

NETWORKING GUIDE

Stanley R. Becker Career Center



518-388-6176 | careercenter@union.edu | <https://www.union.edu/offices/career/>

Networking

Networking is the process of learning and building relationships. Networking can be conducted in either a spontaneous or planned manner, both of which are beneficial. Your strategy will depend on the nature of your relationships, and your goals for the networking communications.

Examples of Spontaneous Networking

- As Lisa was getting lunch, she saw a Peace Corps representative at an information table in the Reamer Campus Center. Lisa decided to stop, and learn about the mission of the Peace Corps, the candidate recruitment process, and was provided with contact information of a past volunteer who could provide further insights.
- Julie meets her sorority sister's father during Family Weekend and learns about his position at a well-known advertising firm in New York City. As a result of talking with him and following up to thank him for his time, Julie is given a contact to follow-up with regarding their summer internship program.

Examples of Planned Networking

- Neil talks with his Electrical Engineering professor about his interests in renewable energy. Neil's professor encourages him to speak with an employer from the renewable energy sector that recently presented at a conference he attended to learn more about the field.
- Recently at a college career fair, Emily met with a Human Resources representative from a national company regarding internship opportunities in California. Although the representative was hiring for the Northeast region, Emily e-mailed the recruiter after the fair and was able to obtain a company contact on the west coast.
- David spent winter break learning about the Arts Administration career path by conducting informational interviews with Union alumni and contacts found through his faculty. David's informational interviews allowed him to hear of un-posted job opportunities, which led to interviews, and ultimately a job offer.

Identifying and Establishing Your Network

- Identify people you already know including family, Greek Life members, friends, community members, professors, coaches, former employers, etc. Even if they are not in the field(s) of interest to you, they can often lead you to people who are.
- Join clubs and professional organizations that relate to your areas of interest. These can lead to valuable connections to professionals within career fields of interest.
- Identify Union College alumni who are employed in career fields of interest through faculty, administrators, LinkedIn, and the Union Career Advisory Network (UCAN).

Strategies for Effective Networking

- Make your initial contact by e-mail, or message on UCAN/LinkedIn. This gives your contact the opportunity to respond when their schedule allows.
- Prepare and practice your self-introduction so you are prepared when a networking opportunity presents itself.
- Ask contacts for their career advice **not** for a job or internship.
- Network with entry and mid-level professionals first. After acquiring sufficient knowledge and networking confidence, begin to contact more senior level professionals.
- Always follow up networking meetings and conversations within 48 hours with a thank you e-mail or message reiterating what you learned, and thanking your contacts for their assistance and time.
- Dress professionally for in-person meetings and employer visits.
- Organize a tracking system to record names, addresses, meetings, and follow-up.
- If your contact agrees to keep in touch, follow up every 4 – 8 weeks to increase the likelihood that your contact will think of you if/when an opportunity arises.

Self-Introduction

Alumni events, guest lectures, career fairs, conferences, athletic events, college reunions, and neighborhood gatherings are all great venues to engage in networking. Prepare and practice a concise introduction so that you're always ready to network effectively. Include your full name, class year, major, career field of interest, and ask your contact if they would mind if you asked them a couple of questions about their career field.

For example: *Hi, I'm Robert Plant (shake hands). It's nice to meet you. I am a first year student at Union majoring in psychology. I'm interested in learning more about the publishing field and heard that you work at XYZ Publishing. Would you mind if I ask you a couple of questions about your experiences working in publishing?*

Informational Interview E-Mail Correspondence

Requesting an Informational Interview via E-Mail

Subject: Union College Student Seeking Alumni Advice

Dear Carl,

I'm an Electrical Engineering major in my junior year at Union College, and have an interest in renewable energy. Professor Smith provided me with your contact information and suggested I send you an e-mail because you are currently working in the renewable energy sector and recently presented at a conference he attended. I would like to learn more about your experience in the industry and appreciate any advice you'd be willing to share to further my knowledge in this field.

