

The ConnectMe! Program

What is the ConnectMe! Program?

Linfield Career Development established the ConnectMe! Program to help students reach out in personalized ways to alumni, parents and industry partners for informational interviews and other connection activities. Students opt into this program, and describe career interests and reasons why they want to reach out. We then identify partners based on student interest and email you directly to let you know that the student will be reaching out to inquire about an informational interview. We believe in guiding students through this process, while keeping the responsibility on them to maintain ownership over their career journeys. We do our best to follow up with students to learn of their informational interviews and always encourage students to reach out to us for support.

Reasons students ask for an informational interview

- *Career exploration* – they are interested in either your company, industry, and/or your position and want to learn more as they explore career ideas
- *Career confirmation* – they are confirming that they want to move forward in pursuing a career in your company, industry and/or position type
- *Job or internship search* – the student has identified either: specific jobs/internships at your company and wants to get some industry and application insight and make a professional connection as part of the application process; or, the students is connecting to learn more about possible jobs/internships in your company or industry and get insight from you on where to look for opportunities and tips on how to apply
- *Grad school information* – the student may be interested in your graduate school path, if applicable
- *Job shadows* – similar to a job or internship search, the student may be looking to make connections for job shadow opportunities
- *Course assignment* – many students do informational interviews as part of a course requirement, and this is great! Often, this will be for an exploratory or career confirmation meeting

The ConnectMe! Program

What to expect from the student

- Do initial outreach to you, including why they are asking for the informational interview, and some suggested meeting times
- Find and read your profile on LinkedIn
- Research your employer and/or industry
- Prepare informational interview questions
- Practice introducing themselves
- Follow through on the meeting!
- If the student has to postpone or cancel, proactively reach out ahead of time
- Maintain a professional demeanor and communication style
- Follow up to thank you for the meeting

How to help the student

Many students will be nervous! This may be a student's first informational interview. Additionally, even if you are not in the exact position or industry of interest for the student, know that this informational interview will be very helpful, and the student will take away much more than you may realize. Here are some tips to help ease students, help the conversation, and help the student take away a great experience:

- Try to elaborate on your answers
- Think ahead of time on what types of questions you wish you had asked a professional when you were a student and offer those questions and answers
- Offer to take a look at the student's resume to give feedback
- Ask the student about their career goals, favorite classes, co-curricular involvement, etc.
- You don't have to have all the answers!
- Let the student know it is okay to be nervous

Mitigate misinterpretations

Students know that this is a professional meeting. Many will ask to meet with you in your place of employment or perhaps at a coffee shop. We have advised students to avoid suggesting meetings places that are not generally a professional setting or that are not in a public space (i.e., not to request to meet at a bar, or in a private home). Often, an initial informational interview may lead to follow up meetings or a mentoring relationship, which is wonderful! Please be aware of how you approach these topics so that you relay this is a professional relationship. Some good rules of thumb:

- Only demonstrate professionally appropriate interest in the student's personal life
- Avoid accepting, giving or exchanging romantic or overall personal gifts or notes with the student
- Honor appropriate professional boundaries with students in conduct and all conversations
- Communication in all forms should be focused on professional topics and/or business or organizational matters