



Why is having professional connections important?

Social connections are important, but they are not the only type of connection you need to make. It is also important to connect with the faculty members or other professional staff such as chairpersons, psychologists, or advisors. Having a professional connection can serve you well through your college experience and beyond. If you are able to connect to a mentor, you will likely find that this person will be able to fill needs that are often very different from your social needs. Specifically, a professional mentor has access to academic and career information that others



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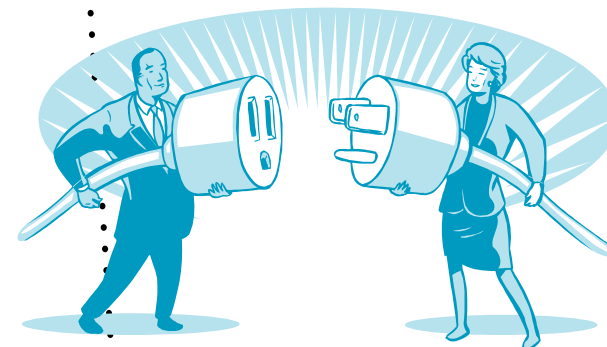
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Making Professional Connections



How do I make a professional connection?

Not surprisingly, faculty-student connections are linked to student success and more positive self-concepts (Woodside, Wong, & Weist, 1999). Making a professional connection begins with making a good impression. As you have probably already noticed, faculty members have a lot of students. This is particularly true if your college offers courses in large lecture halls. Do your part to stand out from the rest of the class and show the faculty member that you are on a mission to achieve success.



Based on these research findings, it is important that you go beyond being a good student. Seek out connections with faculty members outside of the classroom setting. As a first year student, it may be a little intimidating to begin a conversation with a faculty member. Try the following and you'll soon be comfortable reaching out to your professors:

- Think about what you would like to ask or say and then write it down.
- Go to your professor's office hours.
- Reach out by e-mail.
- Approach your professor before or after class.
- Ask your professor if he or she is an advisor of a club or organization.
- Inquire about opportunities to assist with research or other projects.

You might be surprised at how many college graduates keep in touch with their mentors for many years.

There are many benefits of establishing a mentor relationship with a faculty member or professional staff person on your campus. Mentors can provide you with effective academic advice, write powerful letters of recommendation, and share their general knowledge and connection with you.

At this point, you should realize that meeting with success in college takes a lot more than intelligence. The two key academic resilient factors are hope or optimism and support from others. Both of these are factors that are within your control. You can be optimistic and you can have a strong support system. There's no doubt that these resilient factors will help you achieve your desired goals.

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