



NETWORKING: MAKING CONNECTIONS FOR YOUR FUTURE

Networking is all about *Connecting with Others*. **It's Relational; not transactional.** **BE CURIOUS!** Networking is learning from people, gaining their advice and guidance. You're not asking for a favor, but to learn from their experience and wisdom. This happens every day with your fellow students, professors and coworkers. You're naturally learning from others all the time: what do they like, what don't they like, what do they know and what works—or doesn't. Now, networking makes it intentional because you want to learn about your next potential community, be it a new academic department, grad school or a career.

“Do informational interviewing: Talk with a lot of people in your chosen field/company/career. If you are unsure, just talk with a variety of people about what they like and dislike about their jobs. You can start with talking to just one person, ask if they know anyone else you should talk with.” Stacey Bearden, class of '99

Your Network Starts with Who You Know. Think of the contacts you have through *family, friends, professors, past employers, or roommates* and begin to expand your network by asking them about people they know in certain careers. You will find most people very willing to share their 'stories' with you – after all, they were once where you are now, and they know the challenge of finding a meaningful path in life.

Another group of people with whom you have a logical connection are **Swarthmore Alumni**. Access the Online Alumni Directory on the Career Services website. Use **LinkedIn** and join Swarthmore groups such as the *Swatties Helping Swatties* Mentoring and Networking group on It's designed for alums and students to connect about career topics. Also search Swarthmore College and click on Alumni for a keyword search.

Networking happens when you don't even know it - connecting with others in casual conversation, while attending meetings and special events or in prearranged “informational” interviews. However it occurs, forming relationships with others teaches you what's happening in the world.

80% of all jobs are found through NETWORKING. Getting to know people in your field of interest is vital as you search for meaningful internships and plan your full time job search.

STEP 1: Identify your interests

First, identify what type of work motivates you. Having a genuine interest in a particular field will help you communicate your passion to individuals who can be great networking contacts in that field.

Meet with a career counselor to explore your specific interests and professional goals. Counselors can talk with you about the career decision making process and administer the interest inventories to help match your interests, skills and values to careers. Once you have discovered your likes and are ready to network with an alum or other professional, determine exactly what you want to gain from your contact: a personal or telephone informational interview; answers to specific questions; career advice; insight about a job or internship announcement you've seen posted; or tips on how to gain experience or break into their line of work.

STEP 2: Making contact for an Informational Interview

Think of the members of your network as your professional development guides. The better informed they are about you and what you want to do, the better they can answer your questions or lead you to opportunities. Identify information you would like to gather from your contact; have an outline of the questions you would like to ask; develop a brief summary of who you are and what your preliminary job or

graduate school plans are. Also, thoroughly research the person you plan to contact. Do they have a blog? Follow it. Have they recently published a book or research? Read it. Prepare your resume and draft an e-mail to introduce yourself. Discuss your resume and networking e-mail with a counselor or Career Peer Advisor in Career Services.

Remember, in networking you are looking for advice and guidance, **not asking for a job**. You're developing invaluable resources for your career development. Networking is about building relationships; and building relationships takes time. A networking relationship is an on-going, two-way relationship.

Furthermore, don't think that you're taking advantage of someone because of your intentions for reaching out to them. Remember that these people were once in your shoes! Therefore, they will understand why you want to connect with them and they will be eager to help.

Though networking often happens through casual conversation, you may want to set up meetings with your contacts so that you can make sure to have your time together focus on deeper conversation. This way they'll learn of your goals and give thoughtful responses to your inquiry and you'll be able to learn as much as possible about their work.

If you don't know the person with whom you are meeting, the appropriate way to make an introduction is through an email message. Send a copy of your resume with your inquiry to give the person more information about your experience and interests.

Sample Introductions:

Dear Mr. Smith:

My name is Alice Paul and I am currently a junior at Swarthmore College with an honors double major in Political Science and Religion. I was connected to you through Swarthmore College Career Services when we discussed a career in the consulting industry.

