



Beyond Barnard

BARNARD COLLEGE

Beyond Barnard Opportunities Conference: Student Frequently Asked Questions

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What are some links and contacts to help navigate the conference?

- Please [register for the overall conference](#) on Handshake. Only after you register on Handshake for the conference, will you receive the links to sign up for specific career conversations with employers, alums, and graduate school representatives.
- Explore the [Beyond Barnard Opportunities Conference website](#) to read more about the different conference events you can participate in.
- Physically navigate the conference using the [Barnard Campus Map](#).
- Questions can always be directed to beyondbarnard@barnard.edu or 212-854-2033, including on the day of the Conference
- Please follow Beyond Barnard on Instagram [@beyondbarnard](#)

What distinguishes the Beyond Barnard Opportunities Conference from other Career Fairs?

- Above all, Barnard aims for its Opportunities Conferences to facilitate substantive interactions among employers, students, faculty, staff, and graduates of the College.
- We aim not only to showcase the incredible diversity of Barnard's candidates, but also to distinguish Barnard as an institution that thinks deeply about issues that cut to the heart of conversations about recruitment and retention in the contemporary workplace.
- There are three main component of the Opportunities Conference that students can participate in:
 - **Career GPS Workshops:** Barnard staff host career workshops throughout the day, geared towards the different class years, to help you best prepare for the year ahead:
 - [Senior Year Career GPS](#) (11:00AM-11:50AM)
 - [Sophomore and Junior Year Career GPS](#) (12:00PM-12:50PM)
 - [First Year Career GPS](#) (1PM-1:50PM)
 - **Career Conversations:** Employer, alum, and student feedback has helped us rethink the way we run major career conferences at Barnard. In lieu of traditional fair tables (with long lines and short interactions), our [Career Conversations](#) aim to connect employers more meaningfully and effectively with Barnard and Columbia candidates and to give students another way to build their professional connections with the alum network. There will be three types of Career Conversations available:
 - **Career Conversations with Employers:** Employers including HR representatives will be available to speak with students in small groups for 30 minutes at a time about their company/organization, job and internship opportunities, to answer your questions including those about hiring, and to get to know you as prospective candidates for their opportunities.
 - **Career Conversations with Alums:** Alums will be available to share their career stories and advice with you with the goal of exposing you to new

industries, job functions, and organizations, as only someone who has walked that path can. These discussions will not be focused on hiring as the conversations with employers will be, however are an excellent opportunity to expand your professional network!

- **Career Conversations with Graduate School Representatives:** This is a *small* new addition to the Conference this year. While the vast majority of the available conversation slots will be with employers and alums, a small group of graduate programs reached out to Beyond Barnard asking to participate. While the opportunities conference overall is not a graduate school fair, we thought it would be a nice opportunity for interested students to learn more about these select programs. Career Conversations with Graduate Schools will focus on sharing information about their programs and institutions and answering your questions as interested or prospective future or current applicants.

What should I expect from Career Conversations with employers, alums, and graduate school representatives? Are the three types of career conversations different?

- Barnard and Columbia students will have the opportunity to register for 25-minute conversations with participating employers, Barnard alums and graduate school representatives.
- Up to 8 students can register per employer/alum/graduate school rep table during each allocated 25 minute session.
- Employers, alums, and graduate school reps will receive a roster of pre-scheduled sessions the day of the conference. This will give them better visibility on the range of students they'll meet; and it will allow students more time to prepare in advance for conversations.
- Career Conversations will run from 12 - 3pm. You must pre-register for 30-minute slots with both employers, alums, and graduate school representatives from 12 - 2:30pm. Walk-ins will be allowed from 2:30 - 3pm the day of the conference..
- **Career Conversations with employers are different from those with alums and graduate school reps!** Employers will be there to speak with you about different **hiring opportunities**, what they want potential candidates to know about their company/organization, and to get to know you as prospective candidates. Alums are there to share their **career stories and advice** with you and to give you an insider peek into an industry, job function, and organization as well as to share tips and advice. Graduate school reps are there to share **information about their academic programs**.

How can I sign up for the Career GPS Workshops being held by Beyond Barnard Staff?

- Register on Handshake to attend the Career GPS Workshop that best aligns with your class year:
 - [Career GPS for First Years](#)
 - [Career GPS for Sophomore and Juniors](#)
 - [Career GPS for Seniors](#)

Where is the Conference taking place?

- The Beyond Barnard Keynote Discussion will take place in the James Room, Barnard Hall from 10am to 11:30 am. (space is limited and interested students can register for the keynote on Handshake. Please check back for the Handshake registration link for the keynote which will be added shortly.)
- The Career GPS Sessions will take place in a TBD location (check back for updates)
- Career Conversations with employers and alums will take place in the Diana Oval and Student Dining Room Diana 2nd floor. Additional locations will be added - check back for updates.

Why is the Conference good for First Years?

