

Professional Networking 101



How to start or break into a conversation:

- Try being friendly and commenting about your surroundings (i.e., the food, the speaker, the conference) – examples *This food looks great!*; *Wow – I really enjoyed that speaker!*
- Make a personal connection – ask what university are they from? Have they been to this city before?
- Talk research – ask if the person is presenting at the conference and what their research is about

Be organized with contact information:

- Create a plan before the networking event – how/where are you going to save contact information from the event – designate one pocket or folder to put business cards in
- After the event ends, make notes about which event/conference you met each person at on the back of each business card
- Follow up after the event – take a few minutes to send “thank you” emails saying how nice it was to meet each person you met at XYZ conference last week.

Other helpful information:

- Show an interest in someone else’s research – engage with a poster presenter, stay after an oral presentation session to talk to a speaker, or simply ask what s/he is working on.
- Recognize that you have something to contribute – if your research has overlap with the presenter, share it!
- Ask your faculty mentor to introduce you to colleagues.
- Make eye contact.
- Take advantage of open seats at large tables during lunch and start a conversation.
- Be approachable – put your phone away, look around and smile at people, etc.

The Elevator Pitch:

- Prepare your “pitch” in advance and practice.
- Be succinct – if the person is interested, s/he will ask questions to get more details.
- Should be geared toward a general audience (but can be tailored if you know your audience).
- Answers the question: *What do you do?*
- Don’t forget to share *why your research is so important* – this is often the most engaging part.