



THE CAREER COUNSELOR'S GUIDE TO LINKEDIN

by Kevin Grubb

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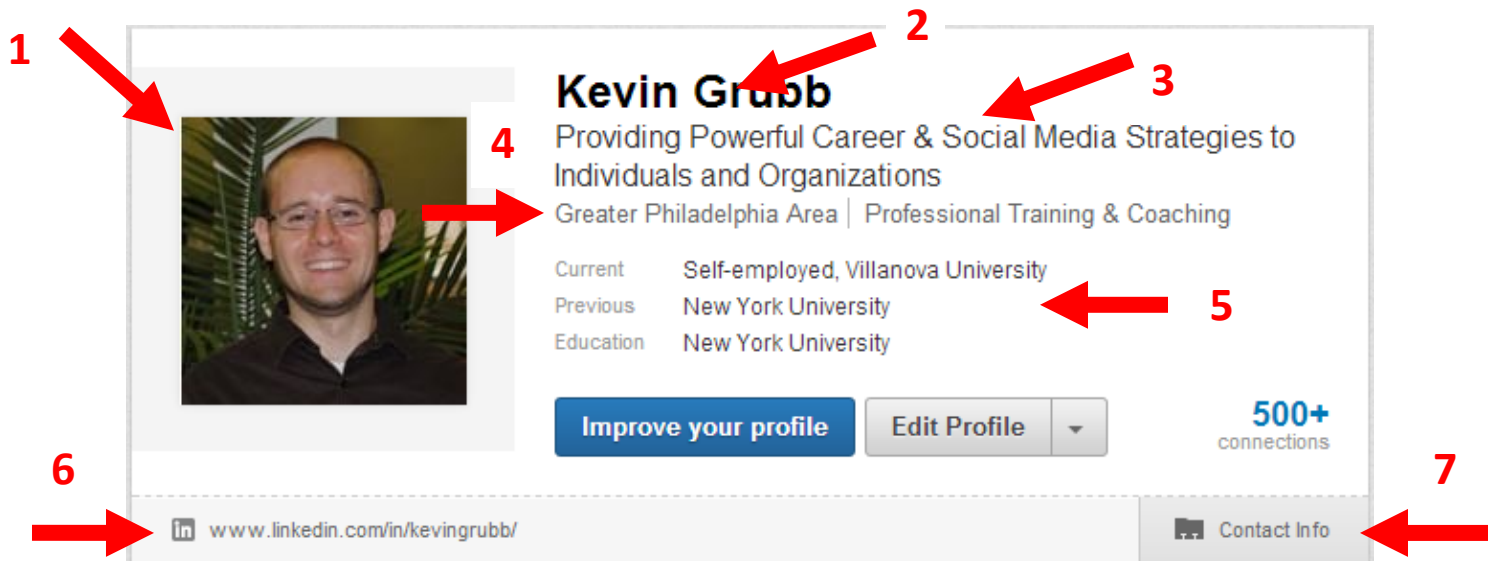
LinkedIn, what some students might call “professional Facebook,” is the world’s largest professional social network. It is used widely by recruiters, hiring managers, and professionals in hundreds of industries to both develop themselves professionally and to find qualified candidates for open positions. With hundreds of millions of members, LinkedIn allows a user to:

- Easily create a professionally oriented presence online
- Discover connections to organizations and opportunities via people he or she already knows
- Learn about trending news in an industry or field and share it with others
- Get introduced to the right person to contact at an employer of choice
- Find job and internship opportunities, as well as the individual who posted these opportunities

This guide will cover strategies to teach students about creating a strong profile and using LinkedIn to network and connect professionally. It will also offer tips on finding internship and job listings on this social network.

CREATING A STRONG PROFILE AND PERSONAL BRAND ON LINKEDIN

LinkedIn has often been referred to as “your resume online.” This assertion is not far off, as there are many similarities between a LinkedIn profile and a resume. As such, some of the points covered here may sound like your advice to students about resume writing. However, there are differences in the two where it is critical to pay attention.