Would you be willing to speak with me for 15 - 20 minutes at a time that's convenient for you? I have attached my resume to give you a better sense of who I am. Thank you in advance for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Neil Butler

Thank You E-Mail (To Who You Spoke With)

Subject: Thank You

Dear Carl,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me earlier today regarding your experiences in renewable energy. Your insights in preparing for a career in this sector were extremely helpful. As we discussed, I will reach out to you on LinkedIn to stay connected.

Sincerely,
Neil Butler

Thank You E-Mail (To Who Provided You With the Connection)

Subject: Thank You

Dear Professor Smith,

I wanted to write to you to say how much I appreciate you providing me with the contact information for Carl Brown. We had a wonderful discussion about the renewable energy field and his experiences at his current company. We are planning to connect on LinkedIn to stay in touch. Again, thank you so much for this connection.

Sincerely,
Neil Butler

Leveraging Your Alumni Network

Union Career Advisory Network (UCAN)

UCAN is a searchable database of approximately of 13,500+ Alumni and Friends of the College who have offered to share information and advice relative to their career and/or graduate school experience. The UCAN database is exclusive to Union College students and alumni and is accessible through the UConnect Alumni Community. To gain access, all students need to attend a UCAN Orientation, offered at the Becker Career Center.

Requesting an Informational Interview via UCAN (Note: UCAN does not allow you to attach your resume.)

Subject: Union College Student Seeking Alumni Advice

Dear Candice,

I'm a junior, English major at Union College, and have interest in pursuing a career in the field of television and film production. I found your contact and employer information through the Union Career Advisory Network. I was excited to see your experience with MTV. I am eager to learn more about your experiences in the industry and any advice you'd be willing to share with regards to succeeding in the field.

Would you be willing to speak with me for 15 - 20 minutes about your experience in media production at a time that's convenient for you? I can be reached at doej@union.edu. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Jane Doe

Follow-Up Message (if you have not received a response after several business days)

Subject: Following Up

Dear Candice,

I am following up regarding my interest in talking with you about your experience in media production. I recognize your time is valuable and this is a busy time of year. If you could spare 15 – 20 minutes of your time to speak, I remain interested in learning more about television and film production. Thank you for time and consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Jane Doe

Conducting Your Informational Interview

Informational interviews are networking meetings where you ask professionals within career fields of interest questions regarding their work, industry, career path, educational background, and advice on the job search. Informational interviews are conducted over the phone or in-person, and are a great tool for building your network and acquiring insider knowledge.

Step 1: Arranging and Preparing for an Informational Interview

- Ensure your resume is up to date, has been tailored to the specific position you are applying to, and has been reviewed by a career center advisor.
- Initiate contact by sending a networking e-mail/message stating your interest in speaking with your contacts for 15 - 20 minutes about their career related experiences.
- Arrange a mutually convenient time to talk/meet. Let them know you appreciate their time and are willing to work around their schedule.
- Research your contact's career field and employer. Becker Career Center has resources that can assist in your research including Facts on File, Vault, LinkedIn, GoinGlobal, ReferenceUSA, and Glassdoor.
- Develop several questions to ask during your informational interview. Reference page 9 for further tips.
- After a few informational interviews you should replace your standard questions with more insightful ones.

Step 2: Conducting the Informational Interview

- Call your contacts from a quiet place where you know you won't be interrupted and you have good cell reception.
- You can contact Becker Career Center to reserve one of the interview rooms.
- If meeting in person, plan to dress professionally and arrive 10 - 15 minutes early at the prearranged location.
- Reintroduce yourself and explain why you reached out to them.
- Begin by asking the questions you prepared. However, be flexible and prepared in case the conversation takes a different path.
- Keep track of time, let your contact know when 15 - 20 minutes is up and follow the contact's lead on ending or continuing the conversation.
- Be sincere, show interest, and thank your contacts for volunteering their time.
- Ask contacts if they would provide you with other professionals that can offer additional career information.
- If the connection is genuine, ask if you can stay in touch including possibly connecting on LinkedIn.

