

The University Career Assistance Network (UCAN) – *Brought to you by the UVA Alumni Association*

About UCAN (<http://hoosonline.virginia.edu>)

UCAN is available to **ALL students**. They can access UCAN if they register with Hoosonline. For more information, contact Hoosonline Support hoosonline@alumni.virginia.edu or call (434) 243-2012.

More than 75% of all jobs are obtained through networking! Effective networking can significantly strengthen any job search or career research. UCAN, the University of Virginia Alumni Association Career Assistance Network, is a networking tool designed by the Alumni Association to help connect you with alumni. 25,000 alumni are registered on Hoosonline and many have agreed to help UVA alumni and students with informational interviewing and networking by joining UCAN. UCAN's alumni come from various professions and fields, and provide advice and perspectives regarding career decisions, job search strategies, and the work world in general. With UCAN, you can explore different career paths and strengthen job searches the world over!

UCAN offers an opportunity to get information about industries, companies and careers from people with common experiences and education at UVA. UCAN is *not* a job placement service. Users can expect advice, ideas and encouragement. Whenever possible, UCAN volunteers may also offer to conduct resume reviews or provide employment referrals. UCAN is a service of the UVA Alumni Association and is open to UVA alumni and students. There is no fee to use the service.

Using UCAN

The UCAN database contains contact information for all Alumni Career Contacts. You may find contacts in the database using one or more of the information fields: career field, geographical area, major, Greek affiliation, and other UVA clubs or organizations.

Become a Career Contact!

There is now an online version of UCAN as part of HoosOnline, the UVA online community – and we need alumni to participate! When you set up your profile on HoosOnline, please check the box that says “Are you willing to make yourself available to counsel UVA students and alumni interested in your career field.”

Interviewing Tips...Or...But what do I say?

The purpose of an informational interview is to gather information and seek advice from someone who is working in a career area of interest to you. Keep in mind that the information you collect is only one means of getting data – and that the information you receive will

involve someone's opinions, and opinions can be biased. Be sure you balance your use of UCAN with other career and job search resources.

Review the list of contacts you have generated, and decide which ones you want to contact. Before you contact a contact, consider your goals for the meeting, and then prepare a list of open-ended questions that will stimulate discussion and enable both of you to learn about each other. (See examples below.)

Contacting UCAN Contacts

After you have done your research and preparation, prioritize the people you want to contact. Tip: Don't start with your top picks – get some confidence by talking to other contacts first! Many of the alumni contacts in the database have email addresses, and that's a great way to initially contact them. However, we recommend that you meet in person or at least schedule a telephone conversation instead of having only an email interview.

Here is an example that can be used for a phone conversation or an email:

“Hi (*contact name*). My name is _____, and I am alumnus/a student of the University of Virginia. THANK YOU for being a contact for UVA students. I'm very interested in the field of _____(or “doing a job search in the field of _____”) and am looking for more information on the field. I'd like to do an informational interview with you to ask a few questions and to discuss your opinions and experience in the field. Would you prefer that I call you, email you (or visit in person)?”

After your interview, remember to send a written or e-mail thank-you note promptly. Thanking your fellow alumni contacts for their time and advice shows your appreciation *and* helps them remember you.

Need information on Informational Interviewing?

Wish you had one of those UCS handouts on informational interviewing? Not to worry, all of UCS's handouts are on the web at www.virginia.edu/~career: click on “students/alumni”, then “online library” then “UCS handouts”.

What if I don't find anyone I want to contact?

UCAN has been in use for several years, and there are very few instances where no contacts were appropriate. UCAN is updated regularly, and we anticipate that the number of contacts available will increase greatly through the use of HoosOnline.

DISCLAIMER: YOU MUST READ THIS!

The UCAN database is comprised of alumni who have graciously volunteered to be contacted for informational interviews and career networking. UCAN is not a placement service. Alumni career contacts' roles are advisory; please do not put them in an awkward position by soliciting them directly for a job or requesting that they refer you for a job if they are not familiar with you and your qualifications.

Because career contacts are volunteers, we cannot guarantee that there is contact information to meet every request. Confidentiality policies and regulations strictly prohibit the Alumni Association from releasing information on alumni who are not participating in UCAN, or for purposes other than career contacting. Any request for such information will not be honored.

The Alumni Association requests updates from alumni on a regular basis, but unless a contact notifies us of any changes, listings remain the same.

Sample goals

Understand what kind of candidates they prefer to interview

Understand the salary range, career path in the field

Review your resume

Review your job search strategy and provide advice and insight

Suggest names of people you could talk to for more information on a field or company

Sample open-ended questions related to a JOB SEARCH

- How did you get your first job in this field?
- Here's how I plan to conduct my job search. Where am I on target, and where am I off base?
- What job search strategies do you think are most effective to get jobs in this field (e.g., internet posting, newspaper ads, networking, employment agencies/headhunters)?
- What websites do you think are the best for this kind of job search?
- If you were in my shoes, which search methods would you spend most of your time on?
- In your experience, how long would a job search in this field take?
- I've brought along a copy of my resume. As an employer in this field, what aspects do you think are strong? Need work?
- If you were reading this cover letter as a potential employer, would you be impressed enough to read my resume or interview me? How can I improve it?
- Are there holes in my skills/experience that would prevent me from getting into this field? How could I go about filling them in?
- What professional associations or publications are there in this field that include jobs or contacts?
- Are there any conferences, meetings or other networking opportunities that you would recommend that I attend?
- What feedback do you have for me on how I come across in general (voice, communications, energy, handshake, overall image)?
- If this were a real job interview, would I be dressed appropriately?
- What organizations do you know of that frequently have openings in my area of interest (even if they don't right now)?
- If you were in my shoes, whom else would you talk to for job leads and ideas?

Sample open-ended questions related to CAREER RESEARCH

- What credentials/degrees are required for entry into this work?
- What types of prior experience are absolutely essential?
- Can you suggest any specific professional development or volunteer experience that might help me in the transition to your field?
- How did you prepare for this work?
- Can you tell me how you occupy your time in a typical workweek?
- What skills/talents do you think are most essential for effective job performance in this field?
- What are the toughest problems you deal with?
- What do you find most rewarding about your job/career?
- What sort of career goals do you see for yourself?
- How would you describe career potential for the career you have chosen?
- What are the industry compensation norms for this career? (**NEVER** ask someone his or her salary or compensation package!)
- What types of employers hire people with your background?
- How does one find out about job opportunities in this field?
- How does one progress from position to position in this type of work?
- Here is my resume. How well suited is my background to your type of work? What other related fields would you suggest?
- Who are some other people who might be willing to provide me with information?