At the top of a LinkedIn profile is a small box containing some of what I'd call the "fast facts" about each user. Since this box is likely the first thing that another LinkedIn user would see when landing on a LinkedIn profile, this box is incredibly important real estate. Here are some tips to make the most of it for students:

1. **Profile photo**—The best photo for students to use is a professional-looking headshot of just the student alone. Many career centers have taken to offering a LinkedIn photo booth at career fairs or other events where they know students will be dressed professionally. This can certainly help students get up and moving on LinkedIn quickly. Unlike resumes, it is important to include a photo on LinkedIn, as this is a social network. Recruiters who use LinkedIn do have the option to block profile photos so that the issue of discrimination based on protected classes is accounted for.
2. **Name**—First and last name. LinkedIn does give the option to provide a former or maiden name as well.
3. **Headline**—This is each individual LinkedIn user's tagline. LinkedIn will automatically populate the Headline with the most recent position listed in the "Experience" section of a profile, but this is a customizable area. Encourage students to think of it as a personal slogan. It is also critical to include keywords and phrases in this section that are related to a student's desired industry or profession. When other users of LinkedIn search by these words, the student will be more likely to appear in search results. Students can also consider putting in something like "XYZ College student with a passion for (major)."
4. **Location and Industry**—LinkedIn users can select their location and industry in these fields. It is a good idea for students to choose the industry they intend to enter and, if seeking a specific location for work, to choose that location for their profile. This way, they will appear in searches for that area.
5. **Current and Previous Experience and Education**—These fields are automatically populated based on what a LinkedIn user inputs into the Experience and Education sections of the profile.
6. **Public Profile URL**: This URL is a link which users can send to others, whether on or off LinkedIn, to view what is called a "Public Profile"—all of the information a user wishes to have publicly viewed when anyone online views the Profile. LinkedIn will provide every user with a URL, though it will likely contain a string of random characters. Users can customize this URL to contain something easily recognizable, like a name or shortened version of a name. Encourage students to customize this link so they can easily include it in e-mail signatures or on resumes.
7. **Contact Info**—In this section, users can input things like e-mail addresses, phone numbers, mailing addresses, Twitter accounts, and websites. If a student has a personal website or public Twitter account, it would be a great idea to provide links to those here.

Below the box on a LinkedIn profile are various sections, many of which mirror what might exist on a resume. There are several options to categorize a user's experiences and skills in profiles, including:

- Summary
- Experience
- Organizations
- Volunteering & Causes
- Education
- Courses
- Projects
- Skills & Expertise
- Honors & Awards
- Languages
- Certifications
- Publications
- Test Scores
- Patents
- Additional Info

Throughout a profile, no matter what the section, it is important to consider keywords and phrases relevant to one's desired industry and goals, again, because of considerations for searches on LinkedIn. Many of the sections above are self-explanatory; however there are a few specific tips for students to consider in some of these areas:



Summary

Villanova students and alumni: I invite you to join me in one of the numerous LinkedIn groups affiliated with Villanova University. The "Official Villanova University Alumni Association Network" group is open to all students & alumni and is my recommendation as the best resource for networking with the Villanova community on LinkedIn. See you there.

I'm a higher education professional, social media consultant, and a featured speaker on the subject of social media & careers. Since the beginning of my career, I've enjoyed the opportunity to work with students, professionals, and organizations to help them use social media successfully.

Currently, I teach a college course I created called Social Networking: Creating Your Professional Identity. This course is dedicated to conversations that explore ways to harness the power of social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn for career gain. Yes, students are on Facebook in class. But not how they always expect to be. Even though I'm the teacher, the class has me learning every day.

- **Summary:** Although this section may be intimidating for students, it can be one of the most impactful sections of a LinkedIn profile. Here, students have a blank canvas with which to describe themselves. Since the profile is essentially a website, it is important to consider writing for the web: Write in small chunks, use bulleted lists whenever possible, and avoid long paragraphs. Of course, error-free and clear writing is important, too. The best summaries describe a person's interests—both personal and professional—and are truly reflective of the individual's voice. They also help other LinkedIn users by telling them how they can help the individual. Consider having students answer the question, "What information do you seek?" in their summaries to turn up their networking on LinkedIn. To draw a comparison, it may help to encourage students to think of the summary like a cover letter.



Skills & Expertise

Most endorsed for...



- **Skills & Expertise**—This is a keyword and phrase hotspot for a LinkedIn profile. LinkedIn also allows users to “endorse” skills listed in a fellow member’s profile as long as they are directly connected. Think of it like voting up a specific skill. Encourage students to input at least 10 skills in this section to fill the list and so others can endorse thoroughly. Help students think of specific industry- or position-related skills, rather than simply “Microsoft Word.” Strong keywords like “financial reporting” or “marketing strategy” or “event organizer” are best here. Finally, remind them that giving into their networks will help them gain. In this case, to get endorsements, they should consider giving some (honestly, of course) first!

Assistant Director, Career Center Student Services

Villanova University

August 2010 – Present (2 years 10 months)



In this role at the Career Center, I support our office’s mission of empowering members of the Villanova community to choose and attain personally rewarding careers.

