



## Center for Student Experience & Career Development: Networking Guide

### WHAT IS NETWORKING?

Networking is an essential tool in your career exploration and job search processes. Simply put, networking means talking with people who are working in jobs, organizations, or career fields that interest you. In doing so, you will learn what they do, what it takes to succeed, what skills and knowledge the work requires, and receive more names to add to your contact list. Whether you are researching career options or launching a job search campaign, you will want to be as effective in your efforts as possible. Networking is a crucial component in the career development process.

**A Note for Skeptics:** Students sometimes resist networking because of shyness or the mistaken belief that networking is disingenuous.

Don't let either of these keep you from using this highly effective tool! The process of meeting people and building relationships is the major pipeline to jobs and to high confidence in career decision-making. Sophisticated professionals use it regularly and know its immense value. When done well, it is not sleazy, manipulative, or an imposition. If a contact doesn't have the time or inclination to help, s/he/they will tell you. Most people you approach will be happy to help. Keep in mind, most people love to talk about what they do and how they got started and to offer advice.

If you are shy, start with contacts you know personally or that were given to you by those you know. Once you conduct a few meetings, it will get easier. Prepare your introduction in advance and bring questions with you as a short "script."

If you are still hesitant to begin this process, discuss your concerns with a member of the Career Development staff.

### INFORMATIONAL VS. TARGETED NETWORKING

**Informational Interviewing** is most appropriate when you are unsure of your career direction and want to learn more about different fields and the jobs within them. It can also help you find an internship where you can get first hand experience to help you decide if this work is for you. It is a time to ask broad questions about topics such as:

- What skills are needed?
- What skills are needed to advance in the field?
- How many hours a week are expected?
- How might this kind of work fit into my life plans?
- What is the starting salary range?
- What are the satisfactions/rewards of this work?

Once you have made a decision about career direction and have a specific field or job target in mind, you are ready to conduct "**targeted networking.**" This is a job search tool that savvy job seekers use to gather deeper, insider information to increase one's odds of targeting a great organization or position or to develop job leads. That information could be about:

- The organization (products, services, competition)
- Potential job openings
- More contacts within the organization with whom to discuss your job objective
- More contacts outside the organization with whom to continue networking
- Advice on how to improve your job search techniques or targets

## RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### Framingham State University Alumni

An excellent resource for networking is the alumni finder tool in LinkedIn. This tool allows you to search for and connect with Framingham State alumni. The alumni finder tool allows you to search for alumni in a variety of ways, including by major, where they live, where they work, and other filtering options. To access the alumni finding tool, follow the Framingham State University LinkedIn page and select the alumni tab to search for Framingham State University alumni.

### Career Fairs & Employer Showcases

One of the primary benefits of attending a career fair and Employer Showcases is meeting new people—recruiters, other job seekers, career professionals—to add to your network of contacts. Regardless of your reason for attending a career fair, keep in mind that one of the biggest benefits is the addition of contacts to your career network. Of course, your first priority should be to network with recruiters, but don't discount the other participants at the fair. Be sure to network with fellow attendees. Some of the attendees are your competition, but many are seeking other positions, and the sharing of information and resources can be beneficial, not only at the fair, but also beyond. So, take time to chat with other fair-goers. Also network with fair organizers who may have inside information on upcoming recruitment events, organizations that are recruiting but could not attend, etc.

Don't leave the career fair without a collection of business cards. After the fair, take time to write a quick thank you note to any new network contact you made. Make sure to also connect with them via LinkedIn if you have an updated profile. Make sure to include a note with your invitation to connect to remind contacts how you know them and where you met them. One of the keys to keeping your network strong and invested in your career is by keeping in touch. As with the recruiters, remember to thank them for their time and acknowledge any help they have provided.

Make a list of individuals who are part of your network. Connect with these individuals if they are on LinkedIn. If they are not, reach out to them when the time comes for you to start internship/job searching. Share recent updates with them about your academic studies, achievements, and experience. Inform them that you are actively searching for opportunities and would welcome any advice or resources they can recommend to you.

### Potential Contacts

- Framingham State alumni
- Roommates
- Friends
- Faculty/staff
- Athletic coaches
- Fellow teammates
- People you know from volunteering
- Summer job co-workers
- Job supervisors
- Clergy and church members
- Your parents and siblings
- Friends of your parents
- Friends of your siblings
- High school teachers and friends
- Internship supervisors/peers

**Not sure what to include in your outreach message? Reach out to Career Development and a career counselor can help you put together a message for your targeted audience.**