

EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS

There are many ways to explore career opportunities during your time as a Friedman School student. Throughout your time in your graduate program, we encourage you to build connections and learn from a variety of individuals so as to maximize your success.

THE POWER OF NETWORKING

What is Networking?

It's the single most effective way to explore careers and find work. In fact, according to multiple sources, as many as 85% of all jobs are filled via networking! Networking is a great way to turn contacts into connections and develop professional relationships.

Networking = Research

You're collecting useful info on industries, career paths, job roles, skills needed, future trends, and how to break into an industry. Speaking to people — alumni, family, friends, colleagues — helps you learn more about the world of work and where you best fit. Networking can be serendipitous (e.g., chatting in line at a coffee shop or on an airplane) or strategic (e.g., attending a conference reception or meeting with someone 1-on-1 for an informational interview).

Networking is Mutually Beneficial

Networking is more about the relationships you develop rather than the things others can do for you. The goal is to build sustainable, mutually beneficial relationships. As a graduate student, you may wonder how much you have to offer in a networking situation. Grad school trains you to be an expert in your field, which puts you at the cutting edge of emerging ideas. By reading journals, staying involved in research, and attending events, you have access to a wealth of knowledge that people who work outside of academia may not have. You may also have personal experiences that interest others, such as international travel, tech expertise or shared hobbies.

Questions to Ask in a Networking Situation

Questions about their experience and the job

Tell me about your typical day at work. • Which skills or experiences are most valuable to have in your field? • Which qualifications are required for someone to work in this position? • What do you like most about your job? • What are some challenges of your work? • Tell me about your career path and how you got your current position. • What do you think has made you successful throughout your career?

Questions about the industry, future, trends

Where do you see your career/position within this organization going from here? • What is your impression of how your industry or organization will grow or change in 5 years? • What are some of the challenges your industry is currently facing? • What are some of the long-term trends in your organization?

Questions about breaking into field, advice, additional contacts

What experience would be valuable to have before getting a job in this industry? • Which skills did you gain from your (graduate) education that helped you in your career? • What advice do you have for someone with my background who wants to enter this field? • Can you suggest additional contacts who might be willing to share their experiences?

Grad school is a great time to start networking

- Discounted member rates for professional organizations
- Student rates at conferences and other social events
- Access to free networking events with alumni and talks hosted at Tufts
- Good rule of thumb: Attend a couple of conferences or alumni events per year with unique attendees whose career interests overlap with yours. Create goals before attending so you'll be sure to meet new people in addition to reconnecting with familiar faces.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

An informational interview IS ... A conversation you have with someone who is working in a field, job, or organization that you're interested in.

It is NOT ... A traditional job interview. Rather than asking for a job, you're seeking **advice and insight**. While you may be interested in working for the organization, this shouldn't be a topic of conversation. Instead of talking about yourself and what you offer, take this opportunity to learn about the people you're interviewing and their roles.

Why are they important?

This is a chance for you to learn firsthand about an organization or career path you're interested in pursuing. It's a great chance to learn about the skills you'll need to develop during your graduate training and what it's like to be employed in a particular field or with a specific organization. Going beyond a job description, informational interviews can offer you insider information about the day-to-day activities of people working in areas that interest you.

This is also a way for you to expand your network. While not the purpose of the interview, having these conversations may lead to the discovery of job openings before they're posted. Like all networking, informational interviewing is a form of research. Determine learning goals according to your stage of career development. First-year grad students may focus on career exploration, while those launching a job search may be more tightly focused on specific occupations or industries.

1

SCHEDULE THE MEETING

Most people are not only happy to talk about their experiences, they're willing to meet with you to share that information. Start the search within your own network and branch out from there. Often, having a common connection with someone who you're interested in speaking with can make this process feel more personal.

2

PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

Prepare for an informational interview as you would a job interview by gaining as much info as you can about the person you'll be speaking with and the organization they work for. This will be a lot like using the research skills you have developed during your graduate degree. Visit the organization's website and check out the LinkedIn profiles of people who work there. Not only will this help you engage in more meaningful and informed conversation, but it can also give you ideas about the questions you might want to ask.

CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

There may be many questions you want to ask. When creating your list, ask yourself: What info am I looking for? Write down your questions so you don't forget them. You may only have 15-20 minutes with this individual, so try to limit yourself to five or six questions. Although it's called an interview, this should feel more like a conversation. Express enthusiasm and interest by asking follow-up questions and engaging with the other person.