- Counsel undergraduates, graduate students, and alumni on a variety of career issues
- Liaise with the College of Engineering to provide professional development opportunities to students & alumni
- Co-manage university-wide Career Fairs
- Manage social media marketing campaigns
- Coordinate and lead professional development workshops

- **Experience, Organizations, Volunteering & Causes**—Within these sections, students can consider including things like: internships, part-time jobs, student club and organizational involvement, and volunteer experience inside and outside your college or university. It is important for students to display these things, just as it is for them to do so on their resumes. The inclusion of industry-relevant keywords and phrases is just as critical here as in other sections of the profile.

For more information about best practices for LinkedIn Profiles, visit <http://university.linkedin.com/career-services/resources> and check out the videos and handouts located there.

NETWORKING AND CONNECTING PROFESSIONALLY ON LINKEDIN

Creating a strong profile on LinkedIn is only the first step in turning this network into an ongoing professional resource for a student. The next step is to start connecting and communicating with other users about professional interests. Being active on LinkedIn is a critical step to getting recognized, learning about a field of interest, and establishing an online identity.

Connecting with Others on LinkedIn

LinkedIn recommends that users connect with only those whom they know and trust. This is a good suggestion for students just starting out on the social network. Here are a few suggestions of types of people who may be good to connect with:

- Family members
- Friends and fellow students
- Internship or job supervisors and co-workers
- Professors, advisers, coaches, and former teachers
- Family friends

Any of these people could be great references and connections on LinkedIn. What's more, LinkedIn helps users see the connections of their connections, thus enabling them to understand who of their trusted contacts can introduce them to someone at an organization of interest. A good rule of thumb to follow is to consider connecting with at least 50 people on LinkedIn to make the network's web of connections work well. *Special Note:* when it comes to connecting with students yourselves, consult your university's social media policy and NACE's advice on [Building a Social Media Policy](#).

One LinkedIn tool that can help students find connections is called LinkedIn Alumni. This page can be found at www.linkedin.com/alumni and looks like this:

Villanova University > Students & Alumni

Share: [in](#) [t](#) [f](#)

You have admin access to view all members

Attended: 1900 to 2020 Include people with no dates [Change school](#)

Where they live	Where they work	What they do
United States: 71011	Villanova University: 1043	Operations: 6888
Greater Philadelphia Area: 24019	Vanguard: 350	Sales: 6755
Greater New York City Area: 14188	Lockheed Martin: 320	Finance: 5284
Washington D.C. Metro Area: 3662	Boeing: 316	Program and Project Management: 5274
Greater Boston Area: 2761	Merck: 309	Information Technology: 4811

See more | [Q](#) See more | [Q](#) See more

1 (arrow pointing to 'Change school')

2 (arrow pointing to right-pointing arrow)

To get to page 2

With this tool, any LinkedIn user can search information about alumni from colleges and universities around the world. Although the search will default to the college or university in the Education section of a profile, any user can “Change school” (No. 1 above) using the button on the right-hand side of the page to search any alumni information available on LinkedIn. Searches can be done by any keyword or by the predetermined categories on LinkedIn, which include the following:

- Where they live
- Where they work
- What they do
- What they studied (on Page 2; see arrow No. 2 above)
- What they’re skilled at (on Page 2)
- How you are connected (on Page 2)

It should be noted that when connecting with others on LinkedIn, a user will be prompted to note how they know the other person, as seen in the following screenshot. There is also the option to include a personalized note the person will be able to see on the other end along with the connection request. **It is essential to encourage students to customize this message.** A customized message request is like writing a thank you note after an interview—it is critical to be known as a polite professional. The message cannot be long, but including a sentence or two about how the student knows the other person will go a long way in facilitating the connection.

Invite Mary to connect on LinkedIn

How do you know Mary?

- Colleague
- Classmate
- We've done business together
- Friend
- Groups
- Other
- I don't know Mary

Always customize this personal note area with a thoughtful message.

Include a personal note: (optional)

I'd like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn.

- Kevin Grubb

Important: Only invite people you know well and who know you. Find out why.

[Send Invitation](#) or [Cancel](#)

Suggestions for Status Updates

After making connections, the next step is to consider a plan for communicating on LinkedIn. One place to begin is with a status update—through which the user can share thoughts, questions, or ideas with members of their network.

Type a name or @ to mention someone...

