

## Networking with Carnegie Mellon Alumni

### *Tips and Guidelines for Students from the Office of Alumni Relations*

#### **WHAT IS NETWORKING?**

Networking is the process of connecting with people in various jobs and career fields of interest to you. Networking is NOT asking someone for a job! It is an opportunity to gain information to help focus your career plans, and make contacts to aid you in your job search.

#### **WHY SHOULD I NETWORK WITH ALUMNI ?**

Carnegie Mellon alumni are a tremendous resource for students. They can share their perspectives on their industry or employer, as well as help you to understand the skills learned and the adjustments needed in transitioning from a university environment to the work world.

#### **BE PREPARED**

In addition to working with your Career Center counselor, it is a good idea to do some of the following research before contacting alumni:

- **Research the field, the job type(s) and the organization;** learn the basics to provide a framework for your conversation.
- **Get organized;** Keep track your contacts— name, title, address, phone number, email, dates of contacts, type of contacts (i.e. left message, e-mailed), results, date to follow up, type of follow up (i.e. call, send resume), names of additional contacts given with title, address, and contact information.
- **Screen your own voicemail message;** Revise your outgoing message to sound more like a job seeker than a student.
- **Make initial call or write initial letter:** introduce yourself briefly, explain why you are contacting them and express interest in setting up a time to meet or talk on the phone to learn more about their job, organization and career.

*Sample phone script #1. (can be adapted for letter or email):*

*“Hi. My name is John Smith and I obtained your name from the Carnegie Mellon alumni directory. I am a junior at Carnegie Mellon and have decided to pursue some type of environmental work after graduation. I know a little bit about your organization and am very interested in the work it does. I am calling to ask if you would be willing to speak with me to give me more information about the organization and the industry.”*

- **Prepare a list of questions:** “broad brush” questions often work best for general career exploration. Here are some examples that you might modify for your use:
  - **General Questions**
    - How did you first get interested in this line of work?
    - What has been your career path?

- Does your work relate to your experience at Carnegie Mellon?
- How did Carnegie Mellon prepare you for this career?
- What do you enjoy most (and least) about your industry?
- What is your typical day like?
- What kind of hours do you work? Are they flexible?
- What lifestyle choices have you made to work in your industry?
- Questions about the organization:
  - What is a typical career path in this organization?
  - Does your employer offer any type of training program? What skills and/or experience are necessary?
  - What are the prospects for advancement?
  - What is your organization's mission?
  - How would you describe your corporate culture?
- Questions about the career field:
  - What type of education or training is recommended or necessary to excel in the field?
  - What are the typical jobs, particularly at the entry level?
  - What is the salary range for these positions?
  - Can you recommend specific trade journals, publications, or web resources which would be helpful in researching this field?
  - Among my strongest assets are (skills, areas of knowledge, personality traits, and values). Where might they fit into this field?
  - Whom else might you recommend I approach for advice about entering this particular field?
  - Is this field comprised of a diverse workforce?
  - Do professional networks exist that provide support to individuals like me who are seeking to enter this field?

### **FOLLOW-UP**

Relationships, which begin only to provide information, will often develop into leads to actual positions in that company or another one. The key is to keep following up at appropriate times to get more information, set up additional meetings, make more phone calls and eventually send a resume and letter if there is an opportunity for which you've been encouraged to apply or one that seems like a good fit. Make notes of type and timing of follow up with contact, (i.e. contact him or her in two months to inquire about the development of any positions, or make contact with referral given).

### **PAYBACK**

As a student, you may feel uncomfortable with networking — you are always on the taking side. You will be able to repay those who help you.

- Say thank you. A handwritten personal thank you note is always appreciated.
- Give regular updates to those whom have helped you to keep them in the loop.
- Check with contacts on a yearly basis just to update them on how you are doing.
- Offer to be of assistance to other networkers after you land a job.
- Sign up for the Alumni Career Advisor Network and help other Carnegie Mellon students.