Important: Not every informational interview will go as planned. It is at this point when most people stop. Instead, persevere and acquire the knowledge that will allow you to compete more effectively.

Step 3: Follow-up

- Send your contact a thank you e-mail or letter immediately following your conversation.
- Track each networking conversation and note: the date, key information/insights, and next steps established to help facilitate future conversations with this contact. Reference page 11 for further tips.
- If your contact agrees to keep in touch, mention in your e-mail or letter that you'll be doing so. Multiple communications (e.g., following up every 4 - 8 weeks) increase the likelihood that your contact will think of you if/when an opportunity arises.
- If the individuals you spoke with provided additional contacts, update them as to whom you've followed up with.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with 590+ million users in more than 200 countries and territories worldwide. You can connect with Union College alumni, professors, classmates, family, friends, individuals you've met at networking events, career fairs, or conferences, current/former coworkers and supervisors. To set up a LinkedIn account, schedule an appointment through Handshake and make sure you have your resume reviewed beforehand.

1) Create a complete LinkedIn profile:

- Get started by completing the following sections: name, professional-looking profile picture, appropriate background picture, headline "Class Year Major Student at Union College," location, experiences and education.
- In addition, it is recommended that you add an "about" summary section, volunteer experiences, organizations, relevant courses you've taken, skills, projects, languages, honors & awards, publications, and certifications.
- After, meet with an Advisor at the Becker Career Center for help critiquing your profile.
(Before you begin to send connection requests, you should have a completed profile.)

2) Review and adjust privacy and account settings: Job seeking preferences, profile visibility, activity notifications

3) Understand How to Connect: As you meet people (at conferences, events, workshops, etc.), one of the first things you should do is reach out on LinkedIn.

How to send connection requests:

(Computer)

- In the main search bar, type in the individual's name, and click on their profile.
- Click on the blue "Connect" box, select "Add a Note", include a personal message, and send invitation.

(Apple or Android Phone App)

- In the main search bar, type in the individual's name, and click on their profile.
- Click on the ellipses button [...], select "Personalize Invite", include a personal message, send invitation.

You should begin building your network by adding close friends and family. Then you should begin to reach out to other groups of people. Always customize invitations on LinkedIn (300-character limit.) It is proper etiquette to attach a personalized invite note to each connection request.

4) Increase Your Professional Network: Search for Union College Alumni (Computer)

- In the main search bar, type “Union College”, click on *Alumni* (on the left side).
- Search for Alumni by: where they live, where they work, what they do, what they studied, their skills, and by their year of graduation.

Example messages you can use to connect:

Found them through LinkedIn Alumni Search

Dear Sam Brown,

I'm a senior, music major at Union College and I interested in teaching. I saw your profile in the LinkedIn Alumni pages. Would you be willing to speak with me for 15 - 20 minutes about your experience being a teacher? I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Allan Alabama

Found them through UCAN Alumni Search

Dear Carol Lydon,

I am currently a Spanish major and will be graduating in June 20xx. I saw your profile in the UCAN database and will also be sending you a message on LinkedIn. I very much hope we have the opportunity to speak, because I am very interested to know a little bit more about your experience as a translation coach with company.

Best,

Bobby Clementine

Is in a position that is related to your interests

Hello Daniel,

My name is Christine and I will be graduating from Union with my degree in Economics. I am working on expanding my network and would like to add you as a connection. I am very interested in talking to you about your experience as a business consultant because that is a field I am considering entering in to. Would you be free to talk sometime in the upcoming week?

Sincerely,

Christine Johnson

Is in a position that is not related to your interests, but the company is

Hello Ann,

My name is Kevin and I will be graduating from Union with my degree in computer science. I am working on expanding my network and would like to add you as a connection. I am very interested in talking to you about your experience at IBM. Would you be free to talk sometime in the upcoming week? Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Kevin Jones

- 5) Increase Your Basic Network: Start by thinking of groups of people that you want to reach out to (family, friends, teammates, professors, staff, current/former colleagues). Then consider specific people in those groups.

