



# Networking at Professional Meetings & Conferences

Brenda Nickol, Director of Career Services

UNMC College of Public Health

October 2, 2013

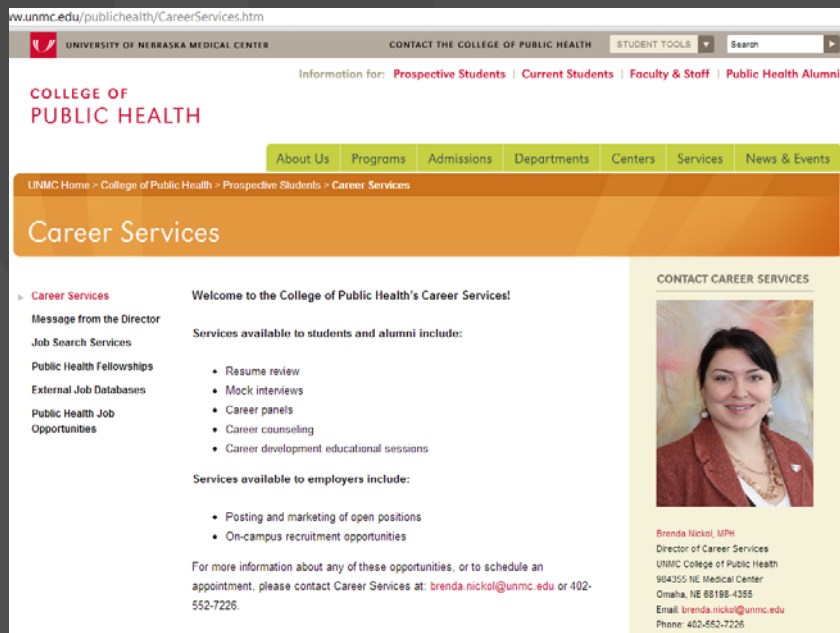


# Who is in the room...



# COPH Career Services

<http://www.unmc.edu/publichealth/CareerServices.htm>



The screenshot shows the UNMC Career Services website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the University of Nebraska Medical Center logo and the text "UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER". Below this, there is a search bar and a "STUDENT TOOLS" dropdown menu. The main header area includes the text "COLLEGE OF PUBLIC HEALTH" and a navigation menu with options: "About Us", "Programs", "Admissions", "Departments", "Centers", "Services", and "News & Events". The page title is "Career Services". The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column lists various services such as "Job Search Services", "Public Health Fellowships", "External Job Databases", and "Public Health Job Opportunities". The right column features a "CONTACT CAREER SERVICES" section with a photo of Brenda Nickol, MPH, and her contact information: "Brenda Nickol, MPH, Director of Career Services, UNMC College of Public Health, 904355 NE Medical Center, Omaha, NE 68198-4355, Email: [brenda.nickol@unmc.edu](mailto:brenda.nickol@unmc.edu), Phone: 402-552-7226".



@COPHCareers



UNMC College of Public Health Students & Alumni Group



# Today we will cover:

- Networking tips for Before, During and After a professional meeting or conference



# Networking





# Networking

**Building relationships  
with others.**



# Networking...

- It is all around you, every day
- Conversations and interactions with people with whom you have something in common, in any setting





# Networking Tips

1. Find areas of mutual interest—ask questions, use good listening skills and be genuinely curious
2. Relax, and be yourself
3. Follow up
4. Don't forget about what you can give



# Networking Give & Get

## Give

- Time
- Expertise
- Recommendations
- Introductions
- Insight and advice
- Lessons learned
- Connections

Be a  
**Connector!**



# Before the Conference



# Getting to the Conference

- Submit abstracts for presentation
- Seek out scholarships from the organizers and related professional organizations
  - Student
  - Emerging Leaders
  - Young Professionals
- Student rates
- Volunteer/Work options
- Roommate finder



# Do Your Homework

- Study the schedule, use personal scheduler if available
  - Download the conference app
  - Look for student sessions and first time attendee sessions
- Identify pre-conference workshops, meetings and outings
- Research presenters (and participants if possible) and engage on social media
- Look at the exhibitor list



