Writing Consultants and Career Advisors Can Help You Draft Your Profile and Write Follow-Up Thank-You Emails!

For hours and locations, visit: http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/asc/writeplace or http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/career/staff/ca

THE 2014 ENGAGEMENT WANTED PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Beginning this year, there are two items that each student must complete to participate in the Engagement Wanted program: the Engagement Wanted Ad and their Student Profile. The Engagement Wanted Ads that get emailed out to alums each week will each include a link back to each individual’s Student Profile. So, please read through the sections below on completing your 500-character Engagement Wanted Ad and your Student Profile.

Drafting Your 500-Character Engagement Wanted Ad

Keep in Mind:
1. Your audience (alumni, parents, and friends of the College): your readers want to see a professional but “Carleton” ad.
   a. Carleton acronyms (e.g., ENTS) aren’t necessarily familiar to alumni and parents, so spell things out.
   b. It’s possible that the readers of the Engagement Wanted Ad (but not the Student Profile) will extend beyond alumni. Ideally, they’ll forward your ad to friends and contacts who are in a position to help or advise you.
   c. If you are focused on a specific industry, keep that in mind (and make it clear in your ad).
2. Your purpose (to get advice, to learn about contacts or opportunities, and/or to network).
   a. Be as specific as possible
   b. The word “experience” is overused and vague. What specific type of experience are you looking for?
3. The context: your major/concentration along with what you have entered as tags into the Career Interests and the Other Areas of Interest fields on your Student Profile will be displayed underneath your ad, so you don’t need to include all of this in the actual ad.
4. The word limit: you have 500 characters to make a good impression and ask what you want.
5. The importance of good manners: respond to alumni who contact you, even if they’re not offering the advice or referral you are looking for. You should always thank them for their time and acknowledge their response. (For tips on what to say and how to say it, see the section below titled “Following Up With Alumni Who Have Responded to Your Ad.”)

Characteristics of a Strong Ad:
1. It’s focused on what you are looking for (if it’s too general or vague, readers won’t have any idea how to help you).
2. It errs on the side of professional. Be down to earth and conversational, but use humor judiciously.
3. It includes interests and qualifications related to what you’re looking for.

The Main Elements of an Ad: (not every element is appropriate for every ad, and they don’t have to appear in this order)

Please keep in mind that your Student Profile stands behind your EW Ad and will provide more details and in-depth information for alums to see.

Statement of what you’re looking for
1. The first sentence needs to be clear and specific. The more specific you can be about who you are, where you want to be, and what you want to do, the better. (Some alumni have complained that vague, general ads don’t give them any way to reply and help.)
• “Passionate advocate for social justice seeks employment with equally passionate nonprofit agency.”
• “Looking for a hands-on job in conservation.”
• “Invested advocate for the arts and education, seeking stimulating experiences related to the arts and/or education.”
• “2014 grad looking for experience in corporate communications or human resources.”
• “Moving to Palo Alto for a math grad program. Seeking leads on affordable housing and information about public transportation.”
• “I want to travel abroad and need help figuring out how to pay for it.”
• “I’ve been accepted to grad school in the Int’l Relations program at UW-Madison, and I’m interested in learning more about eventual work at a think tank or in the government.”

2. Request for feedback, specific to your interests, goals, and experience
• “I would appreciate any suggestions as to jobs or internships that I might look into, as well as any general advice related to navigating the job market.”
• “I’d love advice on opportunities with non-profits or government programs, as well as perspective on the education field.”
• “Do you know of any job or internship opportunities at non-profits in the Chicago area?”
• “Could you give me some advice for marketing myself to publishing companies?”
• “If no opportunities come to mind, I would also love to talk about your career path and what motivates you to do the work that you do.”
• “Can you help me get a better sense of which neighborhoods in Seattle might be best for a recent college graduate?”