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Connection</u>
Kelsey	Puckett	Worked with at CVS Pharmacy
Bob	Jones	Guidance Counselor in high school
Tyler	Paul	Staff in Residence Life at Union
Sandra	Darling	Economics Professor Fall 20xx

(Example list):

Example messages you can use to connect:

Current or former co-worker (from job or internship)

Allison,

It was a pleasure working with you at the Niskayuna community pool. I know that you have moved on to graduate school and was hoping we could catch up. I would love to learn about your program and talk to you about the application process. I think I may also be choosing graduate school in the near future.

Thanks,

Cameron Killjoy

Professors you currently have and have had before

Hello Professor Smith,

I had the pleasure of taking Econometrics with you last term. I learned a lot from the course and the final project you assigned. I am in the process of expanding my network on LinkedIn so I was hoping to connect with you.

Thank you,

Kimberly Allen

Professional staff at Union that you have had interactions with

Dear Charlotte,

Thank you so much for your help. As a sophomore at Union, I am working on updating my documents to be prepared to apply to summer internships. I am very interested in connecting on LinkedIn to stay in touch and continue seeing the articles you post on job search related strategies.

Best,

John Jacobs

- 6) Ask your connections to introduce you to their connections

Once you have cultivated a relationship with a connection, you may consider asking them to introduce you to one of their connections that may benefit your network. The connections you ask should be ones that you are very familiar with and have a good professional relationship with. You could consider sending them a message through LinkedIn asking them if they would be willing to introduce you. Speak with a Becker Career Counselor if you have questions.

Resource:

<https://university.linkedin.com/linkedin-for-students> – Visit this link for an overview of LinkedIn. There is information on how to get started creating a profile, understanding the different ways you can utilize LinkedIn, and various tips and tricks to successfully network.

Networking at a Career Fair

Career Fairs provide a great opportunity to network with multiple recruiters in a convenient location. The organizations participating may offer full-time positions, internships, and/or volunteer experiences. In addition, employers are eager to speak with students who are exploring career fields of interest. Below are some tips for making the most of these events.

Before the Event

Research organizations of interest that will be attending the event.

- Research the organization's mission, customers, competitors, products, and services. Utilize resources including Handshake, the organization's website, and industry journals/articles.
- Be sure to consider small or lesser known organizations as they can provide exceptional opportunities to learn about a profession and how the business works.
- Use UCAN and LinkedIn to identify alumni who work at the organizations or fields of interest and contact them to conduct informational interviews with a goal of furthering your knowledge.

Prepare your resume.

- Have your resume critiqued by a Becker Career Center Advisor **before** attending a Career Fair. Employers can tell who has had their resume reviewed by a Career Advisor and who has not.
- Print 15 copies of your resume and bring resumes in a portfolio with a notepad and pen.

Prepare and practice your introduction/pitch/30-second sell.

- Prepare a short introduction that includes your name, class year, major and whether you are interested in full-time or internship positions. For example, "Hi, my name is Sara Goodwin. I am a junior at Union College, majoring in Biology. Through my research, I understand that your company hires Research Interns and I am interested in learning more about these opportunities."
- If you are exploring career fields of interest, your introduction should include similar information. For example, "Hi, my name is Chad Wilson. From my research I understand that your organization employs teachers throughout the world. I'm interested in learning about the characteristics of a successful teacher and more about the field."
- Practice your introduction and handshake to increase confidence and comfort with introducing yourself.
- Prepare questions to ask the representatives (refer to page 9 for sample questions).

Anticipate questions from employers and be able to carry a conversation with them.

- Employers will ask why you are interested in their organization and the opportunity; be prepared to answer.
- Be prepared to answer questions about your experiences/skills and to provide a copy of your resume upon request.

Dress code is business professional.

- This style includes: solid, dark or neutral colored pant or knee length skirt suits; long-sleeved dress shirts/high neckline blouses; clean and comfortable dress shoes/darker colored socks; conservative ties; and a neat appearance.