# Logistics

- Try to stay at the conference hotel
- Set up meetings ahead of time
  - Use social media to pre-connect
  - Reach out to your network
- Packing
  - Professional, yet comfortable
  - Think about each day's events when planning outfits
  - One extra outfit



# Prepare Yourself

- Think about
  - Your goals & priorities
  - How you will introduce yourself
- Update your LinkedIn Profile
- Copies of resume



# Prepare Yourself

- Business cards
  - Vista Print, Zazzle, Moo (20% student discount)
    - Cannot use UNMC logo
  - UNMC Print Services
    - One color, 250 for \$21.56
    - Title: MPH Student
    - Email, Phone, Department, but no mailing address





# During the Conference



# First Things First...

- En route
  - Strike up conversations and be polite
- Try to make at least one good, genuine connection early
  - En route, in hotel check in line, registration line, in lobby area, pre-conference activities
- Register as early as possible
  - Review conference materials
  - Note schedule changes
  - Review participant list



# Conference Sessions

- Arrive early and talk to person next to you
- Turn off electronics\*
  - \*Tweet highlights from plenary sessions
- Yes, you can introduce yourself to the speaker at the end of the session
- Pay attention to who hangs out together
- Consider ROI of a session vs. a meaningful conversation
- Take notes



# Additional Events and Places to Connect

- Hit the exhibit hall
- Attend social/networking events
- Non-conference locations (airport, restaurant, elevator, etc.)
  - Be on the lookout for conference nametags, bags and other clues



**This is all helpful, but what does  
'it' really look like?**



# In all interactions, be...

- A good listener
- Yourself
- Positive
- A connector



# Networking Conversation Tips

- Ask lots of open-ended questions and provide more than yes/no answers
- Potential Topics:
  - Highlights from sessions
  - Anything fun seeing/doing in the city
  - Restaurant suggestions for dinner/good coffee
  - Tips for the conference (especially if you are a first time attendee)
  - F.O.R.D.: Family, Occupation, Recreation, Dreams



# Wrapping Up a Conversation

- Exchange business cards (make a note on the back)
- Compliment & thank them
- Exit Line (i.e. “I need to go touch base with my colleague about tomorrow’s schedule/a deadline”)





# After the Conference



# Following Up with New Connections

**Within 48hrs!**

- Depending upon the kind of connection you made and how in-depth your conversation was, any of the following will work:
  - Thank you email
  - Thank you note
  - LinkedIn Connect request (personalized!)



# On-going Communication

- Let speakers and/or conference organizers know when you use information
- Be a connector
  - As you see relevant opportunities or new information, share with people you met
- Schedule a more formal conversation or meeting (informational interview)



**If you do all of these things...**



You will be the kind of person that people like and respect, and ultimately, want to help.



**You don't have to take my word  
for it...**



“Ask all questions, even if they're not explicitly about/for networking. Some of my best networking experiences have come from simply asking good questions that were not meant to prompt networking.”

“Walk up to groups of three or more and say "I'm just trying to meet new people" with a big smile. Works every time!”



“My first APHA conference I attended--met a great woman, pioneer/professor in the field of community gardening and health promotion. After her talk I went up to her and chatted for a little while. Kept in touch over the next year and ended up writing my masters’ thesis with her (she was in Denver and I was in Chapel Hill). Goes to show that just a bit of networking can make you lasting connections. We're still in touch...10 years later!”





“After I present at a conference, I appreciate the people who approach me that are dressed professionally, not chewing gum, and remember my name---always remember the person’s name who you are speaking to!”

“When I go to conferences I bring copies of my resume (you never know when someone may ask for it)... at my first APHA conference I actually had an impromptu interview and was glad I had my resume.”



**Questions?**



**Brenda K. (Thompson) Nickol, MPH**

Director of Career Services

MCPH 3054

[Brenda.nickol@unmc.edu](mailto:Brenda.nickol@unmc.edu) | Phone: 402-552-7226