

MENTORING SPARK

Quick ideas to light up your doctoral conversations.

► NETWORKING



SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Most students hear about networking, but many do not know how to start and/or do not have the confidence to start. Understanding what networking is, why it matters (near and long term), and becoming equipped with tools to use can remove barriers and give students the confidence to start networking. Let's define networking: **Intentional relationship-building that enables mutual growth, opportunity-sharing, and learning.**

Networking is about **cultivating relationships over time**. It is important to start networking early!

Why it matters:

- **70–80%** of jobs are filled through connections.
- **References, collaborations, and mentorship** often come through relationships.
- **Academic hiring and conference opportunities** stem from peer and mentor networks.
- **Industry jobs are often not well advertised** and they often remain open for applications for only a few weeks.

This **Spark** provides practical encouragement for students who are new to (or uncomfortable about) networking.



LEVEL 1: ESTABLISHING A NETWORK

LEVEL 2: ELEVATOR PITCH

LEVEL 3: CAREER NETWORKING



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- Help students think about the difference between networking and having a conversation.
- Help students think about the value of focusing on what to ask someone to learn, instead of simply chatting.
- Remind students that the person next to them would probably be happier talking about their passions and purpose than the weather and “what’s up.”
- Discuss with students the advantage of asking open-ended questions such as, “What roles and positions have led you to where you are today?” in lieu of “What’s your current position?” Have your graduate students make a point to talk to seminar speakers.

CONTINUED ...



FACULTY FYI

This **Spark** is intended to help students who are new to networking to think through who they want in their network, *where* they fit in their network, and *why*.

Networks are interrelated; quite often, a student’s network becomes an extension of their advisor’s network. Accordingly, when you help your graduate students develop their networks, it will likely benefit you by increasing the reach of your own network.

A RESOURCE FROM:



Use this QR code to access this and other Mentoring Spark tip sheets:





DIGGING DEEPER

- LinkedIn Account and/or a Blinq account.
- Book: **A Beginner's Guide to Networking** (Harvard Business Review)
- Book: **The Two Hour Job Search by Steve Dalton** (contains TIARA method).
- A three-circle model map (see diagram) to help organize your network.

EXTERNAL:

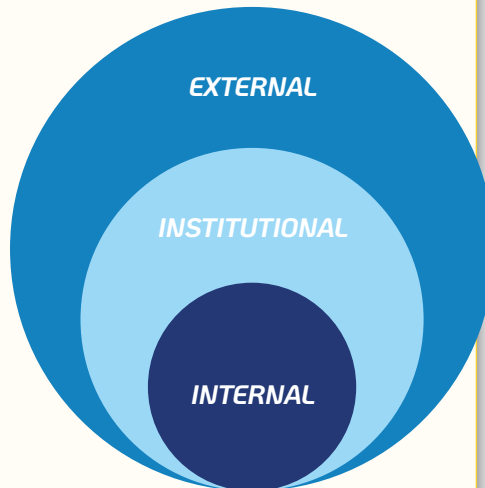
LinkedIn, peers at other institutions or businesses, alumni from your university
—job leads, cross-disciplinary projects

INSTITUTIONAL:

Campus/business unit collaborators and colleagues
—recommendations, visibility

INTERNAL:

Peers, advisors, lab members, co-workers
—support, writing partners



Please visit the RDI Mentoring Sparks website for examples and links to these tools and resources!



EXERCISES FOR STUDENTS

1. List 3 people for each circle in the 3-circle model map.

Low-Stakes Everyday: Attend seminars and ask follow-up questions. Follow up with speakers. With a solid internal network in place, begin to branch out. **Attend conferences and events.**

Don't stay in your advisor's circle—meet new people. Attend poster sessions, receptions, mixers.

Consider: Who supports you today? Who do you want to build a relationship with? Which category needs to be strengthened?

2. Draft your Networking Plan.

Write down: three people you want to reach out to and why.

Draft a deep question to ask to one of these three people.

3. Prepare a one-minute pitch about your research and goals.

(See Level 2 for added support with this exercise.)

4. At the next conference attended, meet at least three new people. Include at least one person that you, prior to the conference, noted should be at the conference and is someone you want to add to your network.

5. Develop your LinkedIn account, or review it /update it if you have one.



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- Help students understand that networks are not built overnight, and that they are continually updated. Networking is a skill—not just for extroverts. Being shy or an introvert is not an excuse!
- Discuss tools to help students be organized and intentional with starting, building, and sustaining a network.
- Encourage students to step outside their comfort zone – the more they do that the easier it becomes.
- **GOAL Setting:** Agree on a basic networking goal with your student.

Don't stay in your advisor's circle – meet new people.



REFLECTION & NEXT STEPS

- **Student:** What is helpful/working?
- **Faculty:** What other basic networking skills should be discussed?



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