Best Practices for Using the Kellogg Alumni Directory
Compiled in part by the KSA Alumni Committee

- Remember that your best contact might not be the CEO or SVP. Focus on more recent alums first, as your response rate will likely be higher with the recent grads. Recent grads are often excited about Kellogg, and they tend to remember and be sensitive to the networking process. You might also find more recent alums are more comfortable sharing the “inside scoop” with you. Then, as you delve deeper with your interest in companies, you can be even more prepared when trying to contact decision makers and more senior executives.
- When using email, keep your message short and to the point. Be clear as to the purpose of your contacting them, and close by asking when a good time would be for you to call them. Don’t leave the ball in their court to call you – it probably won’t happen when you’d like, if at all.
- Do NOT mention your interest in a permanent job during your first contact with the person. This is an absolute, sure-fire way to be dismissed by someone. Think about how you can engage this person in a two-way conversation, and you’re much less likely to feel like you’re begging help from a stranger. Ask questions; tap into their experience, insight and expertise.
- Be prepared with legitimate, thoughtful, interesting questions! Make sure the information you are trying to gather from alumni is nothing you could easily obtain from other sources (like the web, or an HR department). Alumni are extremely busy, so be sensitive to contacting people simply to ask “the basics.” Specific questions whose answers from a specific alum will provide unique insights are absolutely critical!
- Be mindful that alumni may not share your schedule – or your sense of urgency. There is a fine line between being assertive and proactive, and being impatient. Use your best judgment as to how to handle no responses. Be patient, and make sure you give plenty of time and opportunity for that person to get back to you.
- When making a second attempt at connecting, never let anger or frustration show. It might also be helpful to show understanding: “I know you must be busy, but I’d appreciate 10 minutes of your time whenever it might be convenient for you.”
- It is critical to create and maintain a networking spreadsheet in Excel to track your progress and to remind you who you contacted, what you talked about, and when you need to follow up.