Carleton alumni are one of the best resources to get first hand and current information about a job, organization/grad school, or a career field. They are experienced, have a great professional network and are excited to advise Carleton students.

What is Alumni Networking? Why Should I Network?

Alums are one of the best resources from which to learn about a job, career field, organization, or grad school. They’ve “been there, done that,” and they’re excited to advise students of their alma mater with information about their field and education and career path. They’re real people with real experiences and can tell you more about the personal side of a company or field, which you often cannot easily learn from the internet. They’re also a great source for “insider tips.” Up to 85% of all positions are filled through networking. Remember, alums are a resource tool. Be professional. Do not ask them for jobs or internships. Explore the directory today @ go.carleton.edu/alumni/directory

how do i contact an alum?

1) THE INITIAL CONTACT:
You first need to ask for their willingness to help you.
Tips: In the subject line of your email, say “Carleton student seeks advice” or something similar that will let them know your email is not SPAM.
Content: “Dear Ms. Doe, I’m a sophomore and beginning to look for career-related activities for winter break. I found your name in the alumni database, and wonder whether or not you would be willing to give me advice for my search. Please let me know. Sincerely, ______”

2) THE SECOND CONTACT:
Once the alum replies to your initial contact, make a second, brief contact stating a specific request for information.
Tips: Be specific. State exactly what piece of information you would like.
Content: “Dear Mr. Doe, Thank you so much for your time and assistance. Sincerely, ______”

3) THANK YOU/FOLLOW UP:
Once the alum provides you with information, don’t forget to express thanks and let her/him know you will let her/him know what happens with your career exploration.

Ask a question:
A) “If you were me, where would you look for possible volunteer or work possibilities in your field?”
B) “What advice can you share with me that would help me identify organizations or people who may need and benefit from seasonal help?”

Closing: “Thank you so much for your time and assistance. Sincerely, ______”

the bottom line

When you’re contacting alumni, it is important to put your best foot forward!
Carleton students and alumni have access to a wonderful resource—the online Alumni Directory (https://apps.carleton.edu/alumni/directory/). We want you to use this directory to learn more about different fields of work from alumni who are in those fields. We have heard from several alumni who are concerned about some communications students have had with them. Because the students’ communications were unclear or inappropriate, the alumni were not able to help them or provide the best type of advice. If you are uncertain if your communication is at a professional level, please have someone in the Career Center review a draft of your email message before sending it or role play a phone conversation or meeting; just as you would have your cover letter or resume reviewed. Remember, first impressions count!

One Alum Advises…
“…Recently I have received a number of requests from current students for advice or job opportunities…. I am an enthusiastic supporter of Carleton and have a desire to help these students out. The issue I have had in some of these cases is that students who seem to contact me do so in such a manner that I am nervous to forward their names and back them to colleagues or friends who may not be as forgiving as I am. Specific issues I have had include long delays in returning phone calls, missed appointments for phone calls, typos/grammatical errors/ spelling errors in letters, and inappropriate tones/language on the phone or in letters. I do understand there are always issues with students when they are applying for their first or second jobs, but the problem I have is some of these issues make it impossible for me to fight for them for these competitive jobs, especially when I consider them relative to the students I interview on a regular basis… As we all know, first impressions are important and I feel some students that have contacted me are simply not putting their best foot forward. I wonder whether we can make sure we encourage students to work with members of the Career Center/peer coaches to ensure that students are coached on appropriate demeanor with prospective employees and alumni contacts so that we can increase their chances of getting placed. Stressing the importance of background checking (contacts’ genders, professions and backgrounds) is important, as is proofing letters… I would like to be as helpful as I can to Carleton students and career preparedness is an area I think Carleton students can really improve on relative to other undergraduate schools…”

As the informational interviews are low-stress compared to job interviews, conversations with Carleton alumni allow you to gain confidence in talking with professionals in the career field of your interest.

quick tips

- View each email, phone call, visit or networking connection as you would a cover letter; it’s a professional contact
- Do your homework: Know something about the field or company so you can ask thoughtful questions that will make you stand out (try “Spotlight On Careers” on our website)
- Initially ask for advice and information rather than asking for a job or internship directly
- Use a professional tone rather than “campus–informal” and seek to establish rapport
- Do not miss appointments or phone calls
- Do not delay in returning calls
- Always follow-up to let the alum know what has happened and thank them
- In written correspondence, check your spelling and grammar
- When in doubt, visit the Career Center for advice!