

Networking in academia

by Chi Chi Okezie, contributing writer

Networking is not just reserved to the business sectors. It can be a useful tool for communication, development and advancement in academia. Students, professors, faculty, staff, alumni, etc. can strengthen their relationships, collaborations and learning aptitudes via networking. It is an untapped resource which offers several benefits to the individuals and institutions. Listed below are useful tips and strategies to implement networking into your academic lifestyle and beyond.

Networking for the Student

Students are ideally positioned to utilize networking to build relations via peer to peer. As well as, through their academic institution, the local communities and business organizations. As a matter of fact, creating a plan for networking throughout their time in school can leverage their success upon graduation and successfully transition them into the workforce. Below are a few tips which can impact the ability of a student to reach their networking goals.

- Join clubs/organizations to expand on communication and leadership skills.
- Connect with heads of departments in regards to scholarships, endowments, internships, and other opportunities.
- Join external professional/industry groups as a student to take advantage of free or reduced membership fees.

Networking for Professors, Faculty, Staff

Work loads, busy schedules and office hours can put a strain on allocating time for networking. But, it is extremely important to incorporate networking into a strategic plan for development and advancement. It is also an excellent way to promote one's personal brand and create partnerships and meaningful collaborations. Below are a few tips which can be used to strengthen anyone's networking goals.

- Be intentional about connecting with HR or heads of departments to inquire about development opportunities or professional training budgets.
- Join external professional organizations to connect with peers, learn new trends and promote one's personal brand.
- Attend annual academic conferences in order to establish relations with colleagues, facilitate presentations as a subject expert or promote books, research and other initiatives.

Networking for Alumni

Business professionals sometimes miss the mark by not getting actively involved with their alma mater. Besides leveraging institutions for talent acquisition and new hires, colleges and universities can offer a plethora of resources for business development and engagement. Below are effective tips for pursuing your networking objectives.

- Register/get connected with the alumni association and update necessary contact information
- Subscribe to listserv and communications to stay current on activities, opportunities and ways to support
- Reach out to the alumni association to inquire about resources for grow business growth (eg. space for hosting events, tools for aiding in research and development, or events for connecting alumni).

Definitely use these tips to enhance fundamental networking activities and connect within the institutions. Leverage the resources and contacts available to advance within academics, careers and businesses. Be available and flexible for functions and activities which can promote personal branding and build professional acumen. Sharpening communications skills and being able to use the proper skills and abilities is an ideal formula for sustainable success. **TE**



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