

# UMBC Professional Network: Student Guidelines

## **Welcome to the New UMBC Alumni-Student Networking Group on LinkedIn**

With this new group, you will be able to connect with alumni who have volunteered to be part of the Alumni-Student Networking Group on LinkedIn.

Please review and follow these helpful guidelines when connecting with our alumni.

## **Why join this LinkedIn Group?**

This is a great opportunity to connect with alumni who are willing to invest time, energy, and personal know-how in assisting with your professional growth and career planning. Please note that the alumni group members are volunteering to offer professional advice, not jobs; this group is to be used for the purpose of professional networking.

## **How to Connect with a UMBC Alumna/us:**

Using our new LinkedIn networking group to connect with a UMBC alumna/us is very simple. Just follow these step-by-step instructions:

- Visit the Career Center's website ([careers.umbc.edu](http://careers.umbc.edu)), click on the menu "For Students" > "Build Your Network" > "UMBC Professional Network"
- On the UMBC professional network page, click on "Join today."
- If you already have a LinkedIn account, request to join the group.
- This is a private group. Current UMBC students with their @umbc.edu email listed on their LinkedIn account will be auto-approved. All others will require approval by the group manager.
- Once approved you will receive an email notification that you have group access.
- If you are not currently using LinkedIn, you must first join LinkedIn in order to connect with the alumni group members.
- To help determine which alumni group members you want to connect with, we suggest that you review their LinkedIn profiles (hover your mouse on top of their photo or name, and click "view profile").
- For additional information on how to use LinkedIn (setting up your LinkedIn account, making connections, building a professional LinkedIn profile and on privacy settings), please see the LinkedIn section on our website.  
<http://careers.umbc.edu/students/network/linkedin/>
- Also, please see the section below "Ideas for Connecting with Members of our Networking Group."

**Important: In order to quickly determine the status of group members, we ask that you please enter your UMBC expected graduation date in the education section of your LinkedIn profile. Please include both the month (or semester) and year of graduation.**

### **Ideas for Connecting with Members of our Networking Group:**

Once you have connected with alumni members of this group, make sure that you are very specific about the information or assistance you are seeking. Here are some suggested topic areas on which alumni might be able to offer advice:

- Gaining visibility in your industry. For example, what professional associations are recommended for your industry?
- Gaining the ability to interact appropriately with professionals in your industry or field of interest.
- Developing networking and personal branding skills and establishing professional contacts.
- Complimenting your academics with your professional development.
- Applying your strengths in a professional setting.
- Providing insight into your career field and industry by providing information on career options for your specific degree.
- Reviewing your resume for industry appropriate information.
- Conducting a site visit/shadow day or informational interview.
- Asking for feedback; be open to constructive criticism.
- Please note that there is no guarantee that the alumni group member you have attempted to connect with will accept your invitation to connect and Career Center or Alumni Relations cannot control when or if you receive a reply.

### **Professional Skills Development:**

Alumni in this group may also be able to help with the development of professional skills by helping you to:

- Prepare for an upcoming interview or job fair (e.g., conducting a mock interview).
- Transition as an international student.
- Improve professional communication skills.
- Develop your overall professional etiquette skills.

When connecting with alumni group members, don't be afraid to share any academic or professional progress (past and current) that you feel good about. Consider what additional assistance, guidance, or support might be most useful.

### **Be Prepared with your "Elevator Speech" or your "30-second Commercial:"**

The 30-second networking commercial is a sales promotion for yourself. This commercial can be considered to be your personal marketing tool. It is used continually in the job search and must be practiced. Take the time to develop your script so that you are comfortable talking in any networking situation. Click on the links below for additional information.

### **Sample 30-second Commercial:**

See “Networking 101” on the Career Center’s website for a sample commercial as well as additional tips on networking.

**Remember to:**

- Keep your LinkedIn profile updated with all of your relevant experiences.
- When connecting with alumni, show how you have demonstrated a genuine interest in the career field you are pursuing (give specific examples of things you’ve done, if applicable) and discuss your relevant skills.
- Explain what makes you stand out from the crowd (e.g., any leadership experience or special recognitions).
- Give the alumna/us a couple of options on how s/he can assist you.

Networking doesn’t have to be uncomfortable. By applying the above suggestions, you can confidently network in any situation. How can you tweak your 30-second introduction to be a conversation starter?

**Tips on Responding to Professional Email Messages:**

- Once you and the alumni group member have made a connection and would like to connect again for a more in-depth conversation, you can then reply with more specific information and offer to email attachments (such as your resume) as needed.
- **Keep your Emails and Interactions with the Alumni on a Professional level:**
- Many of us have become accustomed to the shorthand used in texting and instant messages. However, networking emails, particularly in the business setting, still demand a higher level of professionalism. For example, “Plz send info 2moro” is simply not appropriate.
- Spell words out and use correct grammar.
- Use an appropriate email address. If you wouldn’t use it when applying for a job, don’t use it when corresponding with alumni members of this group.
- Think professionally. Avoid the smiley faces (☺) and slang.
- Err on the side of formality.
- Use capitalization and abbreviations only as necessary.
- Don’t forget to use the spell check, but don’t rely on the spell check.
- Mind your manners. Remember that someone is setting aside time for you; don’t forget to say please and thank you.

