

JOINING A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION



SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH
Office of Career Services

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

It is a governing body that establishes the credentials necessary to enter the profession and maintains professional standards within the industry. It is also known to represent the profession in discussion with other stakeholders. Professional associations generally function as a nonprofit organization, establishing independent bylaws and mission. Many play a role in accrediting degrees, defining the skills and competencies necessary to excel within the field, and granting professional certifications to indicate that a person is qualified in the subject area.

TIPS FOR SELECTING

You do not need to join every association related to your industry, nor should you. This would be spreading yourself too thin and would likely cost more money and take up more time than it would be worth. Instead, find one or two association that fit your professional needs. Ask professors, professionals within the industry, or alumni which they recommend. This is a great question to ask during an information interview. If you find an association interesting, see if there is a regional chapter you can join. Belonging to a local chapter will make it easier for you to attend events and meet people in your area.

GET A HEAD START

Many professional organizations offer discounted membership fees for students who have yet to enter the job market. Sometimes, these discounts can amount to well over half the typical cost of membership. Joining a professional organization while still a student can also open doors to scholarships, internships, and employment opportunities.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU JOIN

Spend initial time exploring the industry and making contacts. Become familiar with the association's online and in-person resources which may be of value to you as a student and throughout your career. If there is a job search database on the association's website, post your resume and look for interesting opportunities.

BENEFITS OF JOINING A PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

BROADEN YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Many professions are accredited and require ongoing education to retain licensure or certification. Professional associations often offer conferences, courses, seminars, or virtual training to keep themselves and their members up to date on the latest industry innovations, research, and trends. Staying informed in your industry will help during networking and job interviews and help you progress more rapidly in your career.

ENHANCE YOUR NETWORK

You know that networking and making connections is critical, and joining associations provide countless opportunities to connect on a local and sometimes even global level. For most people, creating professional relationships is important, and joining a group allows you to have a sense of security and trust. From this, you can support and help one another in reaching professional goals.

BUILD YOUR RESUME

A professional association could be a great resume builder for young professionals. If you are an active member, you may even explore an internship that will earn you valuable work experience or join a working committee to develop important workplace competencies.

ESTABLISH A SUPPORT SYSTEM

Members of a professional association can often benefit from mentoring relationships with experienced professionals in the industry. You can learn from their useful insights and guidance. Even on an informal basis, these contacts are often a valuable source of information and can provide solutions when you have questions, are at a crossroads in your profession, or facing a challenging situation in your field.

STAY CURIOUS, MOTIVATED, AND INSPIRED!

Be open to possibilities! You may not know that you have a passion for something, but it is important to be curious and proactive. Join a professional organization and discover something new TODAY!

Identify Professional Association(s) within Your Chosen Field

Joining a professional association provides members with a competitive advantage because they become active, informed members within their industry. Many association members who lead busy professional lives depend on their association to brief them on important industry trends, new legislative rulings, and advances in technology.

Considering your career trajectory, identify a recognized professional association within your field. Research the benefits associated with joining and becoming an active member of the association.

YOUR CHOSEN FIELD

Career Field: What career or industry are you pursuing or considering?	
---	--

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION: OPTION 1

Professional Association: Select a professional association that fits your professional needs.	
Mission/Purpose: What central role does this association play within the profession?	
Membership Benefits: Consider networking, continuing education, job boards, etc.	

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION: OPTION 2

Professional Association: Select a professional association that fits your professional needs.	
Mission/Purpose: What central role does this association play within the profession?	
Membership Benefits: Consider networking, continuing education, job boards, etc.	