

Career Center

Board of Directors

You are the Chairman. Build your Board of Directors.

As you learn and build your career path, meeting new people and “enlisting” them to your personal Board of Directors is a key strategy for success. Think about the many people who have had (or could have!) a positive influence in your life.

Look into the future and consider whom you might strategically seek out to add to your board, in addition to staying in touch with those you already know. Every person you encounter over time gets to see a different piece of you at your best (and possibly worst) and can be called upon for insights into significant aspects of who you have been and who you are becoming.

Build and use your Board of Directors to learn about yourself and to imagine and discover YOUR possibilities. The benefits could include:

- Feedback on habits, patterns, and strengths that you haven’t noticed about yourself
- Advice on steps to take, people to meet, and resources or strategies to consider
- Insight into how your advisors have made decisions in the past and what other options they considered
- Inside information about what a typical day is like
- Suggestions for opportunities that might excite you

Enlist a supervisor

Your supervisors are great advisors, even when you no longer work at the organization. Many will suggest you stay in touch, or you could ask if they are open to the possibility.

Staying in touch doesn’t mean having to request something every time you talk. If you come across information or do something that might be interesting to the person, share it! The sentiment, “thinking of you”, goes a long way and can be a great reason to send an email or pick up the phone.

Here are some great updates to share.

I thought of you when:

- I learned something in class.
- I saw something in the news.
- I used something I learned when working with you.
- I followed your advice.
- I mentioned you (or your organization) to someone.

Enlist a professor

Find something you’re genuinely curious about as a reason to talk. People, even professors (!), tend to be flattered when others express interest in something that is important to them.

You can use the words, “I’m trying to understand...” as a way to start these conversations.

Some other examples might include:

- You mentioned... in your lecture. I’m trying to better understand how this connects to...
- We worked on... in the problem set. I’m trying to understand why this technique is preferred over...
- Being a professor seems interesting to me. I’m trying to better understand what it is like.
- Can you tell me about what you do? How you decided to do this? What else you have considered? Who you work with?
- This topic is very interesting to me. I’m trying to better understand the ways that it connects to opportunities outside of academic work. Do you know about this or anyone who might?
- I learned a bit about your research and am intrigued by... Can you tell me more about...



Here are some suggestions for insight you could gain:

Family—know you deeply and over time

Friends—see where you thrive and struggle

Professors—have insight into your academic mind

Coaches—challenge you to overcome obstacles

Advisors—contribute to your decision-making process

Community Leaders—see your passions engaged

Peers—have worked alongside you

Supervisors—have had to give you constructive feedback

Duke Alums—have a common experience