

Networking 101

making connections for your future

as of 08.2023



Career Services

Networking is learning from people, gaining their advice and guidance. You're not asking for a favor, but to learn from their experience and wisdom.

You may not realize, but you already have a network: family, friends, professors, past employers, or roommates. Networking happens when you don't even know it - connecting with others in casual conversation, while attending meetings and special events or in prearranged "informational" interviews. However it occurs, forming relationships with others teaches you what's happening in the world.

If you are looking to chat with Swarthmore alumni, or anybody you may want to learn from, the following steps will help make the most out of growing your network.



Step 1: Identify your goals.

No matter what step your career exploration is at, it is helpful to identify what your goals are with networking.

Determine exactly what you want to gain from your contact:

- Answers to specific questions
- Career advice
- Insight about a job or internship announcement you've seen posted
- Tips on how to gain experience or break into their line of work.

If you are not sure what your goals are or having trouble identifying them, **come meet with a career counselor!**

Step 2: Identify people to speak with.

If you don't know where to start, start with the people you already know! Your family, peers, friends, professors, former manager or coworkers will likely have someone you might be interested in speaking with.



Some avenues to consider finding people:

LinkedIn

Identify individuals, organizations and specific roles that may be of interest to you.

Swatties Helping Swatties Mentoring and Networking group: This group is designed for alums and students to connect about career topics

Alumni Directory

Identify individuals who had similar majors, extracurriculars, or identities as you.

Once you have found someone to reach out to, be sure to include the following:

- Something you both may have in common
- (if applicable) how you met or are connected
- What you are hoping to gain from this conversation

EXAMPLE

Dear [Individual's name],

I enjoyed speaking with you about your career at **[insert event]**. I'm enjoying my varied classes at Swarthmore and considering declaring **[insert major(s)]**. I was intrigued by your career path after earning your [degree] and, if you have a few moments, I'd like to ask you a few more in-depth questions about how you got started in your field and how you've progressed to your current position. If you have time for a phone conversation, please let me know what day and time is convenient for you. Thank you very much, again, for sharing your insight at the Networking Dinner.

Sincerely,
[Your Name & Class Year]

Step 3: Prepare for the conversation.

Before speaking with the individual, learn what you can about the contact/alum and their place of work. Develop a list of open-ended questions that will help you achieve your goal of the conversation (*back from Step 1*).

Sample questions:

- What is your educational background? What were your career plans when you graduated?
- Describe your typical work day/week.
- What skills are most essential for effectiveness in this job?
- What are the toughest problems you must deal with? What do you find most rewarding?
- Which of your past work experiences has had an impact on what you do now?
- If you had to do it all again, what would you do differently?
- Based on our conversation, are there any other individuals you believe I should talk to?

Some general tips

1. **Be on time** for your appointment and if you can't make it, give ample notice and be sure to reschedule.
2. **Dress accordingly** - depending on what industry the person works in, there are certain norms or dress codes, so be sure seek out what that may be.
3. Bring an **extra copy of your resume** or have it ready to share.
4. **Ensure your safety** - be aware of your surroundings if you are meeting in person and be cognizant that this may be a complete stranger. Be cautious when sharing personal information with this individual.

Introducing oneself in a professional or academic setting

When you are introducing yourself, the following is a general structure on how you can introduce yourself. This is also known as a 30 second commercial or elevator pitch.

Hello. I am **[name]**! *(and offer to shake hands if comfortable or give a copy of your resume).*

I'm studying **[major]** at Swarthmore College and I enjoy my involvement in **[student organization, team, club, etc.]**.

I have learned **[ex. To use Excel to parse data; to interview community members; communication skills]** in this **[club, team, job, etc.]**.

The experiences I saw on your LinkedIn profile *(or bio/nametag if at a conference/event)* have sparked my curiosity and I'd like to learn more about your involvement in **[specifics topic]**.

OR

My **[professor, career coach, friend, teammate]** suggested I reach out to you to learn more about your experiences with **[specific topic]** as I am considering that career path.

OR *(at a Career Fair*

I would like to contribute to your organization. Could you tell me more about the application process and the skills your organization looks for in candidates?

Thank you very much for your time. I will connect with you on LinkedIn and look forward to keeping in touch.

Step 4: Maintain contact & follow up.

After you meet or speak with the individual immediately follow-up with an email. The content should include :

1. Thanking them for their time
2. One key takeaway from your conversation
3. (if applicable) Note on any suggestions or advice they gave you

The importance of a “thank you” email or note cannot be underestimated! Alumni and other contacts are generally very willing to share their experiences and help others entering their field. Remember, though, that their time is valuable and they would like to know that is wasn’t wasted.

EXAMPLE

Dear [Individual’s name],

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I was very interested to learn more about your research into micro-banking and developing nations. I am even more determined to pursue my goals having talked with you about my hopes to study abroad and do an internship in The Gambia. I will contact the people you suggested and follow up with you regarding my progress. Thanks again for your insight and guidance.

Sincerely,
[Your Name & Class Year]

Moving forward...

- Be sure to keep their names and contact information and continue a reciprocal relationship.
- Keep your network thriving! – as you accept a position or make key career decisions, share your progress with your contacts.
- **LinkedIn** – A great platform to keep your career networks in touch with what you are doing
 - If you need a professional headshot, Career Services can take one for you!