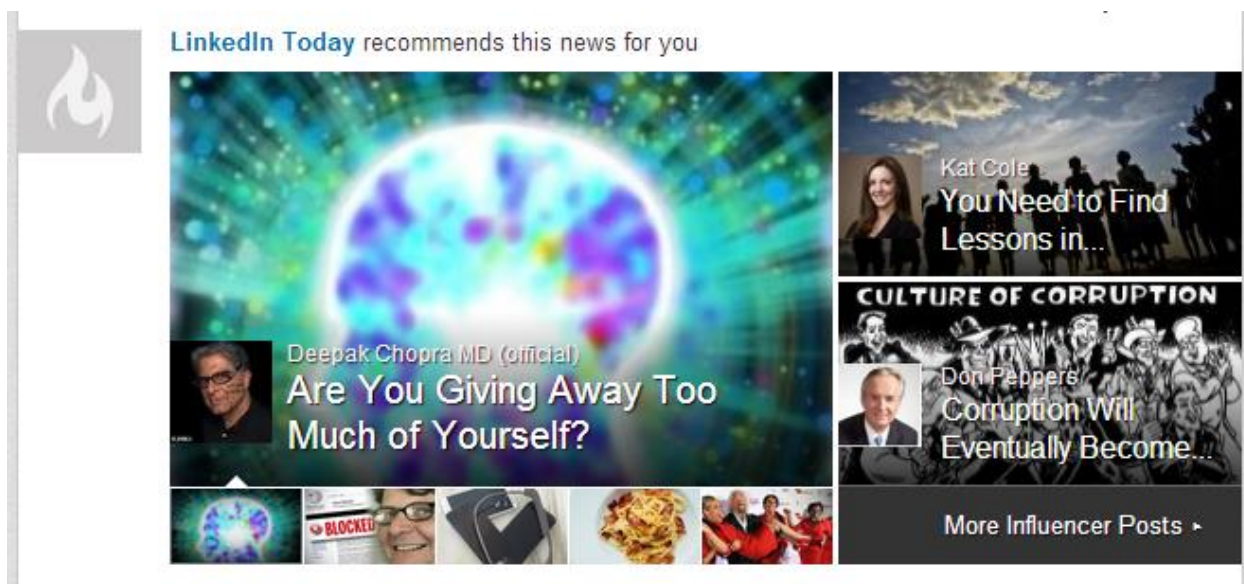
Share with: **LinkedIn**

Share

Here are a few ideas that students can consider sharing as a status update:

- Questions about their field of interest or perhaps about a topic from class.
- An interesting article they've stumbled on. It would also be good for students to share a thought or opinion on the piece to let others know their point of view.
- An update on an academic achievement, project, or paper.
- A success story from an internship or job.
- A blog post they have written or other content they have created and added to the Internet.

It's a good idea for students to share statuses often, as these statuses will appear in the feeds of users on LinkedIn with whom the students are connected. Students can also comment on or like the status messages of others in their networks on LinkedIn. This could be a great way to engage with professionals and learn about trending topics of interest. In addition, LinkedIn has a feature called "LinkedIn Today" that allows users to follow stories from around the web and from "influencers" LinkedIn has asked to write articles about ideas critical to their fields.



LinkedIn Today is a customizable area where users can find trending stories in specific industries (which may be great to share as status updates as well). Students can customize this area for fields relevant to them by clicking on the blue words "LinkedIn Today" at the top of the feature. On the next page, near the top and on the right-hand side, they can click on "All Channels" and "All Influencers" to search each of LinkedIn Today's channel options and influencers to get updates of interest delivered to their LinkedIn home page.

