

# Professional Associations



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## An effective way to build your network

Professional associations provide a range of services and information not commonly found in your academic experiences. Many associations are nonprofit organizations that are organized and lead by volunteers who share their expertise and support with other association members in the field (or entering the field). They promote their field while presenting timely research, speakers, and career related activities such as conferences and job search support. Some associations even provide mentoring activities and job listings for members.

### Getting Started

Many associations provide reduced membership and conference rates to current students. As you begin to search for the appropriate group to join, a Career Counselor can help you begin the process. You may find it helpful to utilize faculty and the DU Career Network (on DU Careers Online at [www.du.edu/career](http://www.du.edu/career)) to get advice on appropriate associations. Local libraries, as well as Penrose Library on campus, provide the Encyclopedia of Associations in the business reference section for use in their library. Contact them to request the following information:

- **Membership information**

Review the association website for member benefits and activities of the association. Select associations are noted on the *Career Links* portion of the DU homepage by field/major. Additionally a search engine for association selection is available under the subject area of *Professional Association*. You may want to verify if you will be required to join the national association in order to join a local chapter. Joining both may be advantageous as well. Most association chapters meet monthly for networking and to hear a speaker, as well as enjoy a meal together. You may want to attend a local chapter meeting as a nonmember to see if it is a match for you.
- **Publications**

While some association information is very visible on the web, you may want to check out member publications as well. It is quite helpful to view the online or print publications available to members of the association. Though you may receive slightly dated materials, request a sample issue or temporary access to the website to access information about the field and the association.
- **Selection**

Some associations focus more broadly on the issues of a given field, while others focus primarily on specific career roles. Try joining just one association to start with and then determine what your professional needs are from year to year.
- **Getting Involved**

Members can be a valuable source of support and information when you are searching for a position or when you are refining your professional skills. Consider conducting an information interview with a leader of the local chapter of the association if you plan on developing local contacts. Attendance at regular meetings provides an opportunity to meet those who are dedicated to their field and committed to their career development. Reading publications and listening to speakers provides continued insights into the issues and best practices of your field. Volunteer when you are able to be more actively involved and consider preparing a paper or presentation for the national conference. Take advantage of all of the services provided by the chapter and the national association.