Over the summer, I spent some time shadowing a consultant at a boutique firm in Shanghai and got to meet interesting individuals from all kinds of sectors. Many had businesses or ideas that were truly innovative and fascinating. The experience got me really interested in the field and I hope to learn and explore more about a career in consulting. I hope that, with your experience at IBM, you can provide me with your insights and perspectives on your career experience. Would you be able to chat for 15 minutes? We can talk by phone or via email, whichever method is more convenient for you.

Thank you so much for kind help and I hope you have a great week ahead!

Yours Sincerely,
Alice Paul '21

Dear Ms. Smith:

I hope you are well. I'm a recent Swarthmore graduate who was connected to you through the Swatties Helping Swatties Networking and Mentoring LinkedIn group. I know you are an active alumna and I'm excited to have the chance to get in touch with you because of your extensive knowledge and expertise in the environmental field through your work at the Aspen Institute.

I have spent the past year in China completing a fellowship studying the implementation of water policy and how changes in that area are affecting the growth of the sector. My resume is attached, if you are interested in finding out a bit more about who I am and about the other environmental work I have conducted.

I was extremely interested to read the Sustainable Water Systems Report that was published by the Aspen Institute this June, and was heartened by many of the progressive recommendations included in it. If you have a chance in the coming days, I am eager to learn a bit about the projects in which you are involved as a senior fellow, and also see what advice you may have on my career options.

Please let me know if you're able to find time for a conversation; I would be very grateful for about twenty minutes of your time. Thank you so much.

All the best,
Palmer Pittinger '20

Hello, Mr. Smith:

I'm Dana Willets, a Swarthmore student planning to major in biology. I learned from the online alumni directory that you are a researcher at Stanford and I've found reading your work on your website very interesting. This summer I hope to get some experience in genetic research and wonder if you could give me some guidance about the types of opportunities that would be most meaningful to pursue. I've attached my resume to give you an idea of the course work I've done here and prior to college. Is there a time convenient for you when we could set up a 20-minute telephone conversation to talk about my interests? Thank you in advance for any advice you might have.

Sincerely,

Dana Willets '23

Hello, Ms. Smith:

I'm Cameron Clothier, and I'm a member of the Class of 2022 at Swarthmore. In the Alumni Directory I read that you are an architect in Philadelphia and that your firm just gained the contract to design the new children's art museum, with plans to make it a LEED certified building. I'd like to talk with you about your work, this project, and your firm's commitment to environmentally conscious and sustainable design. I'm very interested in learning more about architecture and would like your advice about ways to gain knowledge and experience in the field not having studied it as an undergraduate. Could we schedule a time for me to come to your office to talk with you about your career path and your perspective on ways to enter the field? I'd appreciate any insight you could provide. Please let me know if there are any days and times that might work for you. If a phone conversation would be easier, please feel free to call me at 610.328.8352. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you very much for your time.

Best wishes,

Cameron Clothier '22

Hello, Mr. Smith:

My roommate David Kemp referred me to you and I was wondering if you have a few minutes to answer a few questions about your career field. I'm Alice Paul, a junior at Swarthmore College. Currently my major is history and I'm thinking about going on to law school, focusing on public interest law. I know that you graduated from Berkeley and that your practice specializes in immigrant rights, an area of strong interest to me. Last summer I interned at Amnesty International and heard many pros and cons about pursuing law as an entry into human rights work. I'd love to hear your thoughts on this and discuss the path you took to where you are today. If you have a minute, could you give me some feedback on your career satisfaction and any tips for success? Perhaps we could arrange a brief phone conversation, based on your availability. Thanks very much.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Alice Paul '21

Dear Ms. Hallowell,

I am a recent Swarthmore College graduate and honors economics major with an interest in progressive feminist economic research. I came across your work in the book *Postcolonialism Meets Economics*, and I was struck by the type of analysis you were bringing to our discipline. The collected essays in the book are a real challenge to economics-as-usual, building on such works like the *Post-Development Reader* and works in transnational feminist theory. I admire your courage in pursuing unorthodox approaches, and in constructively modeling new "counter-disciplinary" methodologies.

