

Colgate University

Center for Career Services



guide to



Alumni Career Advisory Network

iCAN is Colgate's searchable alumni database for career networking contacts.

iCAN alumni volunteers can help you:

- **Investigate** a career field and its opportunities
- **Focus** your career interests and options
- **Learn** the current issues, trends, and jargon of a field
- **Strategize** how to market yourself for an internship, job, or graduate program
- **Broaden** your professional network
- **Explore** a geographic region



We are fortunate to have alumni who are generous with their time, energy, and expertise. Access to alumni contact information is a **privilege**, and we expect students to treat our alumni volunteers with the utmost **respect**.

What is networking?

- A purposeful conversation to learn about a field of work, employers that interest you, or a geographic place
- A two-way dialogue that involves cultivating a relationship overtime
- An opportunity to speak about Colgate, your career interests, and how you developed these interests

Networking is **NOT** calling someone to ask for a job!

Accessing and Using iCAN

Step One: Understand Networking

View the iCAN online workshop (www.colgate.edu/careerservices) or attend a workshop to learn about your responsibilities and how to use the network.

Step Two: Prepare your Networking Materials

Develop your strategy through thoughtful preparation. Create the following pieces that you will need to move forward:

- Compile your preferred criteria for selecting alumni contacts (e.g.: industry, job title, graduate program, geographic area).
- Have your résumé approved (see our résumé rubric in our résumé guide).
- Develop a list of questions to ask alumni contacts (see examples).
- Draft an outreach e-mail/letter you will send to alumni contacts (see below).

Components of the draft outreach e-mail:

- Target your correspondence to a specific person—be concise and clear.
- Introduce yourself—major, campus involvement, internships, career interests, etc.
- Describe the specific criteria you used to locate them (organization, role, major, grad program, location, etc.).
- Ask to set up a time to talk. Be flexible.
- Indicate what you hope to draw from the conversation.
- Give your contact info (e-mail, phone).
- Thank them for their time.

Step Three: Strategize and Confirm your Approach

Meet with a career advisor to discuss your networking strategy, and to review your résumé, questions and outreach e-mail. You will then receive your iCAN access information.

Step Four: Search for Contacts on iCAN

Visit colgateconnect.org/ican to log in and search for contacts.

Step Five: Research

Prior to reaching out research each contact. Understand the contact's role, employer, and any unique factors that might be points of connection with you. At a minimum, visit the employer's website, Google the person, or look up their LinkedIn™ profile.

Step Six: Target Your Outreach

Modify your outreach e-mail to personalize your approach. Reflect the specific reason you selected that person. Tweak your questions to reflect your research.

Tips to Effectively Use and Build Your Network

Be gracious and recognize your responsibility

- These contacts choose to network with students. The positive interactions you have maintain that network. Irresponsible use can easily damage it. If you are unsure how to move forward, check in with a career advisor.

Follow up and take careful notes

- Track your progress--document your conversations, take careful notes, follow up on alumni's tips and advice.
- Show your appreciation by sending written thank you notes to your contacts.

Maintain your network

- These are not one-time contacts; you are building relationships with potential professional colleagues, which takes time and effort.
- Take initiative to continue to ask questions and seek advice.
- Share successes and challenges (especially when you accept a position!).
- Thank them for their continued support.
- Appreciate the referrals they may provide you.
- Keep your career advisor apprised of your progress and challenges.

Advice from the Alumni Council:

- "Do your homework. The more prepared you are, the easier it is for a contact to help you."
- "Don't focus on questions you can know the answers to by researching on your own."
- "It is ok to call and explore options if you don't know what you want, but let your contact know that at the beginning of the call. Just know what you want to gain from the conversation."
- "The more appreciative and respectful you are, the more I want to help."
- "Don't expect the person you are interviewing to hand you the perfect wisdom, the secret of success—or a job. Expect honest discussions and personal insights."

What is The Alumni Council?

A group of 55 committed alumni who advise the Colgate community, open lines of communication between Colgate and its alumni, and mentor the next generation of graduates.

Advice from the Alumni Council:

- “Talk to as many people as you can—the more you talk to people the more you learn.”
- “The most common mistakes students make: Not being prepared for the conversation—not doing research, not coming prepared with questions, not having any idea about the type of work I do. Not following up.”

Sample Categories/Questions for Informational Interviewing

These general categories reflect the typical kinds of questions asked. A good networker targets questions to show the research he/she has done, and to ensure the conversation yields information that will be helpful for the job seeker. For a broader list of questions, visit Career Services' website or the networking resources on iCAN.

Contact Background

- How did this type of work first interest you, and how did you get started?
- If you could do things all over again, would you chose the same path for yourself?

Student Preparation

- Are there any written materials you suggest I read?

Job Function

- What projects take up the majority of your time? What are the duties/functions/responsibilities of your job?
- What does it take to be successful in your position? Industry?

Job Satisfaction

- What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your occupation?
- What do you like/not like about working in this industry/organization?
- What interests you least about the job or creates the most stress?

Organization-Specific

- Can you describe how your organization is structured? What are the different departments/divisions?
- What can you tell me about the culture of your organization?

Industry/Field Knowledge

- How is the economy affecting this industry? What is the outlook for this field?
- What are some future areas of growth?

Career Advancement

- How does a person progress in your field? What is a typical career path in this field?
- What skills are most important for a position in this field? How did you learn these skills?