

## WHITMAN ALUMNI NETWORK: MAKING AND USING YOUR CONTACTS

Networking is about building relationships and connections in a purposeful way. How you approach networking contacts can have a tremendous impact on how willing they will be to help you.

### **Alumni volunteers can assist students and fellow alumni by providing:**

- Information about their company, organization or career field.
- Referrals to other professionals in their industry or organization.
- Consideration for an internship or job opportunity in their organization, if available.
- Information about the graduate school they attended or degree(s) they received.

### **Update your resume and figure out which fields interest you**

A resume conveniently houses your contact information and qualifications in a single page. Even if a contact is not currently hiring or responsible for interviews, they can pass on your resume to others.

- Be sure your resume clearly represents experience, knowledge and skills that are relevant to the career field in which you are hoping to work.
- Have a Student Engagement Center staff member review your resume for format and content.

### **Make or update your LinkedIn profile**

- A solid basic LinkedIn profile will have a crisp profile picture, a descriptive and current headline, at least a couple sentences of summary, your Whitman education, and a few experiences.
- Visit the Student Engagement Center blog for more information about updating your profile or make an appointment with a SEC staff member via Handshake for personalized guidance.

### **Prepare before reaching out**

Obtain at least some basic information on the company or organization where the CCN volunteer works.

- Research the organization where the alum whom you plan to contact works; this way you will not ask for information that could easily be answered by the internet
- Prepare specific questions

### **How to communicate with contacts**

- Avoid a casual tone or incorrect grammar in your email or phone conversations.
- Identify yourself as a Whittie; indicate that you found the contact's name on Whitman Connect
- Email is generally the preferred method of contact; attach your resume, when appropriate.
- Join the Whitman LinkedIn community.
- After making initial contact with an alum, consider scheduling a phone call or an in-person meeting for a specific time/date (which could be as low-commitment as meeting for coffee or as high-commitment as shadowing them for a day).
- *Be respectful of the volunteer's time and always be sure to dress professionally for the meeting.*

### **Sample questions**

- What advice would you give to someone looking to enter your career field? What skills are required?
- Which employers would you recommend I explore in this field? To whom would you suggest I speak? May I use your name when I contact them?
- What impact has your graduate degree (or graduate institution) had on your career? Would you recommend your graduate program?

### **Follow-up**

Be sure to send a (handwritten, if possible) note thanking them for the time and information they shared with you. Contact the colleagues or peers to whom they offered to refer you. Keep your networking contacts informed about your progress. This is an essential professional courtesy.