CONNECTING WITH COFC 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.

Start by joining College of Charleston related groups like the College of Charleston Alumni Group (over 10,000 members) or one of the 70+ other groups affiliated with CofC. To find, type “College of Charleston” in the search bar and then select “Groups” from the “More” dropdown menu.

College of Charleston also has a school group on LinkedIn with an alumni tab feature embedded in the page that allows you to search for alumni based on the filters you set. For instance, if you wanted to connect with previous marketing majors who are located in Greenville, SC, you would be able to set a major filter and a location filter to narrow your search.

In addition, 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
- College of Charleston Honors College Alumni
- College of Charleston School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Connect with others with whom you share common interests. Do a keyword search to find other groups related to:

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

For example:

“I found your profile through the College of Charleston Alumni 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 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, organizations, 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?