Getting Involved in LinkedIn Groups

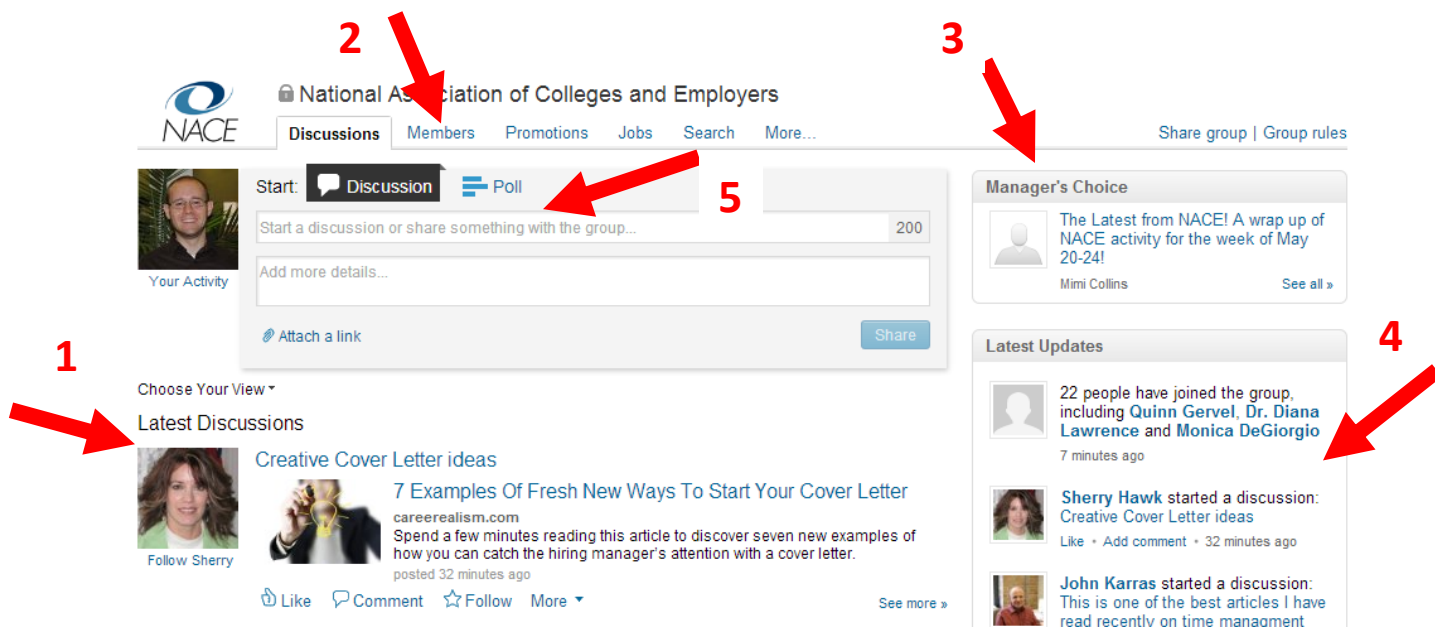
One of the richest resources on LinkedIn comes from its members; the millions of people around the world who share ideas and information. This often happens inside LinkedIn Groups—communities of people who come together based on a specific affiliation, interest, profession, identity, or other reason. There are millions of groups on LinkedIn, so there's a good chance that a community exists in which students can jump in and learn quite quickly.

With millions of groups, the first question is often: Where do I begin? If your college or university and your office has a group students can join, that's one solid suggestion to make immediately. Getting students involved with others in your school's community could help them make career connections either on or off campus that could benefit them throughout their lives.

Another suggestion for students is to find people they know and admire professionally on LinkedIn, then take a scan of that individual's group memberships on LinkedIn. This can be seen at the bottom of a person's LinkedIn profile, provided that the individual allows group memberships to be publicly viewed.

Finally, there is the search feature on LinkedIn, which allows users to search everything on LinkedIn by keyword, including groups. It's a good idea to recommend that students find groups relevant to their professional interests, as well as groups that match other affiliations or identities they have had in the past or currently.

Once a member of a group, there are plenty of professional development opportunities and ideas to go around. Here's a walkthrough of what it looks like inside a group.



1. **Active Discussions**—As a member of a group, LinkedIn users have the ability to view and comment on discussions that other group members have started. These discussions are often posts about hot topics in a field or even questions to gather opinions and feedback. Getting involved in some of these discussions could be a great way for a student to learn and get recognized by others in the field.
2. **Searching Group Members**—By clicking on “Members” at the top of a group, LinkedIn users will be taken to a page that lists all other members of the group. This is a great way to find members of a specific group who may be particularly helpful. Users can search by keyword, job title, and company to locate a fellow member. One great thing about joining groups is that any user can send a private message to another group member without being directly connected. This would allow students to get in touch with professionals of interest without requesting to connect.
3. **Manager’s Choice**—The “Manager’s Choice” area is a section where those who own or manage the group can feature specific discussions. These may be critical for announcements to the group or a trending conversation of broad appeal to the group.
4. **Latest Updates**—Here, group members can see the most recent information about the group, including a briefing on all of the discussions posted and a list of all of the people that have joined the group.

5. **Posting a Discussion**—Of course, group members can post their own discussions. Depending on the group’s norms, it may be a good idea for students to post discussions about:
 - a. The job or internship search (i.e. “_____ student seeking advice about securing an internship in _____ industry”).
 - b. A question about a specific idea or topic in a field of interest.
 - c. An article of interest. It would be good for the student to add his or her own commentary or thoughts on the article.

It is also worth noting that LinkedIn allows people to see “Group Statistics”—information about how active the group is, where most group members are geographically based, what level of seniority they have in their organizations, and more. It would be wise for students to investigate the statistics before and after joining groups to help understand whom they will be communicating with as a member of a group.

