Career Connections:
Peer-to-Peer Advising Guide

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About Career Connections

We all need guidance throughout our careers, and Career Connections is a place where alumni and students can meet to share professional advice. By joining Career Connections on LinkedIn, you can act as either a Searcher or an Advisor (see below), even simultaneously requesting advice from one participant while receiving advice from another.

Those searching for advice initiate the process by reaching out to the group at large or finding another Career Connections participant who might be able to answer their questions. Together, the Searcher and the Advisor determine the length of the career advising conversation, whether it is a single interaction or longer term.

Searchers: Alumni or students at any stage seeking career advice
Contemplating the next step in your career? Is there a professional capability you would like to develop? Reach out for advice from Moore School alumni who have experience with what you are about to face. There are a few ways to ask:
1) Post a general question to the group. It will appear on the group's wall and in the group digest.
2) Search the Career Connections group members to find a potential advisor and send them a message.
3) E-mail your question to alumni@moore.sc.edu with "Career Connections" as the subject, and we may post it to the group for you anonymously.

Advisors: Alumni, and sometimes students, willing to share insights from their professional experience. Simply join Career Connections to show you are willing to be contacted. In addition to one-on-one sessions, you can also answer questions posted to the group.

Who Can Join? The Career Connections group is open to alumni and some current students of the Darla Moore School of Business. Moore School faculty and staff may also be admitted to the group for administrative purposes.

Main Goals: Career Connections exists to
• Allow peer-to-peer advice among the Moore School community
• Allow alumni and students to build professional capabilities, confidence and networking connections
• Share career development information

Job Search & Recruiting: With advising and sharing information the primary focus, Career Connections is not our forum for job postings. Those can be accessed at, or posted to, our exclusive Darla Moore School of Business Alumni group under the Jobs tab.

Alumni who are recruiting their fellow alumni or current students for jobs may post a job description directly to the Jobs tab themselves or e-mail it to alumni@moore.sc.edu for posting.

Leaving the Group: Go to the group page, and you will see a grey “Member” button across from your name and profile picture. Hover over the button and the text will change to “Leave.” Simply click that button to be removed from the group.
**Staying Safe** Every profile in Career Connections has been verified against our alumni database, but please use common safety advice when setting up in-person meetings with people you may not know. This includes letting someone else know when, where and who you are planning to meet, meeting in a public space, not sharing too much personal information, etc.

**The Fine Print** This group is for networking, advice, and support. Please keep inquiries to a professional nature, and avoid solicitation of job opportunities outright. The group administrator reserves the right to remove anyone from the group who has used it for purposes other than those explicitly stated in this document.
Questions Posted to the Career Connections LinkedIn Group

Good questions to post to the group include general topics that other job seekers might also be interested in like negotiating tips, thoughts on professional networks or associations or skills most valued in a particular job.

Potential Advisors can review their daily or weekly e-mail digest to see if they can offer Searchers any help.

One-on-one Advising Sessions:

These confidential sessions are ideal for discussing more specific topics such as company culture and career paths or for tackling tougher career development questions once a rapport has been built up.

The Commitment: Advising sessions can be a single LinkedIn or e-mail exchange, phone call, coffee meeting, etc. They are typically a commitment of 30 minutes to 1 hour per session, including advisor prep time. (i.e. Prep 15 min + Discuss 30 min)

The Beginning: Searchers lead the process by initiating contact with a potential Advisor and selecting which topics to discuss based on their professional development plan.

Lifetime of the Advising Sessions: If the two build some rapport, the advising conversations may continue, sometimes for 6 months to a year, but many productive advising relationships are much shorter. If yours achieves longevity, a good guideline is to space sessions out to once every 4-6 weeks.

The End: Most advising conversations will have a natural end, especially if it is a one-off question. Of course, either party may end the advising sessions respectfully at any time.

Re-examine Ground Rules for Longer Set of Advising Sessions: If your conversations continue beyond what you expected, or for more than 2-3 months, it is a good idea for both parties to discuss the overall aims and goals of the discussions. This includes establishing ground rules such as how long and how frequently advising sessions should take place. When the objectives have been reached, both parties then have the responsibility to wind down the advising conversations thoughtfully and respectfully.
**Searchers: What to Expect & Planning Suggestions**

**Taking the Lead:** Searchers will be in charge of initiating one-on-one advising conversations and setting the agenda based on their professional development needs.