**Sample Questions You Might Ask Alumni Group Members:**

For information on informational interviews and a list of questions check the student page of our website (see “build your network.”). These questions may be used to spark

conversation with in the group (or one-on-one) and you may gain additional insight into your career planning and job search.

### **What is an Informational Interview?**

The purpose of a structured informational interview is not to get a job but to better understand a particular position or industry and make potential connections in that field. See the Career Center's website for additional instructions on how to conduct a formal informational interview.

If you request a formal informational interview, treat the interview as a business meeting. You should prepare in advance. Prior to the interview, research the company or career and develop a short list of questions that you would like to have answered, and schedule a meeting with the alumna/nus in advance.

### **UMBC Alumni-Student Networking Group on LinkedIn Best Practices**

- Once you invite the alumni to connect with you, they should be contacting you within five to seven business days (however, the Career Center cannot guarantee this).
- When connecting with the alumni group member, be sure to establish specific goals and expectations for our interaction with the alum/nus.
- Hold realistic expectations of the interaction with the alumna/us. Keep in mind that the goal of the Alumni-Student Networking Group on LinkedIn is to help you make connections with professionals in your area of interest, hone your networking skills, and explore career options.
- We ask that you keep the relationship career and academically focused.
- You and the alumni group member can determine your own level and amount of contact. Connections may be made by posting in the LinkedIn group, sending the alum/nus an invite, face-to-face, at Career Center and Alumni Services' sponsored events, campus events, or by phone. If the contacts are made by phone, please consider who is responsible for placing the phone call.
- Communicate honestly, but respectfully with the alumni.
- If you make a connection with an alumna/nus, make periodic contact with him/her. Touch base with him/her every now and then and let him/her know how you are doing; be sure to share your latest accomplishments or information that may be of interest.

- Keep scheduled appointments and meetings. Arrive on time and inform your alumni contact right away if, for any reason, you are not able to keep your appointment. Reschedule if you are busy – it’s always better than a “no-show” or an extremely late appointment, but please try to limit the number of times you reschedule.
- When meeting face-to-face, please meet only in an appropriate and accessible space for both you and your alumni contact. We strongly recommend participating in campus-sponsored events with the alumna/nus. See the section on “Additional Engagement Opportunities” for suggestions.
- Be patient. Remember that professionals are busy. You may not receive a response to your invite right away. If you haven’t heard back in a couple of weeks, you can try contacting that person a second time. It is possible the person you are trying to connect with could have over committed. After a second try and no response, it may be time to return to the Alumni-Student Networking Group to try to connect with another alumna/nus.

**Thank the Alumna/nus for His/her Time:**

Whenever someone offers guidance or support, we must always remember to thank them. Emailing a follow-up note of appreciation goes a long way; forgetting can seem ungrateful and disrespectful. Effective networking depends on the ability to create connections with people. Effective networking requires follow-through.

After meeting or exchanging emails with an alumni group member, send a quick email thanking the alumna/nus for his/her time. Summarize any action items you two have agreed upon (e.g., calling his/her office assistant to schedule a site visit).

The thank-you note can be an email or a handwritten card. A handwritten card adds another special touch. Sending thank-you notes is more than a professional courtesy; it’s a wise business practice and can help to build and maintain relationships.

**Participate in Career Center and Alumni Services Career Events with Your Alumni Group Member:**

**Additional Engagement Opportunities:**

We encourage you to take advantage of the many opportunities to become even more engaged with your alumni contacts and with UMBC.

There are several services, programs and events that should fit your availability and interest. The following is list of Career Center and Alumni Services ([www.retrievernet.umbc.edu](http://www.retrievernet.umbc.edu)) programs and events in which you and your alumni

connection can become engaged. Please find detailed information with dates and times in the calendar of events and on our websites.

Just click on “calendar” under “quick links” on our website ([careers.umbc.edu](https://careers.umbc.edu)) for more information on:

- Job fairs
- UMBC Connects days
- On-campus interviews
- Employer information tables
- Mock interviews and resume critiques
- Information sessions
- Career Crush Month (Alumni Networking Night)
- Workshops and seminars.

**Let us know about your Alumni-Student Networking Group on LinkedIn Experience:**

- Periodically, we will post a survey asking group members about your experience with our networking group.
- When we post it, please complete the Alumni-Student Networking Group on LinkedIn survey. This will allow us to continue to improve the program and assess its effectiveness.

**How to Reach Us:**

We are excited that you have taken time to invest in your future by participating in our Alumni-Student Networking Group on LinkedIn. Through this important program, the Career Center and Alumni Services strive to enhance your career development and networking skills. We hope that you find it worthwhile.

If you have any questions or concerns about the Alumni-Student Networking Group on LinkedIn, or need assistance, please contact:

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