3

FOLLOW UP

After the informational interview, it's customary to send the person a note to thank them for taking the time to meet with you. (Email is the easiest and quickest way to do this.) The sooner you reach out, the better. Experts recommend doing this immediately following your meeting so the information is fresh in your mind.

4

Sample Request

Dear Ms. Winter,
As a graduate student in the Tufts Friedman School [name of program], I came across your name in the Tufts Friedman School Alumni Association group on LinkedIn. I'm interested in speaking with you about your professional experiences and [highlight something specific if relevant]. I'm currently conducting career research in the [name of workplace sector] and would appreciate the opportunity to learn about your career path.
Would it be possible to arrange a 15-20 minute discussion of these topics? Thank you in advance for your time and I look forward to the opportunity to connect.
Sincerely,
[Your full name and contact information]

Sample Thank You

Dear Mr. Smith,
Thank you for speaking with me this afternoon. It was fascinating to hear about your personal career path in addition to learning about the internal structure of [name of organization]. It was both informative and encouraging to hear about your success in this field.
I greatly appreciate your advice on seeking out an internship opportunity with your organization. At your suggestion, I have contacted Teresa Field about the matter and will be meeting with her next week. I truly appreciate your willingness to speak with me and look forward to staying in touch.
Best Regards,
Jonathan
[Your full name and contact information]

YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE CHECKLIST

Maintaining a strong virtual presence is one way to add value to your personal network. Through LinkedIn you have the opportunity to connect with fellow grad students, alumni, potential employers, and others. Use your profile as an additional way to showcase some of your skills, experiences, and achievements. Visit the Block Career Center website for LinkedIn tips, including resources to help you increase the strength of your profile and the likelihood that people will contact you in the future.



Headline

Your headline will serve as your online elevator pitch. It should be a short but memorable professional slogan about your areas of interest or expertise and which kinds of opportunities you're looking for via LinkedIn.



Profile Picture

Choose a profile picture where you're alone (i.e., rather than a cropped photo of yourself with others) and in professional dress. Use a current and welcoming photo. *Profiles with pictures are 14 times more likely to be viewed!*



Summary

Write a short summary that includes information about your qualifications, skills, relevant work or extracurricular activities, and accomplishments. Include a brief statement about your plans and goals for the future. Feel free to use your headline as a template when writing this section.



Work Experience

List any previous and/or current jobs, along with what you accomplished at each. You can also share examples of your work by including media (e.g., photos, videos) or documents (e.g., excerpts of writing that you're particularly proud of).



Education

Start this section with your graduate degree, followed by all of your additional post-secondary training. Include information about your institution, majors and minors, thesis title, courses, and program.



Volunteer Experience

Showcase volunteer experiences and highlight organizations and causes that you care about. According to LinkedIn, 42% of hiring managers view volunteer experience as equal to formal work experience, and 1 in 5 has chosen a candidate based on their previous volunteer work.



Accomplishments

List your accomplishments to optimize your profile for talent seekers. These can include publications (links to peer-reviewed work and other relevant writing); certifications; patents; courses (list by course name, not number); honors and awards; languages; and more.



Projects

Projects can be a particularly important piece of the Accomplishments section for grad students. List anything from course assignments to entrepreneurial activities, as well as your thesis. Include project names and information about what you did and how. If relevant, you can also include a URL that will direct viewers to the project's website.



Recommendations

Ask employers, colleagues, professors, clients, or classmates who have worked with you closely to write brief recommendations on your behalf. This will add credibility to your skills and strengths. Try to get a range of recommendations from people you've collaborated with in unique settings.

Important Profile Tips

- 1. Customize your URL** by changing the default link to one that includes your full name. This will increase the chances that people will easily find your LinkedIn profile when searching for you online.
- 2. Consider including your contact information** (e.g., email address, Twitter handle, link to an ePortfolio) in your profile summary if you would like others beyond your direct connections to have access to the info.
- 3. Add skills and endorsements to your profile.** If you like, you have the option of adding key skills relevant to the careers that appeal to you. Your connections can then endorse you for the things you're best at and you can do the same for them.
- 4. Think about making your profile visible to others.** Visit your public profile settings to edit the visibility of your profile. This controls how often your info will appear in search engines, e.g., if a potential employer googles your name.