

MENTORING **SPARK**

Quick ideas to light up your doctoral conversations.

► NETWORKING



SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Pursuing a job or collaborative work opportunity often requires networking. Networking can allow for direct or once-removed knowledge of a trusted person to provide information to the student about an opportunity. However, many graduate students find it stressful to network on their own behalf, and ask others to assist with networking for them.

This **Spark** is intended to make networking for a job less stressful and more impactful.



LEVEL 1: ESTABLISHING A NETWORK

LEVEL 2: ELEVATOR PITCH

LEVEL 3: CAREER NETWORKING



FACULTY FYI

Students should have documented their value, network community, and elevator pitch prior to this Spark. This **Spark** provides suggestions for students in the job search process. Consider this as a tool when students approach *you* with a request for you to network for them; if you are using your social capital to set up an introduction or interaction, you will want to ensure the student does well!



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- Challenge students to update their networking “circles” if they have not done so in the last few months – it is a living document. Add potential companies/university contacts as necessary.
- Talk with students regarding how their **elevator pitch** could vary for different job goals.
- Remind students that active networking is different than having 500+ on LinkedIn; it is valuable for having a group of trusted people to ask for help in a job search, to collaborate with, and/or to understand the pros and cons of particular jobs.

Pursuing a job or collaborative work opportunity often requires networking.

A RESOURCE FROM:



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



CONTINUED ...



DIGGING DEEPER

- **Career fairs** and **conferences**
- Peers who are also in the job market **will have current** information on what is and is not working.
- Your advisor or others in your department (*perhaps others who worked in industry of interest*) are important **network connection points**.
- Though the Internet and AI are good resources for generic advice and polishing the writing, they are not a substitute for what people on the *hiring side* say is important.
- **Career Services** and **Student Support Services** departments.
- **Personal website** – Consider establishing one; some are free.
- **Business cards** – Consider putting research interests on the back.
- **Career Informational Handout** (on RDI website)

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



EXERCISES FOR STUDENTS

1. Have students develop a networking plan related to getting a job.

Suggested items to include are:

- Their target audience. Consider doing this as a logic diagram. For example, if job hunting, do you want: Academia, Industry, or Other? For each of those, branch out – such as breaking Academia into tenure, non-tenure, research, teaching, administration, or dividing Industry into research, manufacturing, start-up, etc.
- Their “ask.” (In other words - desired outcome from the interaction.)
- Why they are a good “fit” for a particular job; their **benefits**, not just their **features**. (Explain to the student that their degree is a feature, but their benefit could be their expert knowledge in research methods. A feature is having an internship; a benefit is knowing how to use a scanning electron microscope from that internship.)
- Have them develop the plan for at least two different types of jobs (e.g., teaching position or tenure track position at a University).

2. Have your research group discuss the different networking audience considerations for:

- **Academic Jobs:**
 - Reach out to faculty where you’re applying.
 - Mention shared interests.
 - Meet at conferences (*can lead to interviews*).
- **Industry:**
 - Find alumni or insiders on LinkedIn.
 - Customize your pitch to highlight transferable skills.
- **Government, National Labs, & Nonprofits:**
 - Attend webinars or fellow talks. (*Rely on referrals.*)

3. Power of Networking: Materials: a ball of yarn. Form a circle. Using a ball of yarn, have the first person state a career goal, a geographic preference, or a company/employer they are interested in. If someone in the circle has a lead, they raise their hand and you throw the ball of yarn to them. That person then states a goal, location, company and sees who has a connection. Continue the process until the group has a “spider web” of connections. Discuss the power of networking.

4. Build your Brand: Have students post on a regular cadence about their research, awards, service, conferences attending, etc.



ACTIONS FOR FACULTY

- Discuss with students the difference between **entry-level** networking (*simply meeting someone*) and **collaborative networking**, which includes acting in a peer-to-peer manner to negotiate mutually beneficial agreements (*work, grants, contracts, etc.*) or to solicit support from a trusted resource.
- **GOAL Setting:** Agree on a goal for the student to pursue relevant job-seeking networking activities.

Customize your pitch to highlight transferable skills.



REFLECTION & NEXT STEPS

- **Student:** Consider your networking circles in relation to your research and your career planning; are there any gaps?
- Consider if (and if so *how*), your networking is improving your professional development, especially in terms of communication and potential collaborations.
- **Faculty:** Are you able to help students by using your network connections?



This document series was supported by the National Science Foundation under grants No. 2029796, 2029784, 2029782, and 2029785. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or

recommendations expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.