Follow the steps in the Quick Start section to find potential Advisors in the Career Connections LinkedIn group. Once you have identified someone you would like to reach out to, send them a message introducing yourself, mentioning Career Connections, stating why you chose them, what you would like to discuss and anything you might be able to offer in return (i.e. future help, your perspective on industry if the potential Advisor is a peer, etc.). Specify whether you would like to set up a phone call or in-person meeting or if an e-mailed response would be ok.

**Interacting with your Advisor:** After you initiate contact, you should expect confidentiality, respect and a relatively quick response (2-3 business days) from the intended Advisor. Remember that schedules are busy, so the initial response may be that they will answer your question later or to schedule a phone call or other meeting to discuss it with you. Always thank your Advisor for his or her input.

Follow-up advising sessions, including questions or meetings, should be spaced out at a rate that is comfortable for both you and the Advisor. Since planning a response takes time, try to leave a few weeks between sessions taking place by e-mail, phone or in person. If adding a topic, you should always check to be sure the Advisor is comfortable continuing the advising conversations. See the section on One-on-one Advising Sessions for tips on managing the advising sessions together.

**Multiple Advisors:** Having more than one Advisor is encouraged. Because today’s working world is so chaotic, you may find that one person may not be able to give you the full advice you need.

**Keep in Mind:** Searchers should remember that Career Connections is to further networking and the exchange of career development information. Directly asking for jobs is inappropriate, including sending your resume without the Advisor asking or agreeing to see it as part of your early conversations.

Once you have built up rapport and trust with an Advisor, they will often share information naturally about upcoming job openings they know about or feel comfortable connecting you with their other contacts. However, advisors often want to help in these ways but may not be in a position to do so (i.e. confidentiality, undergoing own career search, etc.). Please respect their boundaries.

**Planning Suggestions:**
- List and prioritize your professional development goals and reach out to Advisors who can help you in those specific areas.
- Use a spreadsheet to track your Advisor relationships, conversations and how much time you have asked them to commit to helping you.
Advisors: What to Expect & Ways to Give Effective Support

Encouraging Searcher to Take the Lead: When an Advisor receives a one-on-one advising request from someone in the group, they should expect the Searcher to lead by setting the agenda.

Interacting with your Searcher: When you receive an introductory message from a Searcher, you should provide a relatively quick response (2-3 business days), either to answer the question or to set up another time to fully respond. Please keep the content of the conversations confidential and respectful. Of course, if you receive more requests than you can handle, please politely decline the request with a brief explanation.

Follow-up advising sessions, including questions or meetings, should be spaced out at a rate both you and the Searcher are comfortable with. Since planning a response takes time, try to leave a few weeks between sessions taking place by e-mail, phone or in person.

If the conversations move beyond the original topic or last more than a couple months, please indicate to the Searcher whether you are comfortable continuing the advising sessions and mutually agree to some ground rules, including how and when to end the sequence of conversations. Please see the section on One-on-One Advising Sessions for tips on how to manage the advising sessions together.

Giving Effective Support: Empowering the Searcher to take the lead in their professional development means Advisors should focus on thoughtfully responding to the Searcher’s chosen topics based on your experience. Advisors should encourage the Searcher to think through their problems while giving a gentle push in the right direction. Sharing resources you have found helpful, examples from your own professional development or connecting them with others from your network are all ways to help.

While questions about corporate culture, career paths, interview styles, etc., are on the table for discussion, we have asked Searchers not to ask outright for information on current job openings or direct help getting hired. However, Advisors may share such information if they feel comfortable doing so after getting to know the Searcher.

Keep in Mind: The Searcher contacting you may be a peer or more experienced manager as people are seeking advice at all stages of their careers. This includes asking for help with new technology, transitioning to a new company or industry and more.

Searchers may also have more than one Advisor they are communicating with in order to meet their full slate of professional development needs. Do not feel that you have a responsibility to respond to more than what you initially agreed to discuss or to respond to a topic that you do not feel you are capable of answering fully.
Further Reading

This guide was influenced by the following sources. Those that may be useful to Advisors and Searchers trying to understand more about contemporary ways of giving and receiving career advice are highlighted in bold.