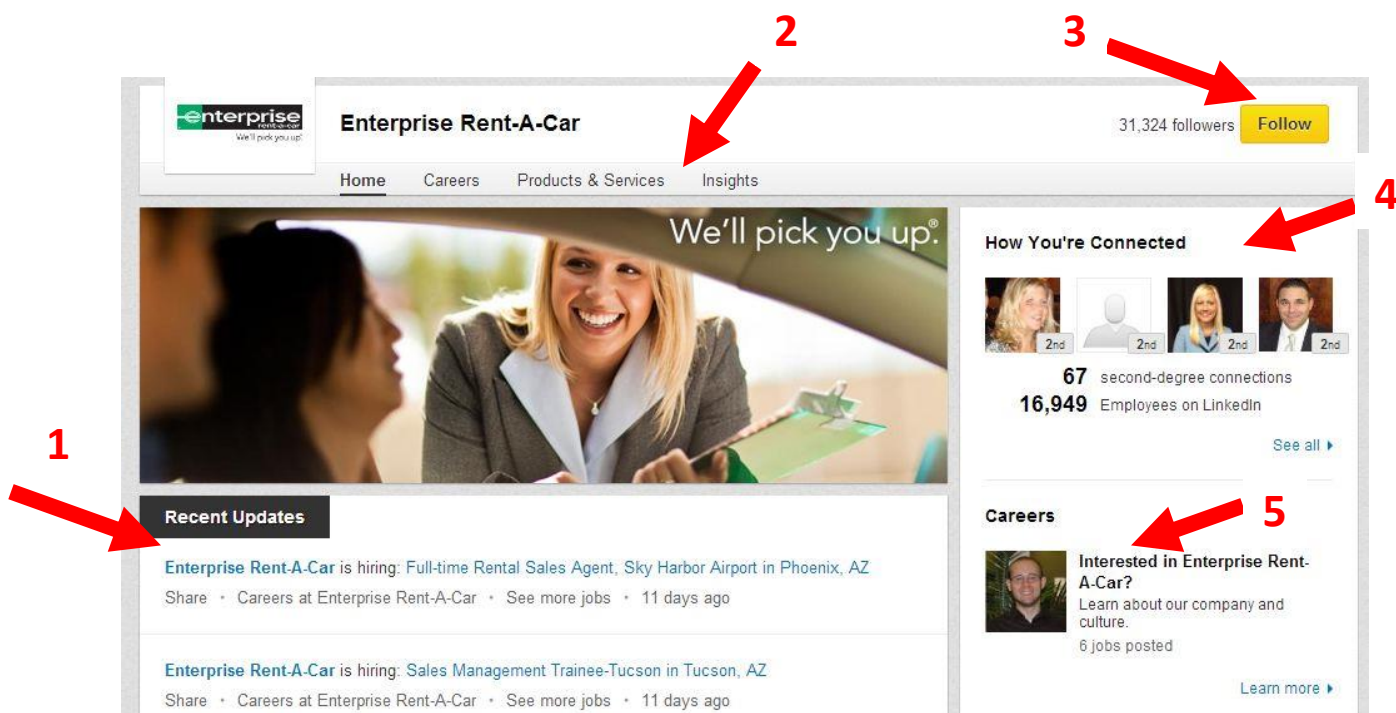
FINDING INTERNSHIP AND JOB LISTINGS ON LINKEDIN

As the world’s largest *professional* network, LinkedIn is home not only to people and conversations, but also to job and internship listings that appeal to students. There are several ways to explore these opportunities and specific features of LinkedIn that enable a user to go beyond viewing a traditional position description.

Searching for Companies

One of LinkedIn’s greatest assets for a job seeker is the ability to view employment-specific information about an organization on what are called “company pages.” These are landing pages on LinkedIn that are created and maintained by individuals who have a LinkedIn profile and work for the company. There are millions of them. While some may be a bit more robust than others, company pages are a great resource for job seekers and can contain information like a brief overview of the organization, a listing of products and/or services the company provides, job and internship opportunities currently available, a listing of recent promotions, ideas about similar companies, the skills most often cited in profiles by those who work there, and a place to explore “Who You Know” at the organization based on your LinkedIn network.

Let's take a look at a specific company page to explore what students can do there. For example, if a student is definitely interested in opportunities at Enterprise Rent-A-Car, you can suggest the student type in the company's name into the search box and select it when it appears in search results.



1. **Recent Updates**—Here, the company shares updates about itself and who it is. Often, as you can see here, the company posts jobs for which it is hiring.
2. **Products & Services, and Insights**—Any company can provide information about products and services it offers as part of its business. In the “Insights” area, LinkedIn users can see things like employees with new titles, skills cited most often in profiles by employees, and other companies that LinkedIn users also viewed. Likely, these other companies are going to be competitors or organizations in a similar industry.
3. **Follow button**—The yellow “Follow” button in the top right-hand corner allows users to follow a company and receive updates from the organization on the home screen after logging in to LinkedIn. This is a great way to learn what is happening in real-time at an organization and to understand its culture.
4. **How You're Connected**—A critical piece of the company page is this “How You're Connected” area, where you can see who in your network works at the organization. As you can see in the screenshot above, I have 67 second-degree connections at Enterprise, which means I am not directly connected to anyone who works there, but I am only one person away from 67 people there. That would make for quite an easy introduction and open door if I want to learn more about Enterprise from someone who actually works there.
5. **Careers**—Finally, the “Careers” area allows users to see more about what it's like to work at the organization and what kinds of job opportunities are open right now.