- The Opportunity Conference (with all the events happening on the day) is a great way for first year students to observe and begin to get comfortable with meeting employers and graduates, and to hear about a particular industry and what it might be like to intern or work there in the future.
- Attending the Career GPS Workshops for First Years allows you to hear from Beyond Barnard staff about career topics relevant to your specific class year..
- It's absolutely acceptable for first years to sign up for conversations with employers and alums! The best way to approach conversations with them is to bring good questions about their organization or experience to the table — and to express some of your initial curiosities about the industry they represent. You can check out [alum bios and company descriptions](#) to help you prepare.

Why is the Conference good for Sophomores?

- For some Sophomores this might be the first time that you are thinking about an internship or a particular industry and this is a chance to get more information from employers and alums directly. Others may have done an internship already, and are seeking more pointed information about next steps. **Regardless**, remember that you're still very early in your career — at Barnard and in general. It's okay to leave the Conference with more questions than answers about what's next.
- It's okay not to be certain about what you want, and to be “shopping around” for ideas about career paths that might be interesting to you. We'd advise not limiting yourself by assumptions about particular fields or organizations. Have conversations with individuals from employers whose names you recognize — and those you don't.
- The same goes for panels: the discussions are designed to be open-ended introductions to topics, and we support going into them with general questions and curiosity.

- Attending the Career GPS Workshops for Sophomore and Juniors allows you to hear from Beyond Barnard staff about career topics relevant to your specific class year.

Why is the Conference good for Juniors?

- For many Juniors this is a great opportunity to build upon an internship, SRI or other experience and to translate that experience into meaningful discussions with employers about future next steps. For others, it might be the first time you're really thinking concretely about application processes.
- No matter where you're coming from: pace yourself. There's no such thing as a one-day career search.
- Try to go into the day with a specific and manageable goal — to meet three employers; to attend the Career GPS for Sophomore and Juniors and ask a question; to learn about 2 new career pathways from alums; etc. Going into an event like this with the objective of *securing an internship* is likely to increase the pressure you place on yourself, and decrease the odds of an outcome about which you'll feel positive. So be present, curious, and focus on building relationships.

Why is the Conference good for Seniors?

- As we say above to Juniors: pace yourself. There's no such thing as a one-day career search. Seniors can tend to put an inordinate amount of pressure on themselves at big events like these. They can also tend to expect the world out of a career conference. In the end, the Conference is just a single day to learn more and possibly connect with helpful people who are interested in learning more about Barnard candidates.
- Try to go into the day with a specific and manageable goal — to meet three employers; to attend the Career GPS for Seniors and ask a question; to learn about 2 new career pathways from alums; etc. Going into an event like this with the objective of *securing an internship* is likely to increase the pressure you place on yourself, and decrease the odds of an outcome about which you'll feel positive. So be present, curious, and focus on building relationships.
- There can be a lot of chatter in the Fall Semester of senior year about Barnard and Columbia students who are *set*. It can feel like a lot of students already know "what's next" after graduation. In reality, almost 85% of students have yet to determine their next steps — many have not started serious consideration of where they are going to go after crossing the Radio City Music Hall stage.
- No matter where you're at when it comes to your reflections, the Opportunities Conference can be a productive day! Check in with Beyond Barnard before and after the event to let us know how things are going, how you're feeling, how the day did (or did not) change your mind about your search. And remember that there's still plenty of time to reflect, consider, connect, and apply to opportunities.

I don't see any companies that I recognize or want to work at. Why should I attend?

- No Conference can be comprehensive in its ability to represent all industries. Many organizations don't have the bandwidth to send staff to events like these; others make strategic decisions not to recruit at big events. There are many reasons why the organization you have in mind might not be represented — but there are so many great people and organizations who *will* be present. And what they share in common is a general interest in Barnard students and a desire to get to know you.
- The entire Conference represents a chance to get to know individuals and learn more about potentially unexpected directions for your career.
- We aim to foster an environment where students feel able to engage with employers and alums, not just in conversations about specific jobs and internships, but also in consideration of important topics in the workplace that will affect graduates no matter where they end up working.
- We hope you'll come to the Career GPS Workshops, attend Career Conversations, snap a LinkedIn photo, and bring curiosity and questions that might open your eyes to directions and opportunities you might not have previously considered.

Why are there no companies in the industry that's interesting to me?

- We do our best, particularly by balancing recruiting with employers and exploratory career conversations with alums, to represent interests that are frequently not prominent at traditional career fairs. These big events tend to attract (and favor) industries and companies with large recruiting workforces with the time and budget to attend campus events. And while we certainly welcome those employers, we also recognize that recruiting practices are not the same across all industries. In some, visits to campus — let alone conferences and fairs — is just not standard practice. That said, even if it turns out that the field you're interested in is not well-represented, it's certain that many of the employers, alums, and peers in attendance share many of the questions and commitments that you do. If you're open, we encourage you to come, attend, and spend some time asking questions just to get some practice connecting with professionals in this kind of setting.
- Short version: yes, it's possible that your preferred industry destination will not be at the Conference. But (a) we still hope you'll attend to talk about your goals and meet interesting people and (b) Beyond Barnard is here – before and after the conference – to provide support for your career and graduate school exploration and goals questions with events, advising, employer information sessions, and more

How will I sign up for Career Conversations?

