

## **Interviewing & Networking Strategies for International Students**

### What is Networking?

- BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
- In its truest form, networking is when people meet to exchange ideas, information, and contacts.
  - It can take place in a formal networking meeting, an office, an airplane, bar, holiday party—anywhere two people are talking and building a relationship.
  - The topic of conversation is irrelevant as long as people are building a rapport, a level of trust, or a bond with each other.
- Networking should NOT be seen as a one-way street where you do all the asking and your contacts provide all the help and resources.
  - You should be open to, and offer to, repay the kindness that has been extended to you by your contacts if they should ever need your assistance.
  - Right now, you may not think you have much to offer your networking contacts, but you do and you will in the future.

### Why is Networking Important?

- Approximately 70% of all jobs are found through networking!
  - Most career counseling professionals estimate that at least 50% of the jobs that are filled are never advertised.
  - Current employees will often tell their networking associates when a position is opening and/or help those associates get interviews.
  - A referral generates 80% more results than a cold call.
- Networking is also very powerful when used to research companies and industries, to prepare for job interviews, and to gain an inside knowledge of possible job openings at a company.

### Where to Meet People

- Attend school sponsored events
  - Social events, receptions, dinners
  - “Meet Employer” events
  - Guest lecturer events
  - Conferences/conventions
- Attend nonprofit/charitable events
  - Great way to build your network of contacts
- Networking sites/databases
  - myNotreDame Alumni networking system
  - LinkedIn

### Your Introduction is the Foundation

- The purpose of an introduction is to engage someone in conversation.
- Look for a connection—find common ground:
  - Experiences you have shared—common studies, educational path, etc.
  - Interests you have in common—love of travel, reading, cooking/food
  - Someone you may both know—a shared connection

- Start with a positive claim directed at the person/organization
  - Compliment the lecture/speech/presentation
  - Praise the outcome of the event, the achievements of the individual/organization, the progress of a project, etc
  - BE SPECIFIC—give an example of what you like/think they did well.
- Relate the person's/organization's/event's goals and interests to your interests/skills/goals
  - Mention the aspects of the person's/organization's research/goals that relate to your interests/research/goals.
  - Experiences you have shared—common studies, educational path, professional aspirations, etc.
  - Someone you may both know—a shared connection

### How to Work a Room

- DO:
  - Have a mission
    - Who do you want to meet?
    - What do you want to know?
  - Play detective
    - Ask questions and listen, but also share info about you
  - Use business cards
    - A fast, easy way to exchange contact information
  - Make sure you let people know what type of opportunity you are seeking
    - What would be a good job for you, what you would like for your next research steps, etc.
  - Have a good exit strategy
- DON'T
  - Monopolize one person's time
  - Stand in a corner talking to your friends
  - Be afraid to read name tags
  - Be negative about yourself, your work, or your colleagues
  - Give a speech
    - Take time to let the person respond
    - Make it a conversation by listening and asking questions
- “Safe” conversation topics:
  - Work/career questions
  - Organization/event questions
  - About you—What can you say that will be memorable?
    - What led you to choose Notre Dame
    - Your intended career pursuits
    - Hobbies/personal interests
- Topics to avoid:
  - Politics

- Religion
- Health issues/illnesses
- Money and what things cost
- Breaking into the Conversation
  - Don't interrupt!
  - Wait for the intended person to finish a previous conversation OR
  - Join the group, listen for a couple minutes and then join the conversation
- Body Language
  - Maintain good posture—stand up straight, face forward
  - Observe personal space—keep 2-3 feet distance
  - Maintain eye contact while talking and listening—this shows you are paying attention and interested
- Handshakes
  - Use a firm grip, lasts 2-3 seconds
- Follow the Host's lead
- Exiting a Conversation
  - Be polite—don't tell them that you need to use the restroom, want to get more food, there is someone else you want to meet, etc.
  - Let them know if you want to meet/speak again in the future
    - Set up a meeting, plan a phone calls, etc.
  - Exchange contact information
    - Business cards are very handy!
  - Thank them
    - “It was a pleasure to meet you,” “Thank you for speaking with me,” etc.
  - Shake hands

### Make it a Conversation

- Be prepared to ask pointed questions – doing your homework will impress and will provide talking points to start/continue conversation
  - Familiarize yourself with their work/research
  - Ask for advice
  - What would the person recommend you do/skills you may need
  - Who would the person recommend you speak with
- Demonstrate your Knowledge & Enthusiasm!

### Prepare Yourself!

- Some questions about yourself that you should be prepared to answer:
  - At what stage are you in your career?
  - What are your research interests?
  - What are you currently working on?
  - What is important about your work? Why should people care?
  - Do you have plans for further research?
  - What are your future goals?

- What skills/qualities do you have that contribute to your work/career?
  - Academic, professional, personal
  - As an international student/professional, what advantages or perspectives do you have to offer?

#### TAKING IT TO THE NEXT STEP

- While not a formal job/internship opportunity, can lead to hiring in the future—*if you maintain the relationship*
- Use your communication tools
  - Write personal notes
    - Always write by hand, personalize if possible
  - E-mail your contacts annually or twice yearly to update them on your activity/progress
- Be organized
  - Keep track of your contacts (i.e. Outlook)
  - Use “notes” field to document contacts/conversations
- Make good use of your free time
  - Schedule a meeting once per week—face time with as many people as you can is key
  - Keep an open mind about opportunities—ask questions and act interested (learn about “their” business or other pending matters)
  - Share information about your interests, pursuits and strengths—you need to give people adequate information to help you