I am writing to ask you for some advice about pursuing a career in economics since my work is grounded in a similar vein of progressive feminist thought. I am currently looking for a job, perhaps working with a feminist economist on research or assisting with implementing a progressive program abroad that would allow me to do more thinking about the issues I care about. I would love to talk to you about your career and research interests as a way of learning more about the field. My personal background (Latina from Miami) and my research history are pointed more towards Latin America (including the US) rather than the Middle East and the US, but I think we could have a very productive conversation.

Please let me know if you are able to find time for a brief talk, or feel free to email back a response if that is most convenient. In either case, it would be particularly helpful if you could offer me direction by way of the names of organizations or individuals who might be working on projects to which I could contribute. I have attached my resume for reference in case you are interested in learning a bit more about my background.

Thank you in advance.

All the best,

Paola Parrish '19

Dear Ms. Worth,

My name is Alice Paul and I am a member of the Class of 2023 at Swarthmore College. I am very interested in biotechnology and medicine, specifically how the system works on an entrepreneurial level. I love science, and hope to be a Chemistry major and Engineering minor here at Swarthmore. After being able to attend part of the TEDMED conference this past year and after my exposure to biomedical engineering, I realized that path that would be fulfilling for me on multiple levels. I want to be involved with the innovation that comes with scientific discovery, but perhaps in a different role than that of the researcher.

I recently spoke with Professor Molter in engineering and she referred me to you. If possible, I would be very interested in meeting you when you visit campus for Engineering Council.

Thank you,

Alice Paul '23

Dear Kayla Burt,

My name is David Kemp, and I am a sophomore at Swarthmore College currently studying English Literature and Psychology. I learned from the Alumni Directory that you practice law in my hometown of Springfield. This greatly interested me, as I am very certain I would like to go into law myself after graduating from Swarthmore and going through law school. Over winter break, I participated in Career Services' Externship Program and shadowed a lawyer in New York, learning a great deal from the experience. I would like to continue that learning process by talking to you about your practice, your path into the legal profession, and any advice you may have for someone like myself hoping to follow in your footsteps.

I have attached my résumé so that you can get a sense of the academic and extracurricular activities in which I participate here on campus. Is there a time that is convenient for you to set up a 20 minute or so phone conversation to discuss your professional experiences? I will also be back in Springfield the week of March 11 should you prefer to meet in person.

Thank you in advance for your help.

All the best,

David Kemp '22

Dear Madison Berger,

I enjoyed meeting you at the Alumni Student Networking Dinner last weekend. Our brief conversation at the hors d'oeuvres table about your first job after Swarthmore got me thinking about that career field. I'm enjoying my varied classes at Swarthmore and considering declaring either a psychology or sociology major. I was intrigued by your career path after earning your sociology degree and, if you have a few moments, I'd like to ask you a few more in-depth questions about how you got started in your field and how you've progressed to your current position.

If you have time for a phone conversation, please let me know what day and time is convenient for you. Thank you very much, again, for sharing your insight at the Networking Dinner.

Sincerely,

Paul Wharton '23

If you intend to make initial contact via LinkedIn, be sure to personalize the message as opposed to using the default message. For example:

I'd like to connect on LinkedIn because I see that you were an engineering major at Swarthmore who earned a PhD at MIT. I am also an engineering major and am considering graduate school at MIT. Could I ask you a few questions about your career path via email or might you have 15 minutes or so to chat on the phone?

Follow the e-mail message with a phone call to confirm a time to talk or meet in person. Don't assume when you call initially that your contact will be ready for an interview at that time – schedule a 20-30 minute appointment. Be friendly. Everyone has busy schedules. Expect to exchange numerous telephone calls before you make contact. However, if the current time is convenient for the contact, ask the questions you have prepared.

STEP 3: Prepare for your meetings/phone interviews

Before making contact, learn what you can about the contact/alum and their place of work. Search to see if the person has been in the news recently, written any books or articles, and be sure to search relevant websites. Be prepared for the contact: show interest in what the alum does, ask about the specifics of their job, how they got there, what they like most about the career field, the job, and the employer.

