LinkedIn & The Job Search

As a college student, you are likely well versed in Facebook, but how familiar are you with LinkedIn? Think of LinkedIn as a valuable networking tool and interactive business card that you will utilize throughout your career. LinkedIn is a summary of your professional experiences, skills, and accomplishments designed to attract the attention of recruiters, networking contacts, and graduate school admissions officers. A strong profile will help you stand out from the crowd. LinkedIn is only as strong as the time and effort you put into building your profile and connections.

How can LinkedIn help you?
Suppose that you interviewed for a job and it’s down to you and one other candidate. The company decides to Google the two finalists to see what sort of information comes up. One has a LinkedIn profile that details work experiences and even has a recommendation from their internship supervisor. The other candidate has no LinkedIn profile and a Google search yields only high school tennis statistics. Which candidate looks more appealing and professional?

Why College Students Should Join LinkedIn
- Use the LinkedIn Student Portal. This LinkedIn feature recommends jobs to you based on education and interests. Opportunities are worldwide and in multiple languages.
- Research companies via LinkedIn's Company Pages. LinkedIn Company Profiles are an excellent way to learn more about a company you are interested in. This feature enables you to see your connections to the company, new hires, employee profiles, new job postings, company size, products and services, recent company-related news stories, and statistics about both the company and its employees.
- Allow companies to find you (especially if you have a profile that is 100% complete!)
- Connect to other colleagues, peers, and alumni to see how they gained experience along their internship and career paths.

How to Build a Professional LinkedIn Profile
- Use an appropriate photo. It is recommended to use a photo in your profile, but use a high-quality head shot, not a party photo or a photo of you and your dog.
- Highlight your education and the quality of your educational experiences. Include information on your major, concentration, minor, and study abroad.
- Create a professional summary statement. This should resemble the first few paragraphs of your best cover letter, concise and confident about your goals and skills. Include mentions of internships, volunteer work, and extracurricular activities.
- Fill in the “specialties” section with keywords relevant to your chosen field of study and career interests. Using words or phrases that a recruiter or hiring manager may type into a search. Read over descriptions for jobs that appeal to you to get a sense of what are the appropriate phrases that will increase the likelihood of your profile being found.
- Joining affinity groups and professional associations allows you to make connections and provides valuable information on industry trends. Perhaps you are a member of an honor or Greek association; this can provide a valuable networking opportunity. Joining a professional group is another way to develop connections. For example, if you are interested in marketing and nonprofits, you can join a group such as Non-Profit Marketing. For a directory of groups, visit http://www.linkedin.com/groupsDirectory
- Collect recommendations from professors, internship supervisors, and mentors. Recommendations lend credibility to your profile.

Common LinkedIn Mistakes Among College Students
- Sending generic invitations to connect with individuals you don’t know. If you’re going to reach out to someone you don’t know, send a personal message along with your invitation to connect. Aim to answer the questions of what you have in common with the other person and why you’d like to connect. It can be as simple as, “I’m a
fourth-year McIntire student at Virginia, your alma mater. I’m interested in pursuing a career in retail management and, given your career path, I’d love the opportunity to connect.”

• Spelling/grammatical errors. Proofread your LinkedIn profile carefully, as it is your professional profile for everyone to see.

• Not keeping your content selective. While it is important to list your educational, work, and extracurricular activities, keep your profile concise. It is not necessary to list every part-time job you’ve held or college club you’ve joined, especially if it is not relevant to the field in which you are job searching. Everything listed in your LinkedIn profile should be targeted towards your professional goals and enhance your personal brand.

• Not keeping your LinkedIn profile updated. Just as you would update your resume to reflect graduation or internship completion, keep your LinkedIn profile current.