

# Using to Network with College of Charleston Alumni and Professionals

LinkedIn is a professional networking site designed to help you connect with alumni and other professionals in industries and organizations that relate to your career and academic interests. Think of LinkedIn as a professional Facebook. Students often use Facebook to interact with friends and find others with similar social interests. LinkedIn is a place to share interests, ask questions, and network with professionals from a wide range of job titles and industries.

As a college student, you can utilize LinkedIn to:

- Build your professional network
- Connect to CofC alumni and other professionals in industries/organizations that interest you.
- Learn about current trends in field(s) that interests you

## Getting Started with LinkedIn

1. Create Your Profile
2. Join Groups
3. Populate Your Profile with Connections

Once you complete these 3 steps, LinkedIn will become a powerful tool for you both to learn about careers and to find a job or internship. You can also visit an on-line tutorial at <http://grads.linkedin.com/>

Your profile should demonstrate the knowledge and skills you have developed that relate to your interests. It should only include information relevant to your job and internship search, much like a conversation at a professional networking event. Your major, internship/work experiences, class projects, honor societies, and student activities are all relevant, but other information such as the year you were born, your marital status and your address is not.

### **Professional "Headline"**

This along with your name is the first thing others will see. This can be your job title, but your headline gives you a way to sum up your professional "identity" in a short phrase. The Career Center recommends that you use a short phrase that highlights your career objective along with your skills, interests and experiences.

Examples: *Recent grad with experience creating marketing campaigns for Fortune 100 companies*  
*Proven leader with experience in designing biomedical devices and providing customer service*

### **Photo**

This is the first image an employer or alumnus will have of you. As a college student, your photo needs to project a mature and professional image. Take a photo in business professional attire. Don't use a photo from a social event or one that requires you to crop someone out of the photo.

### **Summary**

This should outline the key skills and experiences that are relevant to the industry or career field that interests you. Areas to focus on include:

- Professional Interests
- Extracurricular Activities
- Community involvement
- Professional Strengths/Accomplishments
- Relevant work experience, coursework, projects
- Leadership experience

Example: *Strong background in promotional writing and editing. Experience as a reporter for a college newspaper. Public relations and marketing intern with non-profit arts group. Utilized print and social media. 3 years of experience writing newsletter for college student organization. Interested in career opportunities in advertising, public relations, or other positions where I could do promotion work and writing.*

### **Specialties**

Include key words so others can find you. These can be skills, languages or techniques such as:

- Communication -verbal & written
- Interpersonal/Team
- Problem-solving/Analytical
- Organization
- Management
- Languages
- Computer/Technical skills
- Research

Example: *Social Media experience: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn. Technical: Adobe PageMaker, Dreamweaver CS4, Html code, Windows and Mac Platforms.*

### **Education**

Include your Major(s), Minor(s) and Concentration(s), if relevant to your professional goals. Typically, many students do not include their GPA. Highlight any academic honor societies in the Honors section. Additionally feel free to highlight relevant courses, papers, projects, and assignments.

Example: *Selected Science Courses and Projects: Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Quantitative Analysis, Advanced Inorganic. Laboratory Skills: IR Spectrum Analysis, Cell Culture, Dissection, Gel Electrophoresis. Research: Assisted with cell culture, ELISA, basic flow cytometry, recombinant protein synthesis, protein analysis with Western blots, BCA assay, and electrophoretic mobility shift assays and leukocyte isolation.*

### **Experience (Work, Extracurricular, and Volunteer Experience)**

The key to a successful experience is to think of all your experiences that are relevant to your career goals. Paid experiences are only if they are relevant. In fact, if your volunteer and/or extracurricular experiences are more relevant to your internship/career objective, then describe those in this section.

*Resume Upload: It is possible to upload your resume into LinkedIn to populate the experience section. If you opt to include a copy of your resume as part of your profile, it is **VERY IMPORTANT** that you remove your address from that resume. For your personal safety and to prevent identity theft, only your email address should be on this resume.*

**If still have questions about your profile, or want someone to critique it, contact the Career Center and set up an appointment.**

## **Join Groups**

By joining groups, you can interact with individuals who have similar interests, attended similar schools, or who have similar career objectives. It is a quick way to connect to a number of individuals while you build your individual connections. It allows you to discover the current issues and trends within a particular career field. Best of all, by joining a group, you have access to job listings posted by group members that may not be posted elsewhere.

### **Network with College of Charleston alumni**

Start by joining College of Charleston related groups like the **College of Charleston Alumni Group (over 4,000 members)** and the **College of Charleston Alumni & Student Career Network (for specific requirements and more details for joining this group, visit <http://careercenter.cofc.edu/students/careernetwork.php> )**.