Develop a list of questions and try to ask open-ended ones that will generate discussion:

- What is your educational background? What were your career plans when you graduated?
- What credentials (degrees, certificates, licenses, etc.) are required for entry into the field?
- How did you prepare yourself for this work?
- Describe your typical work day/week.
- What skills are most essential for effectiveness in this job?
- What are the toughest problems you must deal with? What do you find most rewarding?
- If you were ever to leave this type of work, what would drive you away from it?
- Which of your past work experiences has had an impact on what you do now?
- If things develop as you would like, what ideal career do you see for yourself in the future?
- What skills have you developed that would be transferable to a different career area?
- Is your career field growing? What do you think the future holds for this field?
- What obligation does your work require outside the ordinary work week?
- How much flexibility do you have in terms of hours, vacations, attire, etc.?
- What type of experience would you recommend for undergrads interested in this field?
- If you had to do it all again, what would you do differently?
- What qualifications are important in hiring entry-level candidates in this field?
- How do job seekers find out about openings in this field?
- What type of employers hire people within your line of work?
- What can I expect in terms of salary/compensation/benefits for an entry-level position?
- Based on our conversation, are there any other individuals you believe I should talk to?
- Could you tell me a few people who might be willing to speak with me and may I use your name as an introduction? (Be prepared for an offer to introduce you on LinkedIn. See the LinkedIn guide at the end of this handout.)

During your meeting:

If you are able to meet with your contact in person, be sure to dress professionally and be on time for your appointment. If you can't make the appointment, call ahead with plenty of advance notice and reschedule. Be respectful of his or her time and keep the interview to the agreed upon time unless he/she seems willing to continue. Bring an extra copy of your resume along.

"Network with people. Ask about careers and lifestyles. Don't assume that one person's experience is representative. Don't forget that even in one field there are many variations of career paths that might even offer totally opposite advantages or disadvantages." Jason Bronstein '05

Networking Safely:

It's important to take precautions when networking with individuals, including friends of friends and alumni, as well as conducting interviews with employers and alumni. These are general tips but each situation is unique; the main thing to remember is to trust your instincts and if you feel uncomfortable, either express this or find an excuse to leave. Never feel obligated to reciprocate for the networking help you have received – this is a professional contact, not quid pro quo. It's never appropriate for your networking contact to exact a personal or social obligation from you.

When meeting someone, please remember to:

- Choose the time and place of your meeting wisely. Insist on a public place like a café or Starbucks at a decent hour during which lots of people will be around. If networking, meeting at the individual's workplace is preferred (unless that workplace is their home).
- Do not conduct meetings in another individual's home or in a hotel room. In some cases employers do rent hotel space to conduct interviews but if that is the case tell them you are more comfortable meeting in the hotel lobby or conference room. Do not invite strangers into your home or dorm room.
- Use your own transportation. Never agree to be picked up at your home or on campus. It's never a good idea to get into a stranger's personal vehicle. If meeting in person is challenging, suggest a phone call or Skype.
- If you need a neutral meeting space, Career Services has interview rooms you can use – simply drop by Parrish 135 to schedule a room for your interview.
- Tell a friend or family member where you're going, who you're meeting with and when. Plan to call or text them following the meeting to let them know how it went. Consider having a friend accompany you if possible.
- Take your fully-charged cell phone with you with easily accessible emergency numbers.
- If your networking contact attempts to make physical contact with you, simply shake their hand. Although they may be friendly, they should keep their contact professional, which does not involve more than a handshake.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable for any reason, make an excuse to leave immediately.

Sharing personal information:

We strongly encourage you to be cautious when sharing personal information that could reveal your identity. Use your general college mailing address on your resume and do not provide anyone with your actual dorm location.

Research the person you're meeting with, even if it is a Swarthmore alumnus/a. Try to verify that the person is who they claim to be. Remember that their LinkedIn profile is self-generated and may not be entirely accurate. Google them prior to your meeting and be alert for anything that looks unusual – does their organization seem legitimate? Do they have a website? Is there any public information available about the quality of the opportunities they are providing? Connecting with a person on LinkedIn can be a professional way to stay in touch with a networking contact.

If you have questions about safety in your job search or want to talk with a counselor about networking professionally, please contact Career Services at career@swarthmore.edu or drop by Parrish 135.

