

## How can students discuss their professional interests and aspirations with faculty?

I grew up in a fiercely competitive and intense part of the U.S., fifteen to twenty minutes outside of Washington D.C. I believed anything outside of perfection was unacceptable. My academic credentials had to be stellar. I had to be involved with numerous athletic teams and music organizations, as well as be constantly surrounded by people. This pressure to *excel in everything and maintain an illusion of effortless perfection* was unrealistic and unhealthy. All of this was self-induced because [I often compared myself to others](#). The ultimate, highly frowned upon act in this kind of environment was asking someone for assistance.

My Japanese language major in college was my inspiration to adopt a different mindset. I realized through my studies and spending time in Japan that [asking for help is a strength](#). In order to effectively deal with my social and linguistic ineptitude early on in this country, acknowledging my vulnerability, which took time, was crucial for success. I also asked questions and shared my frustrations with individuals I felt comfortable with and trusted. A lot of their suggestions were invaluable, and I had a healthier outlook.

My personal experiences in learning to ask for help are also applicable to college students, especially if they are in the early stages of their internship search process. Faculty can be a great resource, both during and outside office hours, when looking for internships. Please keep in mind, however, these kinds of conversations may require several encounters. There are no “right” approaches or even a template to follow, but below are a few pointers that can facilitate the start and you may even come up with your own. After all, no one can offer assistance if everyone is unaware of your circumstance.

- ◆ Express [gratitude](#) –
  - ◇ What did you learn in their class? How did you grow from this newly acquired insight? Can you recall a particular assignment, discussion or a group activity that you enjoyed? Did the professor do or say something (big or small) that made an impression on you? All of these items can be included in this simple act that can go a long way; for the receiver *and* you!
- ◆ Be [curious](#) –
  - ◇ What inspired them to become an academic and focus on their area of specialization? Did they encounter any challenges along the way? If so, how did they overcome them? What kinds of assistance did they receive from others in their journey? Did they have professional interests or aspirations outside of academia?

- ◆ Bring it back to you with the following “hooks” –
  - ◇ I am excited about my professional journey and this is where I am....
  - ◇ What advice do you have for me because I am starting to look for....
  - ◇ Are you aware of any individuals I should also speak with....
  - ◇ Are there opportunities or organizations I should look into....

Networking is inherently stressful for a variety of reasons, and the shift from viewing it as transactional to being a [connector](#) requires practice, patience *and* stamina. [Start small](#) and embrace the uncertainty.

To further discuss this topic, please [schedule an appointment](#) with the [Internship Coordinator, Ned Khatrichettri](#).