

Networking: Having Curious Conversations



COLLEGE OF PHARMACY

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Networking Basics

Some people hear the word “networking” and instantly cringe (especially if you are an introvert). But what is networking? It is a way to build your connections and professional relationships that can benefit both you and the other professional.

Networking can feel intimidating - try thinking of it as initiating a “curious conversation.” Get curious about another person and the work that they do. Ask lots of questions. Most people are happy to share details about themselves when you ask thoughtful questions. By cultivating a curious mindset, you can learn to start networking conversations more naturally.

Pharmacy is a Small World!

Making connections is key to your success and growth as you navigate this profession.

Getting to Know You

Part of networking is also helping others get to know you. But how do you do this?

Start with your current connections: who do you already know?

- Family, friends, neighbors, faculty, supervisors, colleagues, preceptors - all of these people make up your existing network. And you never know who they know!
- Let people know what you are interested in, and that you are hoping to make more connections

In addition, you can utilize other resources to connect with professionals in your field of interest without having a personal connection.

Ways to Network

In-person & Virtual

Plan out when there are career fairs and events for you to meet professionals in the field. Begin attending these events early in your pharmacy school career; don't wait until you need a job or residency. It's about building connections and gaining knowledge and experience as well.

When connecting with pharmacists, also think about how you can also help them. Who might you know? What questions or problems might you be able to help them solve?

Career & Internship Fairs and Events

Check out z.umn.edu/pharmd_careers for upcoming events

Professional Conferences/Socials

- Be prepared to introduce yourself with a 30 second “elevator speech”
- Leave your phone in your pocket!
- Ask about informational interviews for follow up conversations

Informational Interviews

Informational interviews are really just a chance for you to have a “curious conversation” at a set date and time with a pharmacist. This is a great way to gain greater insights into different roles within pharmacy.

Social Media

Like and follow companies and pharmacists in your areas of interests on LinkedIn (if you don't have a profile yet, time to make one!). You can also reach out to pharmacists on LinkedIn to request an informational interview.

Ongoing Contact

Be sure to create a plan for how you remain in contact with your connections. Send emails with updates or relevant professional articles, or connect on LinkedIn.

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Questions to ask in an informational interview (Curious Conversation)

General:

- Tell me about a typical workday
- How do you spend most of your time?
- What specialized/specific skills are required in your position on a day-to-day basis?
- What parts of your job do you find most challenging?
- What do you find most enjoyable?
- What negatives are there to your job?
- How many hours do you work in a typical week?
- What is the schedule like?
- What do you wish you knew (but didn't) when you were considering this job or area of pharmacy?
- Describe any significant changes you see in the future in this area of pharmacy.

Career Development/Progression:

- Is this where you thought you would end up? If not, how did you end up here?
- How do most people enter this area of pharmacy?
- What are you most proud of in your career?
- Would you do anything differently in your career if you could start over?
- What professional organizations are you associated with and in what ways?
- What do you see as your career path going forward? Advancement opportunities?

Advice/Recommendations:

- Can you recommend any elective courses I should take if I want to pursue this type of position?
- Besides the PharmD degree, what other educational preparation would you recommend for someone who wants this type of position?
- Considering all the people you've met in your line of work, what personal attributes are essential for success?
- What do (or would) you look for when interviewing and hiring a new intern or PharmD?
- What advice do you have for me?
- Who else would you recommend I connect with?

Current UMN PharmD students and alumni within 1 year on the Twin Cities & Duluth campuses: Get personalized career coaching support! Contact Susan LeBlanc at sleblanc@umn.edu, or schedule an appointment directly at susan.appointments.umn.edu.