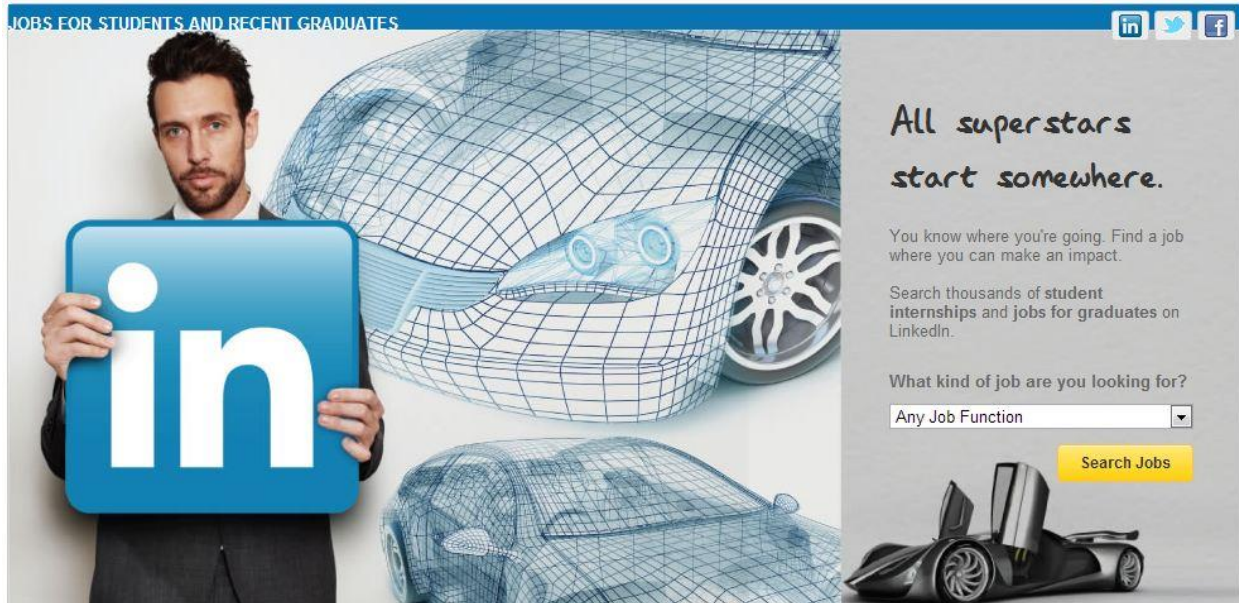
What if a student is not sure about specific companies of interest? Or the student is considering a variety of fields or majors? A great recommendation here is to have the student conduct a company search and filter by specific options. Here's a look at the "Company Search" page and some ideas to help students explore it:

The screenshot shows the LinkedIn 'SEARCH' interface with 3,040,410 results. On the left, there are several filter sections: 'All Companies', 'Relationship' (with options for All, 1st Connections, 2nd Connections, and 3rd + Everyone Else), 'Location' (with checkboxes for All, United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Canada, and Greater New York City Area, plus an 'Add' button), 'Job Opportunities' (with a checkbox for 'Hiring on LinkedIn'), and 'Industry' (with checkboxes for All, Information Technology, Marketing and Advertising, and Internet). Two red arrows point to the 'Location' and 'Industry' sections, labeled '1' and '2' respectively. The main area displays a list of company profiles, each with a logo, name, industry, location, employee count, and network size. The companies shown are IBM, Deloitte, Accenture, Microsoft, Oracle, Hewlett-Packard, and Bank of America.

1. **Searching by Location**—Perhaps you are working with a student who is from the Chicago area and would like to return there to work. You can start by suggesting that the student narrow the company pages by location. There is an "Add" button here to add any area of interest, including international locations. Searching LinkedIn company pages in this way can help the student do some geographic-based organizational research.
2. **Searching by Industry**—Another option is to encourage the student to search by industry. Let's say that same student wanted to live in Chicago and work in the marketing industry. After selecting the Chicago area in "Location," the student could then select the "Marketing and Advertising" option in the "Industry" area. Now, the student would be able to see all of the marketing organizations in Chicago and could tell if anyone in his or her existing network might be able to connect the student with a specific organization.

