

# Networking Night Tips for Students



## Welcome to University Career Services' Networking Night!

To help you get the most out of this event, UCS offers the following information and tips:

**Seize the Moment:** If you are arriving a little early, take the opportunity to begin meeting people before the professional guests are formally introduced. Remember, our guests have volunteered to come to talk to students and are eager to meet you. So don't be shy-go introduce yourself to anyone with a guest nametag. **DO NOT SPEND THIS TIME TALKING WITH FELLOW STUDENTS.**

**Know whom you want to talk to:** Once we begin this evening's program (about 15-20 minutes after the scheduled start), each professional guest will briefly introduce himself or herself. Take note of which guests' careers and experiences are related to your interests. After the introductions, when the "mingling" begins, seek out these particular folks and spend time talking with each of your "priority" guests.

**Know how to begin and what you want to say:** One of the hardest parts of networking is knowing how to begin and how to continue a conversation with strangers. Think of a few questions ahead of time and be able to state your career interests in a few sentences. Some questions you might ask are:

- How did you get started?
- What training or education is required for this field?
- What is the demand for employees in this field?
- What about your work do you most/least enjoy?
- If you were in my position what would you do next?
- Are you aware of any internship/job opportunities?
- Who else should I talk to? May I use your name?

These questions are simply suggestions-feel free to come up with your own. The important thing is to be prepared. Just approach someone that you might want to talk with, extend your hand in a handshake, and introduce yourself with your name, year in school, and major or career interest. Then, either let them take the lead, or ask some of your questions. At the end of the conversation thank the guest for their time.

**Keep moving & Join a group:** Hopefully there are many people here this evening whom you want to meet. There are also other students who may want to meet the same guests that you do. Try to spend three to five minutes speaking with each of your priority guests. Then, thank the professional for talking with you and move on to someone else in order to have time to speak with other guests. You should make a concerted effort to develop at least three different contacts this evening. It is probably not possible for you to have a one-on-one conversation with each of your "priority" guests. If a guest is speaking with a group of students, feel free to just move into the group and introduce yourself.

**Gather information:** It is a good idea to make notes this evening of networking contacts and other important information you learn. Also, be sure to pick up the UCS handout with the guests' names and contact information.

**Follow up:** Send follow-up letters or email to those guests you would like to have further meetings with, who asked you to get in touch with them, who were helpful to you, or with whom you wish to remain in contact.

**What about guests who aren't here?** The professionals who have been invited to this program are quite busy, and sometimes have last minute obligations that prevent them from coming. If you are disappointed that a particular individual listed on the participant list did not come, feel free to contact him or her at a later date, indicating that you were disappointed that they could not make the UCS networking night event and asking if they might talk with you briefly in phone or in person.

**How were the guests selected? What if there's no one here that you have an interest in?** This is an opportunity for you to meet **local** professionals in fields that may interest you. There is no funding to pay travel costs of professionals who are not in this area. However, many of the guests who come to this program not only have the experience of working for their current employer, but have extensive experience with other organizations. For example, you may be interested in working in publishing in New York City and may find that a person attending now works in Chapel Hill but has previously worked for Random House in NY and can give you great advice and possibly even contacts. Be creative – and take maximum advantage of the opportunity to gain valuable information from the guests who are here.

If, at first glance, there does not seem to be someone at the program doing the type of work you have an interest in or working at your desired organization/s, don't waste the opportunity to pick the brains of some guests who might be interesting. These people have extensive contacts and may very well know someone in your field of interest whom you can call at a later date, using their name to gain entry.

**UCS staff members will be there to assist you and answer questions.**