathic Medicine in Town, New York. I have also accepted a Navy scholarship and will be commissioned on June 13th aboard the U.S.S. Constitution in Boston. I cannot express how excited I am to be on my way towards both service as a doctor and serving my country.

Through your help I have made it here. The experience of shadowing put me on the right track. But more than that, I am grateful for the faith of people like you who helped me when my goal was in its infancy.

Sincerely,
Melissa Limestone



This e-mail demonstrates how you can maintain periodic contact with those in your network. It is essential to nurture these relationships, as you may need these contacts in the future.

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