Searching for Jobs and Internships

Beyond searching for companies, students also have the ability to search jobs and internships posted by people and organizations. LinkedIn has created the “Student Jobs Portal” (located at www.linkedin.com/studentjobs), which specifically filters job postings that would be appropriate for undergraduate students. This is a great area to recommend to students who are just beginning the search.



A screenshot of the Student Jobs Portal.

Within the “Advanced Search” page, students can also target relevant job and internship listings. Let’s take a look at this page and some suggestions for students to search.

The image shows the LinkedIn 'Advanced Jobs Search' interface. On the left, there are input fields for 'Keywords', 'Company', 'Title', 'Location' (with a dropdown for 'Located in or near:'), 'Country' (with a dropdown for 'United States'), and 'Postal Code' (with a 'Lookup' button). Below these is a 'Search' button and a 'Reset' link. On the right, there are sections for 'Relationship' (with checkboxes for '1st Connections', '2nd Connections', and '3rd + Everyone Else'), 'Company', 'Location', 'Date Posted', 'Job Function', 'Industry', and 'Experience Level' (with checkboxes for 'Executive', 'Director', 'Mid-Senior level', 'Associate', and 'Entry level'). Five red arrows with white boxes containing numbers 1 through 5 point to the following elements: 1. The 'Keywords' input field. 2. The 'Country' dropdown menu. 3. The 'Date Posted' input field. 4. The 'Job Function' input field. 5. The 'Experience Level' checkboxes.

1. **Searching by Keyword**—One place to begin is to search by keyword. Perhaps a student has an interest in jobs related to “sports,” but does not know where or how to apply it. By searching for jobs with that keyword, the student could start to explore possible positions.
2. **Searching by Location**—Similar to a search for company pages, this is a great field to search if the student knows or has ideas about working in a specific area of the country or world.
3. **Searching by Job Function**—Using this field, students can search for positions that fall within a certain job function. For example, perhaps a student wants to work in writing or editing, but does not yet have a preference of industry. The student could select writing/editing in the job function area to find positions in which that would be a primary role.
4. **Searching by Industry**—Similarly, if a student knows which industry or field is a target, then the student can select an industry in this area to find only positions within organizations that identify with that industry.
5. **Searching by Experience Level**—Students could consider checking off the “Entry level” or perhaps “Associate” box to look at full-time positions (there is also a box for “Internships” that is not shown here).

Job searching on LinkedIn allows a user to go beyond the traditional job listing because each post is tied to a company page and the individual profile of the recruiter or hiring manager who posted the job. Here's how that looks:

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn job posting for a "Technical Writer Internship" at Panasonic. The job is located in Secaucus/Newark NJ (Greater New York City Area). The job description states that Panasonic is seeking a Co-Op, Engineering - Technical Writer / Usability Analyst. The description also mentions that Panasonic's vision is driven by the needs and aspirations of its business customers and millions of consumers. The job posting includes a "Posted By" section showing the profile of Daria D'Italia, a Recruiting Specialist at Panasonic. There is also a section for "Unlock Salary Estimates for Jobs on LinkedIn" and a "You're Linked to Panasonic" section.

1. **Position Title, Company, and Location**—This is the lead information about this job posting, including title of the position, organization, and location. Note that users can click on “Panasonic” and explore Panasonic’s company page for more information.
2. **Job Description**—This provides a full description of the position and information about Panasonic as well.
3. **Posted By**—Here a LinkedIn user can see who actually posted this position. In this case, it is a recruiting specialist at the organization, and a user can view her profile to know more about her.
4. **You’re Linked to _____**—Here, students can see who in their networks can help them get connected to Panasonic, so they can perhaps set up an informational interview or talk to a friend about what it’s really like to work there.

There’s little doubt anymore that LinkedIn has given job seekers access to more information about jobs and internships, the companies that offer them, and the people who make up those organizations. Using this network, students have unique ways to make connections with information and opportunities that can lead to satisfying career paths. Encourage your students to consider LinkedIn no matter where they are in their career development. Everyone from the person trying to identify the possibilities of an academic major to those with niche interests can benefit from the world’s largest professional network.

For more on LinkedIn, including a free webinar every month, visit www.university.linkedin.com.

Kevin Grubb is an assistant director at Villanova University’s career center. He is also a consultant and speaker, and teaches a course he created on using social media to create a brand and job search. Connect with Kevin on his personal website, www.kevincgrubb.com, on Twitter [@kevincgrubb](https://twitter.com/kevincgrubb), or via his [LinkedIn Profile](#).



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