

# Tips for Networking

**What is Professional Networking?** Networking is about making connections. It involves the exchange of information between you and another person in your field of interest.

**Who do I “network” with?** In addition to obvious people such as recruiters who come to the career fair, think outside the box in terms of networking. There is a wide range of people who can help connect or advise you about opportunities in your professional field such as:

- On-campus recruiters (these folks come to career fairs, corporate information sessions, technical talks, formal networking events)
- Alumni (alumni come back to campus for a variety of events such as reunions, technical presentations, award ceremonies, fundraisers. Many schools, including UMass, have an alumni association that offers an online connection to alumni.  
<http://www.umassalumni.com/s/1640/alumni/interior-2col.aspx?sid=1640&gid=22&pgid=509>)
- Faculty/Staff
- People you meet at professional conferences
- Co-workers/Collaborators (Other graduate students and faculty that you have collaborated on research projects with will be key connections in your future. Ask yourself: what kind of collaborator am I? Would a colleague recommend me to their employer in a few years? Why or why not?)
- LinkedIn, other social media that is directly related to your field of interest (AICHE, ASME...)
- Family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances from religious institutions, sporting teams, the gym, etc. (Does your uncle work for an engineering company? How about the person in your running group? Keep in touch, think about how your research could align with their needs/interests.)

**What kind of results can I expect from networking?** Don't expect that someone else is going to “get you a job”. You must get yourself the job by presenting your skills, competencies, knowledge and personality well. However, networking CAN help provide:

- Leads on openings at specific companies
- “Inside information” on what a company is looking for when hiring
- The name of a contact within the company such as a hiring manager or HR person
- Career advice on what type of path to choose in order to meet your career goals
- Names of companies who are doing the type of work you are interested in

**What do I say when I am “networking”?** Many people feel awkward at networking events, not knowing what to say or how to present themselves without sounding like a salesperson. However, being prepared with some general information will help you feel more confident in talking about your career interests. Possibly the best thing to remember is to “keep it real”. Start as you would any conversation, by introducing yourself, then be prepared to follow up as the conversation progresses. Don't forget to ask about them as well. Questions like, “What does a typical day on the job look like for you”, “How

long have you been in the field” or “What types of problems do you encounter” make the conversation a two-way street. Make sure you have thought about the following things in advance and practice them out loud.

- Name, major (or degree), and school level (M.S., Ph.D.)
- Your career area of interest. (It is important to find the balance between being very specific yet staying open-minded about career fields. For example, if you are interested in working with high-end sound systems and you are at a networking event with BOSE, you should be very specific about your research and interest. However, if you are talking with a neighbor who works at company that manufactures medical devices, you should broaden the conversation to talk about your interest in working in a manufacturing environment.)
- A brief summary about your research and how it aligns with the type of work their company is doing.
- Activities that demonstrate teamwork, technical writing, leadership, or other skills.

**Examples:** Depending on the nature of the networking event, your level of preparation will vary. If you are going to a formal networking event, career fair, or professional conference, you should definitely spend some time researching who will be in attendance so that you will be able to tailor your conversation to match the needs of the various attendees. For example: Imagine that you are going to the Society of Women in Engineering Conference and you are participating in the DePuy Networking Night. Your “pitch” could sound something like this:

Hi my name is Dannielle, and I am a PhD student at UMass, Amherst. For the last couple of years I have been involved with optimizing the fabrication process of an actuated bellows mold that will ultimately become a wireless implantable medical device for the treatment of pediatric cancer. This experience has really sparked my interest in the development of implantable biomedical devices, and I noticed that DePuy has just launched a new product line of spinal cord implants that utilize microelectronics in a very unique way. I am really interested in using my laboratory experience in and industry setting to help with the testing and re-design process of implantable medical devices. Do you know of any related openings in the company?

**Other General Tips for Networking:**

- If you will be attending a formal networking event or career fair, ask the event coordinators for a list of attendees so that you can research the type of work they do
- Know the dress code for the event. (business casual vs. suit and tie) Bring breath mints!
- Remember to ask for business cards
- Follow up with contacts after the event. A nice email or LinkedIn note goes a longway!