On Campus

CAA Helping Alumni on the Job Hunt

Fall 2011



Nearly 250 alumni and students recently attended the first Columbia Networking Night. (Bruce Gilbert)

What do Columbia alumni want from their alma mater? When the Columbia Alumni Association (CAA) asked 4000 alumni this question in an online survey in 2008, one of the top answers was career help. Since then, the CAA has responded by giving alumni access to online job-search tools, holding more networking events, and, soon, offering discounted career coaching.

“We want to provide alumni with resources that will help them throughout their career,” says Jesse Gale ’10BUS, the Office of Alumni and Development’s director for CAA marketing and new media.

In the past, the career centers of Columbia's various schools have directed their services mostly toward current students. Over the past two years, however, career-center directors from across the University have been coming together regularly with representatives of the CAA to talk about how to serve alumni better.

Now, the University provides its alumni free access to the commercial websites Vault, WetFeet, and Going Global, which publish career advice, company rankings, and job listings. Alumni can access these tools by clicking on the new "Career Connections" link on the CAA home page. By the end of this academic year, alumni in many cities will be able to get one-on-one coaching from Columbia graduates who are professional career coaches and have agreed to offer their services at a discounted rate.

In addition, Columbia recently began hosting University-wide networking events for students and alumni interested in specific lines of work. The first of these Columbia Networking Nights, organized by Columbia Engineering around the theme of entrepreneurship, was held in September at the Columbia Club in Manhattan. More than 250 attendees listened as alumni entrepreneurs described how they started their own businesses. Afterward, alumni and students milled around for hours, exchanging business cards and stories.

"When you're in the classroom, you don't always know what it looks like to be an entrepreneur," says David Whittemore '06CC, who cofounded a New York City–based technology start-up called Clothes Horse, which helps shoppers find clothing brands that fit them best. "An event like this shows you how people's careers take shape. It shows the path for you."



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All categories >