During the Event (*Treat the event as a professional atmosphere/meeting, and not a social event.*)

- Arrive 20 minutes prior to the start of the event. Review the employer directory to identify employers of interest.
- Be prepared to wait in lines to speak with the representative.
- Greet each employer enthusiastically with a firm handshake, make eye contact, smile, and be confident.
- Listen carefully to the representative so that you can respond clearly and succinctly to their questions.
- Remember the representatives' names, always ask for a business card or write down their name and email address.

After the Event

- Send a thank you e-mail/message within 1-2 days (include a reference to your conversation). See page 10 for tips.
- Assess how you did and what you can improve on for next time.
- Start preparing for initial phone or video screening interviews.

Questions to Ask While Networking

Background Questions

- How did you get started in the industry? What has been your career path?
- How/why did you decide to pursue the career in which you are working?
- What was your undergraduate major? How did it help prepare you for your career? What additional training/education have you had?

Position Specific Questions

- What are the primary responsibilities of your job?
- What do you like most/least about your job?
- What parts of your position do you find most challenging?
- How did you get your current position?
- What are the characteristics of the people who succeed in this position?
- Can you please describe how you spend your time during a typical work day/week?

Company/Industry Specific Questions

- What do you like most/least about your field?
- How would you describe your work environment?
- What are the key challenges for the department/company?
- What developments on the horizon could affect future opportunities in this field/company?
- Who does your company view as competitors?
- Relative to your competitors, what is your competitive advantage?
- What are the key metrics that you use to evaluate your department/business?
- What is the employment outlook in your field? Can you describe any developments that are on the horizon?
- What are the trends currently affecting the industry?
- What traits, skills, or abilities, does one need in order to be successful in this field?
- What types of questions should I expect when interviewing for a job in this field?
- What kind of background, training, special programs or other learning experiences does one need to enter the field?

Graduate School Questions

- Is a graduate degree important? If so, what fields of study are helpful?
- What courses/prerequisites should I take to better prepare myself for graduate school?
- What is unique about your graduate school and/or program?
- What is the success rate of graduates from your program finding employment upon graduation?
- What types of assistantships are available at your institution?

Recommendation Questions

- What educational preparation would you recommend for someone who wants to advance in this field?
- How do most people enter this profession?
- What professional journals and organizations should I be aware of?
- Can you recommend sources for more information (books, trade publications, journals, websites, etc.)?
- What advice do you have for students who are preparing to enter your field?
- Are there other people with whom you recommend I speak? When I contact them, may I use your name?
- Can you recommend any courses I should take before furthering my job search?
- How can students find summer jobs or internships in your field?
- What other means of gaining experience before graduation would you recommend?
- What strategies would you be using if you were in a job search for a position in this field?

Thank You E-Mail/Message (After Career Fair)

Dear Fred,

Thank you for speaking with me at the Union Career Fair. I have been interested in the _____ industry for a very long time. I also appreciated learning more about company. In speaking about internship opportunities with you, I feel with my academic background and leadership experience that I would be a really good fit for position. As you recommended, I have applied through your website for that role. I hope to have the opportunity to connect with you and talk more about my potential future at company.

Best,

Tammy Lamb

Dear Hannah,

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me about the rotational training program at company. From the research I completed before the career fair, I am confident I would be a fit. I have attached my resume for reference, please let me know if there is any other information I can provide for you. Thank you for being willing to connect on LinkedIn, I will send a connection request. I hope to speak with you again soon.

Much appreciated,

Sarah Murph

Example Networking Meeting Record

You should get into the habit of tracking the meetings that you have. There are numerous ways to track your meetings including but not limited to handwriting information on to a printed form (example below), typing into a word document, or even using an excel spreadsheet. Tracking contact information and key facts and insights allows you to reference the appropriate specifics in follow-up messages.

Date: _____ **Name:** _____ **Job Title:** _____

Organization: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Phone: _____ **Referred by:** _____

Key Information/Insights: _____

Referrals (Name, Title & Contact Info): _____

Next Steps: _____