STEP 4: Maintaining Contact & Following-up

Always send a thank you email promptly after the informational interview even if this is a person you already know – professional etiquette is essential and your contact's time is valuable so let them know how much you appreciate their willingness to help you. Also follow through on suggestions and advice they give you. For example, if they recommend you look into a certain organization, do it and then let them know the outcome. This will show them you take their advice seriously and that may make them interested in continuing to mentor you when applicable.

Each person with whom you meet could be a good contact for you in the future; be sure to keep their names and contact information. Continue a reciprocal relationship. For example, if you learn about a topic the contact mentioned in a class, write a short email telling them about it.

As mentioned, networking is not asking for a job, but building a relationship that will benefit both people. Once a person gets to know another person (you), they will see your skills and qualifications. If/when they learn of opportunities, they'll be likely to inform you of the position and recommend you for it. They benefit by knowing they've helped a fellow Swattie and also perhaps by adding a Swattie to their work team. People also appreciate the chance to reflect on their career and trends in their field. Your genuine interest in their career will be valued by them. Consider the people in your network as your mentors. They will remember their challenges and successes and be able to advise you. Alums can share how they translated their liberal arts education into transferable skills sought by employers. It all takes time and patience, but it'll be worth it!

Keep your network thriving! As you accept a position or make key career decisions, share your progress with your contacts. Your contacts will welcome periodic updates about your experiences and progress through school/work, so don't feel like you're annoying them. However, do use your best judgment when deciding how frequently to send updates. After an initial contact or externship with an alumnus/a, maintaining the contact can be helpful in finding out more about careers and or employment. You can keep the connection alive by:

- Asking about significant advances in their field when new discoveries are published
- Following their research, publications, career advances, etc. and congratulating them
- Telling the contact about major events in your life
- Keeping the contact up-to-date on courses you are taking and why you like them
- Letting the contact know when you get into graduate school or get a job/internship
- Sharing your graduate school research
- Touching base when you are visiting or planning to move to the contact's area
- Asking for advice on a career decision, job offers or salary negotiations

The importance of a "thank you" email or note cannot be underestimated! Alumni and other contacts are generally very willing to share their experiences and help others entering their field. Remember, though, that their time is valuable and they would like to know that is wasn't wasted.

Sample thank you:

Dear Ms. Martinez:

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I was very interested to learn more about your research into micro-banking and developing nations. I am even more determined to pursue my goals having talked with you about my hopes to study abroad and do an internship in The Gambia. I will contact the people you suggested and follow up with you regarding my progress. Thanks again for your insight and guidance.

Best,
Erin

Sample follow up:

Dear Michael:

A lot has happened since we last spoke. I am currently preparing to be a Peace Corps volunteer this coming summer. I completed my degree in Political Science at Swarthmore and will be able to intern at a policy think tank in DC before working abroad. Your guidance and long term planning ideas have truly helped me to get to this step. I will be sending emails from my post abroad and look forward to continued contact as we discuss politics and international development.

All the best,
Laurie

How to effectively use LinkedIn:

Create a profile – It can be minimal at first – include classes, high school and college activities, internships. Include a few details about your experiences that will help show people who look at your profile what you study and are interested in. You can begin using LinkedIn without a photo, but we suggest adding a photo to show a more complete profile. Please note that the picture doesn't need to be professionally done, but one you are comfortable being viewed through professional

networking. Career Services is glad to take a photo for your LinkedIn profile; just stop by Parrish 135. Join groups - *Swatties helping Swatties* mentoring and networking can be your first group. It was created by Career Services to connect students with alumni who are eager to talk with you about your career interests.

Here's how to find people with whom you might want to conduct an informational interview:

You can do a simple search by searching for *Swarthmore College*, then selecting *Alumni*. You can then conduct a keyword search or filter people by location, major, what they do, where they work and their skills. If you want to contact someone who isn't in one of your groups or connected to someone to whom you're connected, **DON'T pay money to upgrade to a premium account**. Simply professionally request a connection or in the case of alumni, access the Online Alumni Directory to send them an email.



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