Also, there are specific groups and subgroups for specific majors, geographic areas, etc., including:

- College of Charleston - School of Business Network
- College of Charleston Arts Management Alumni
- CofC Alumni – South Atlantic Region (subgroup)
- College of Charleston School of Humanities and Social Sciences

**Connect with others with whom you share common interests**

Do a keyword search in the Groups Directory to find other groups related to:

A. *Industry /Career Fields* - Join groups related to industries that interest you.

B. *Student Groups, Honor Societies and Professional Organizations*- If you are a member of a local chapter of a group, join the corresponding LinkedIn Group. You will connect with both alumni from these groups, as well as current students.

C. *Other Interests / Recreation*- Interested in sports or even a career related to sports? Many people that join groups related to sports teams are in the sports industry.

Once you are a member of a group, post articles, ask questions and comment within these groups to raise your professional profile.

### Populate Your Profile with Connections

The more people you have in your network, the easier it is to connect to others in a variety of industries and locations. You should start by connecting with 5 people you know. This number should grow as you use the system. For hints on how to write notes and communicate effectively, go to <http://careercenter.cofc.edu/students/careernetwork.php>.

**Start connecting**

LinkedIn will suggest people to add to your network, but it's important that you seek out people that you know to add to your network.

- For people you already know, search by their name.
- Find other people by using the Advanced People Searches. Search on school, keywords, current and past employers, and fields.

Potential people in your network:

- College & High School Classmates
- Faculty members
- Advisors for Student Organizations
- Career Counselors
- Supervisors and Co-workers-Current & Past
- Alumni
- Friends of parents and relatives
- Student Organizations / Honor Societies
- Volunteer groups
- Teammates
- Professional Associations

Now you are ready to use LinkedIn to network with alumni and professionals. To learn how to use it to fit your specific goals, meet with a career counselor in the Career Center.

## Quick Tips for Contacting Alumni

Networking with alumni is about building relationships and connections in a purposeful, organized way. Networking is not about asking alumni for jobs, but asking for assistance. When you contact alumni to network, it should be to seek out and gather information about careers that interest you. Your questions should focus on asking for advice or assistance based on that purpose. Remember it is essential that you be informed, confident, and polite throughout this process.

### Alumni assist students by providing:

- Information about their company or organization
- Information and advice about a career field or industry
- Referrals to other professionals in their industry or organization
- Consideration for an internship or job opportunity at their organization

Once you have joined groups, you can connect directly with individuals or through groups on LinkedIn. In your email or message, clearly articulate who you are and what are your goals.

- State how you are connected and describe who you are.
- Communicate your objectives
  - Learn about their industry/career field, organization
  - Get advice on the job search process/preparing for an interview

*"I found your profile through the College of Charleston Alumni & Student Network group on LinkedIn. I am a senior history major at the College of Charleston. I am very interested in pursuing a career in consulting. Would you have some time to discuss what you do and recommendations for someone with a social sciences background looking to enter consulting? We can discuss this via email at [email@g.cofc.edu](mailto:email@g.cofc.edu) or by phone at 555-1212, whichever is more convenient for you. I look forward to hearing from you soon."*

### Sample Questions to Ask Alumni

- What recommendations would you have for someone looking to enter the industry? What skills are required? What are the typical entry channels?
- What types of extracurricular and internship experiences would best prepare me for a career in this industry?
- I'm interested in your organization/industry. What skills and experiences would help me stand out as an applicant?
- Since I am interested in this industry, what are the key companies, organization and professional associations that I should know about? Are there other alumni that you recommend I talk to?

### Sample Questions to Ask Alumni Groups

- How can students find summer internships in your field? Are there other means of gaining experience before graduation?
- What abilities are important for success in your field? What personality traits or characteristics are important? What is the skill set that an employer in your field would look for in a new hire?
- What advice do you have for students who are preparing to enter your field?
- What related occupations and industries might I explore? What other fields could you see yourself moving into?
- Where can someone in an entry-level position expect to be in 2, 5 or 10 years?

For more sample networking letters/emails; questions for alumni; and additional information on the College of Charleston Alumni & Student Career Network, please visit: <http://careercenter.cofc.edu/students/careernetwork.php>

### The College of Charleston Alumni & Student Career Network LinkedIn group

is the Career Center's professional networking community for College of Charleston alumni and current students. It is a forum to share career-related knowledge, information, referrals, and advice across industries and geographic locations.

**Students** must complete the following steps to access the Alumni & Student Career Network group on LinkedIn:

- ✓ Create a profile on [LinkedIn](#). (See "[How to Build a Professional Student LinkedIn Profile](#)").
- ✓ Read and sign the [Alumni & Student Career Network Contract](#) or download and complete the [print version](#) (at <http://careercenter.cofc.edu/students/careernetwork.php>) and return it to the Career Center (2nd floor, Lightsey Center).
- ✓ Request to join the *College of Charleston Alumni & Student Career Network* on [LinkedIn](#).