Want to See Actual Examples?
Visit http://apps.carleton.edu/career/programs/engagement_wanted/examples/

Following Up with Alumni Who Have Responded to Your Ad

According to worktree.com, one of the situations that require a thank-you letter or email is “when someone provides you with job search assistance such as referring you to an employer, providing a network contact, or speaking on your behalf to a prospective employer.” Whether or not an alum provides you with information that will help you achieve your goal, it is imperative that you send a follow-up thank-you email. At the very least, you should express your appreciation to the alum for taking the time to respond to your profile. For more detailed guidance on what you can include in these short thank-you emails, visit http://www.careerlab.com/letters/chap13.htm. Email communication is an important part of building positive relationships with contacts. It’s always worthwhile to take the time to make sure your messages are clear and appropriate.

1 http://www.worktree.com/tb/MB_thanklet.cfm

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Five helpful guidelines for writing effective emails:

1. **Use appropriate salutations and titles, if you know them.**
   Like letters, e-mails should begin with a proper salutation. If “Dear Dr. Smith” seems too formal, begin your message with “Hello Dr. Smith,” but avoid the kinds of casual greetings you would use with friends (e.g., “Hey”) or no greeting at all. When in doubt about using a first name, use Dr., Mr., Ms.; the alum will let you know (via his/her email signature) when it’s okay to use his/her first name.

2. **Identify yourself.**
   Like you, alums interact electronically with a large number of people. At the beginning of your message, refer to the email you received from the alum. Conclude your message with more than just your first name. Provide your full name and address (including phone number[s] and email).

3. **Avoid acronyms and simplifications you use in texting.**
   Avoid using acronyms that may be unfamiliar to the alum (e.g., CAMS, IPL, SWA). If you’re responding to emails on a Blackberry it’s tempting to abbreviate or shorten words and phrases (e.g., “u” instead of “you”). However, abbreviations are easy to misinterpret or may be completely misunderstood.

4. **Pay attention to your tone.**
   Perhaps the most difficult part of writing an email is achieving the right tone. If you’re writing an especially sensitive email, let your final draft sit overnight and reread it before sending to make sure the message is appropriate. You also can ask a friend, someone at the Career Center, or someone at the Writing Center to read your message and offer feedback about how the message might be perceived. Remember, email creates a permanent record of your communication that you have no control over after you click the send button.

5. **Keep it simple.**
   Long e-mails with too many questions can get confusing. If your message is more than one or two paragraphs, rethink the message.

### Completing Your Student Profile to Complement & Expand on Your EW Ad

Your Student Profile entries should be well written (i.e. more like what you’d turn in for a course than what you’d text to a friend). It isn’t a substitute for Facebook; it’s a professional profile—with a specific Carleton slant. If you have already completed your Student Profile with the aim of networking with fellow students on campus you should review it in light of your new audience and new purpose.

- Your Student Profile photo should be professional-looking.
- You can include links to your Resume/CV, to LinkedIn, and to up to nine more outside sources (portfolio, blog, etc.) if you want to.
- Even though you create your Engagement Wanted Ad in the Student Profile it will not appear there to anyone looking at your Profile. If you decide to include something in the “Introduction” field of your Student Profile then it should complement what you say in your EW Ad. Remember, if you decide not to include anything in the “Introduction” field (or any field in the Student Profile) it will simply not show up.
- Be intelligent about what you include as Tags in your “Academic and Career-Related Interests” and your “Hobbies & Interests” fields of your Student Profile since these will

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2 Adapted from [http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/cgi-bin/tomprof/postings.php](http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/cgi-bin/tomprof/postings.php), posting 1066.
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appear in your ad that gets emailed out to alums and, of course, will be visible when an alum signs in to look at your Profile. Once again, err on the side of professional over personal.

- As with a resume, you can target the information on your Student Profile to the specific purpose of your EW ad: if you are looking for an internship or a job then highlight your academic and career-related interests, skills, courses, work & volunteer experience, and personal interests that support the kind of internship or job you’re looking for.

Resources: