



ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION

Michigan Face to Face

Student Guide

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Michigan Face to Face is a service provided by the Alumni Association of the University of Michigan to students and alumni of the university. While the Alumni Association strives to identify relevant and high quality professionals to provide career advice, we cannot be responsible for screening or evaluating the quality of any advice provided by alumni participants.

INTRODUCTION

As current students and alumni of the University of Michigan, we are united through our shared experiences as Leaders & Best over many decades. The Alumni Association of the University of Michigan seeks to enhance our bond by providing opportunities for alumni to engage with you and offer career-related insights and advice.

The primary goal of Michigan Face to Face is to create and nurture relationships between U-M Alumni and current students. This relationship provides students with a means to obtain informal advice on a wide-range of career topics. The Program also seeks to instill professionalism, expose students to the career field in which they seek to join, and to assist students with developing a professional network early on in their careers.

The following guide is intended to assist you with preparing for your 30-minute session, including resources, worksheets and templates. We ask that you take the time to read through each section in order to understand your role as a student or recent graduate participant and to assist you with preparing for this insightful opportunity.

THE VALUE OF ALUMNI CONNECTIONS

Never underestimate the power of a professional connection. Nearly 70% of all jobs and internships are obtained through networking and Michigan Face to Face provides you with a platform to initiate a career conversation with our alumni. In essence, networking is all about relationship-building. You are not asking the person to give you a job or internship, but rather seeking insight through the lived experiences of fellow members of the Michigan Family. Such a forum will allow your alumni connection to speak honestly and openly about their professional and academic practices within the following areas:

1. **Career Advice:** discussing your educational background and the role of educational preparation for the field, identifying current trends/issues, what to look for in an entry-level position
2. **Job Search Strategies:** direction on where to best look for jobs/internships, required qualifications; things to do now to prepare for a career in the field
3. **Personal Insights:** balancing personal life with a career, what to expect, what your connection may have done differently while at UM, dealing with personal/professional challenges
4. **Networking:** establishing professional relationship with UM alumni, identifying professional associations and publications

PARTICIPANT LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of participating in the Michigan Face to Face program, students and recent graduates will:

1. Feel a deeper sense of connection to the University of Michigan community and will recognize the benefits of involvement in Association-sponsored events with alumni.
2. Develop a thorough understanding of the programming provided through the Association and general knowledge surrounding membership in the Alumni Association that enables programs like Face to Face to occur.
3. Acquire insightful career-related knowledge, leading to an increased level of confidence in making choices about the types of careers or graduate programs they may wish to pursue.
4. Be inspired to take more action on career exploration, planning and/or connecting to others in their career field of interest.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW & EXPECTATIONS

The purpose of Michigan Face to Face is to provide an arena for alumni and students to connect and discuss career exploration. The amount of valuable information that you can potentially gain from your new connection is ultimately up to you: students who do not spend an adequate amount of time getting ready for their meeting will not receive nearly as much direction and advice compared to those who take the time to prepare for this interaction.

Our Alumni Connections are an invaluable resource for students who are preparing for *life beyond graduation*. Having a professional resource who has a shared connection to the University of Michigan allows these individuals to serve several roles:

1. **Motivator:** expresses confidence in the student's educational background and encourages the student to try new things.
2. **Supporter:** Encourages open dialogue and provides honest feedback and suggestions
3. **Resource:** Offers advice on navigating the job search, becoming involved in professional associations, what to look for in an entry-level position and how to expand existing professional networks.
4. **Coach:** Helps the student or recent graduate develop action items and next steps in order to establish realistic and effective goals.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ME AS A PARTICIPANT?

Both students and alumni must approach the relationship with an open mind, respect and a willingness to be honest. Above all, it is imperative that you, as a participant, adequately prepare for the session by establishing goals for what you hope to get out of the relationship. We can assure you that if you don't take the time to formulate thoughtful questions and only view the program as a transactional networking opportunity – where you are just coming to ask for a job – you will surely miss out on the benefits of the program and the chance to gain valuable insight into *life beyond graduation*. On the other hand, if you approach the meeting as an opportunity for *professional development*– or one that will enhance your career readiness and expand your professional network – there is much to be gained within the 30-minute timeframe.

To have a productive relationship with your Alumni Connection, we expect the following from you as a participant in Michigan Face to Face:

- To spend time getting to know your connection (i.e. researching online bios, LinkedIn page, current position, published literature, etc.)
- To set specific goals for the 30-minute session (*Hint:* the worksheet on page 8 will help!)
- To ask thoughtful and appropriate questions about academic and professional experiences
- To act in a professional, respectful, timely and appropriate manner during communication and interaction throughout the duration of correspondence with your Alumni Connection
- To be appropriate in the requests of alumni (do not ask for a job or internship)
- *If participating in a virtual session*, you are responsible for making the first contact with alumni and responding to all communication



Above all, we ask that you possess humility throughout the preparation and interaction with your Alumni Connection: approach the session with an open mind, and be receptive to suggestions, insights and feedback. Our alumni participate with the sole intention of giving advice to fellow Wolverines, so there's no need to worry about any angles or hidden agendas undermining their feedback!

WHAT IS NOT EXPECTED OF MY ALUMNI CONNECTION?

- Invitations to apply for a job or internship
- Initiating contact with you as a participant
- Leading and driving the conversation
- Having the answers to *all* of your questions
- Continued communication after the 30-minute session

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

Now that you have registered for an in-person or virtual session, we ask that you take some time to complete the following items prior to your meeting:

- Review the Michigan Face to Face Student Guide
- Get to know your Alumni Connection better by reviewing his/her LinkedIn profile, company website, etc.
- Use the Pre-Session Worksheet, which will help you begin to formulate questions you'd like to ask during your meeting
- 1 week before your scheduled meeting, you will receive an email from the Alumni Association, confirming your session and providing any additional details.

FOR IN-PERSON SESSION PARTICIPANTS:

- Feel free to dress as you would like: there is no dress code; however, in the past, participant attire has ranged from business clothes to jeans.
- Plan to arrive at the Alumni Center (200 Fletcher Street) at least 10 minutes prior to your meeting. We want to ensure you are able to capitalize on the full 30-minute session!

FOR VIRTUAL SESSION PARTICIPANTS:

Shortly after you have used the online portal to register for a session, you will receive an email from the Alumni Association confirming your participation. Upon receipt of this confirmation, it is your responsibility to make contact with your Alumni Connection. Send an introductory email within 5 business days with the following information:



- Your preferred method of interaction (email, phone, Skype, Google Hangouts, etc.)
- Several meeting times throughout the day that you are available to meet (include both dates and times)
- Your background, including:
 - Major
 - Graduation Year
 - Activities
 - Clubs

FINAL TIPS FOR PARTICIPANTS:

- Be prepared for your meeting. We want to respect the fact that our alumni participants are very busy people with a lot of demands for their time, so the best way to thank them is to come into the session with a good idea of the topics you would like to cover.
- Be open-minded and willing to learn: no matter who your contact is, he/she has expertise and experience to share with you. If you maintain an open-mind and genuinely want to learn, you will ultimately become a better professional as a result of any form of feedback or advice.
- Internalize what you learn and apply it: conversations with alumni can provide you with a lot of insight and guidance – try out the suggestions offered and take the advice to heart.
- Show appreciation: let your Alumni Connection know how much you appreciate him or her. A simple ‘thank you’ can go a long way toward nurturing your relationship (*note: there are templates at the end of this guide to assist you with constructing your messages*).
- Respect the student-alumni relationship: Michigan Face to Face is not designed to be a job fair or forum to seek employment. Never ask for a job or internship!

Questions?! Let the Alumni Association help! We are a resource for every aspect of the process and we want to ensure that you maximize your interaction. If you run into any hurdles preparing for your session, or are unable to establish contact with an alum, contact us for advice and help:

alumnistudentprograms@umich.edu

PRE-SESSION WORKSHEET

The best student-alumni relationships are built from a shared understanding of what each participant hopes to gain from working with one another. For alumni, it may be the opportunity to support current U-M students in their career development or to highlight and share career-related experiences. As a student, you may have decided to participate in this program because you have many questions surrounding career exploration and you are seeking advice from professionals in the field. As you prepare for the meeting with your Alumni Connection, you should spend some time thinking about what you want to get out of the relationship. As mentioned before, the best way to maximize this interaction is through preparation. Prior to communication, we ask that you complete the following exercises.

<u>Discussion Topic</u>	<u>Level of Interest</u>		
Academic experiences	Low	Medium	High
Guidance on how to seek a job/internship in the field	Low	Medium	High
Developing interviewing or informational interviewing skills	Low	Medium	High
Achieving work/life balance	Low	Medium	High
Decision to attend grad school	Low	Medium	High
Discussion of academia vs. industry	Low	Medium	High
Career options for your chosen major	Low	Medium	High
How to prepare for your career while still in college	Low	Medium	High
Resources for job searching	Low	Medium	High
Challenges of work in chosen field	Low	Medium	High

Based on your levels of interest above, which topics are you most interested in further exploring?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

List three questions you would like to ask your Alumni Connection during your session (if you need a little help getting started, refer to the *Informational Interviewing* questions on the following page):

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Informational interviewing is a great way to investigate a specific career field, uncover career options you didn't know about, learning about hot topics in a career field and broadening your network of future colleagues. As you prepare for your session, you should start to create a list of questions that you would like to ask your alumni connection. To help you get started, we have included some questions to help you get started.

Career Exploration

- How can I make use of internships to help decide my career path?
- What did you like most/least about the different professional positions you have held over the course of your career?
- Which career fields do you see growing, and which do you see shrinking?
- What is one current event or issue in your field?
- Do you find that certain personality traits make it easier to do this work well? Which traits?
- What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?
- Are too many or too few people entering this profession?
- What developments on the horizon could affect future opportunities?
- What advice would you give someone who is considering this type of job (or field)?

Academic Preparation

- How large a factor is GPA in your company's hiring process or in the career path in which I am interested?
- What courses did you find most valuable during college?
- Can you recommend any courses I should take in order to prepare me for a career in this field?
- What are non-academic college-related activities that you think contributed to your success?

Applying for Jobs

- What is an effective format for organizing my resume?
- How can I accentuate my best skills and experiences on my resume and cover letter?
- How can I make my resume and cover letter stand out?

Interviewing Skills

- What are qualities you look for in candidates you've interviewed?
- How does my body language affect someone else's perception of me?
- Would you share some examples of questions that are good to ask employers during an interview?
- How do I sell my capabilities effectively during an interview?

Internship Search

- Which companies will give me the best chance to learn more about the industry?
- What should I be doing now to make myself appealing to companies who hire interns?
- Can you provide any tips on how to maximize my internship experience?

Job Search

- What companies/organizations do you think treat their employees well and why?
- What things should I be looking for in order to understand a company/organization culture?
- What are some absolute dos and don'ts?
- What are the most successful strategies for seeking a position in this field?
- What qualifications would you be looking for if you were hiring for a position such as yours?
- What qualifications would you be looking for if you were hiring for a position subordinate to yours in the office?

Networking/Connecting with Additional Professionals

- What are some good ways to start a conversation with a professional I have just met?
- What is the best way to follow-up on a conversation I had with another professional or recruiter?
- How can I use a LinkedIn account more effectively?
- Who are the most important people in the industry today?
- What organizations or affiliations might be helpful to my professional development?
- What professional associations and publications would you suggest I join now?

Professional Communication

- Based on my communication with you thus far, how can I improve?
- What are some typical communication mistakes you see new professionals make?
- What tips would you give me on using technology appropriately in the workplace?

Transitioning from School to Career

- How can I prepare myself for the transition to the workplace from the classroom?
- How do I set realistic expectations?
- What are the best ways to “hit the ground running” in my career?
- What are some ineffective habits for the workplace that I may have developed in the classroom?
- Once I am done with my degree, should I consider attending graduate school in order to prepare me for this career field?

Starting a New Business or Venture

- What factors do I need to consider before investing in a new business or venture?
- How can I differentiate my business from others?
- What are the most effective ways to market a new business?

Personal Life Experiences

- Which challenging situations in your life have facilitated the largest personal growth?
- Would you share an example of when you feel you failed and how you moved forward after that experience?
- What jobs and experiences have led you to your present position?

Additional Questions

- How can I continue to learn every day, even outside of the classroom?
- What books do you recommend I read, either for knowledge or leisure?
- What are some strategies you use to help you with time management?
- What methods are best for me to distinguish myself in the workforce?
- What suggestions do you have for managing stress?
- What do you wish you'd known before you entered this field/professional life?
- What suggestions do you have for balancing work, career, and life?
- If your work were suddenly eliminated, what kinds of work do you feel prepared to do?
- If you could start over, would you choose the same path for yourself? What would you change?
- How did you decide to work in this field?
- What parts of your job do you find most challenging?

EMAIL TEMPLATES

Please note: the templates provided in this guide should be used as starting points –do not copy templates verbatim!

INITIAL EMAIL



If you are participating in a virtual 30-minute session, it is your responsibility to initiate contact with your assigned alum. Your email should address the following items in order to provide an introduction, your goals for the session and your availability:

Introduction Paragraph: Who are you? How did you receive his/her contact information? Make sure to thank them!

Paragraph 2: Share your background: year, major, activities, jobs, clubs.

Paragraph 3: Share what you hope to gain from the networking experience, listing the three discussion topics you identified on your worksheet.

Closing Paragraph: In closing, ask to set up a time to talk (providing your preferred communication method and several meeting times during business hours that would work well to connect) and express appreciation.

Dear [Contact's Name]:

My name is Matt and I was recently informed that you would be my Alumni Connection for the Michigan Face to Face program offered through the Alumni Association of the University of Michigan. Let me start by first thanking you for accepting my request to meet with you.

I am currently a sophomore majoring in public health. Outside of classes I volunteer with Food Gatherers – a food recover center in Ann Arbor. I am also very involved in the Pre-Public Health Association, primarily helping with event planning and coordination.

I am interested in learning about the rewards and challenges of working in a non-profit organization, and how I can best prepare while at UofM, to work in this environment after graduation.

I am really interested to find a time to talk with you in the coming weeks. I would prefer to connect via Skype or telephone, but please let me know if you prefer an alternative method of communication. As of now, I am available on Wednesday afternoons after 2:00pm or any time on Friday. What is your availability?

Thank you again for agreeing to meet with me, [contact's name]. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

Regardless of whether you participate in a virtual or in-person session with your contact, it is appropriate to follow-up with your new professional connection to thank him/her for the insight and time provided to you. This message should address the following:

Introductory Paragraph: thank alum for time during session and highlight one aspect or beneficial piece of information you gained from the conversation

Paragraph 2: Show interest in establishing professional network and ask connection if you can add him/her as a LinkedIn contact. You may also ask if you can contact him/her with questions in the future.

Closing Paragraph: Express appreciation for time and value of conversation

Dear [Contact's Name]:

I just wanted to thank you again for your time yesterday. I was really surprised to learn that there are a lot of different pathways leading to my dream job, and I appreciate that you helped me identify clubs and organizations that I can get involved with right now to prepare me for life after graduation.

I would really like to stay in touch with you as I move forward with completing my studies and entering the job market in 20--. Would you mind if I add you as a contact on LinkedIn? Additionally, would it be ok for me to contact you from time-to-time to gain additional advice about my career as an archeologist? I certainly understand that you aren't obligated to do so.

Thank you again, [Contact's Name]. I am really glad we had the chance to talk and I wish you all the best. Go Blue!

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

PROGRAM CALENDAR

VIRTUAL SESSIONS



The Alumni Association coordinates 5 Michigan Face to Face sessions during the academic year. The following months have been designated for virtual sessions:

- October
- November
- February
- March
- May (also open to new graduates)

IN-PERSON SESSIONS

Participants also have the option to attend an in-person meeting with UM Alumni. Please note, due to the nature of these meetings, we ask that you dress in a manner befitting to a young professional. The following months have been designated for in-person sessions:

- October
- November
- January
- February
- April

ADDITIONAL NETWORKING RESOURCES!

The Alumni Association offers many opportunities for current students to enhance professional skills and prepare for life beyond graduation, including:

Hail & Hello

Are you wondering what it's like to attend a professional networking event? Participate in our Hail & Hello Workshop and Event to learn more about the art of networking. Then, you will get a chance to practice your new skills with Michigan alums.

LinkedIn

The Alumni Association of the University of Michigan has one of the largest alumni groups on LinkedIn. Don't miss out on this opportunity to connect with alumni and fellow students!

For additional information and dates, please visit our student portal at: <http://alumni.umich.edu/students>