- Students who have registered for the conference will receive the links to sign up for slots to meet with employers, alums, and graduate school reps in the Handshake Confirmation email you get in your inbox right after you register for the Conference on Handshake. Please note that you **must** register for the conference in order to be able to sign up for slots and you **must** register for career conversations slots to hold your place with an employer, alum, or graduate school rep.

- While walk-ins will be available in the final 30 minutes of the Conference (from 2:30PM-3PM), we strongly encourage conference attendees to sign up in advance to secure their slots and give themselves time and space to prepare.
- You may sign up for ONE meeting per 30-minute time slot.
- You may meet with an individual employer, alum, or graduate school rep once at the event
- You may register for up to five Career Conversations in total (although there is no minimum) with 2:30 - 3pm being open for additional walk-ins.
- Once registered, you will receive a separate confirmation email from Slottr for each slot you sign up for. This confirmation email will contain a calendar invite to the slot and if you scroll down, a customized link for you to change/cancel your registration. If you need to make any changes to your schedule, you should adjust your registration schedule on your own using the provided link. You can make changes up until the end of day on Wednesday, September 25th.

What questions should I ask employers in the Career Conversations?

- There are a number of questions that are appropriate to ask during a reserved conversation time. They can range from general informational questions about what and how an organization operates, to specific questions about a job posting. This is also an opportunity to ask about organizational culture and specifics about training and what attributes the employer is looking for in a candidate.
- Above all, we recommend that students try to come up with questions that are not already answered on an organization's website.
- Some great example questions include:
 - How do you think you'd characterize the colleagues that you work with at [X]?
 - I'd love to hear about a project you're working on at [X] that you're most excited about now.
 - What do you think the most successful candidates at [X] share in terms of their previous skills and knowledge?
 - What's some advice that you wish you could have given yourself before applying to work at [X]?
 - I noticed on your client's page that you work with everyone from [X to Y]. What would you say is common across different client experiences, and what's similar in your organization's approach?
 - It's so great to see [X] recruiting at Barnard, and I'm curious to hear about your personal experiences connecting with and learning from women mentors at your organization.
 - Do you mind if I get a business card or your email address to stay in touch? I'd love to send you a follow-up.

What questions should I ask alums in Career Conversations?

- There are a number of questions that are appropriate to ask during a reserved conversation time with an alum. They can range from general informational questions

about what one's day-to-day work looks like in their role, what qualifications are needed to enter their field, what it's like to work for their company/organization, and tips and advice for some interested in exploring or pursuing a similar path.

- Some great example questions include:
 - What kinds of projects are you working on right now?
 - How collaborative vs autonomous is this work?
 - What's challenging about the work that you do? What do you love most about it?
 - Do I need a particular graduate degree or course of study to work in this space?
 - What is it like to be a woman of color in your field?
 - What are the most important skills I should be developing in order to be competitive for roles in this space?
 - What is the organizational culture like at your company? How does it compare to other places you've worked?
 - What do you wish you knew when you were in my shoes?
 - What's the best advice someone gave you when just starting out?

What questions should I ask graduate school representatives in Career Conversations and where else can I access graduate school resources since the number of graduate schools at the conference is small?

- There are a number of questions that are appropriate to ask during a reserved conversation time with a graduate school representative. They can range from general questions about the academic programs and institution to tips and advice for applicants.
- Some great example questions include:
 - What professional pathways do graduates of this program go on to pursue?
 - What makes for a strong applicant to this program?
 - How would you describe your school's culture?
 - What kinds of connections do faculty have with industry?
 - How much are GPA and standardized test scores weighed against other parts of one's application?
 - What kinds of funding, research, or TA opportunities exist for incoming students?
- Graduate school programs and events will be posted to Handshake over the course of the academic year and will include application workshops, grad school information sessions, and grad student panels. You can also access our Graduate School Toolkit [here](#) and register for graduate school advising through Handshake.

How do I deal with anxiety associated with meeting employers, alums, and graduate school representatives?

- It's totally normal to feel anxious in a big space, connecting with professionals in a context that may be unfamiliar, and will almost certainly be new.
- A tried and true way to reduce anxiety about meeting new people in a professional space is to do your homework. If you know a bit about the firms, organizations, alum backgrounds, and schools that will be in attendance, then you'll feel more confident

asking questions and engaging. You can read [alum bios and company and graduate schools descriptions here](#).

- One great way to approach the Conference is to go with a friend — someone to bounce ideas off of, ask questions with, and ease the awkwardness and tension that can be inherent in meeting new people.
- Set reasonable goals for yourself that you can actually hit. Instead of saying “I’m going to go get a job today at the Opportunities Conference,” try instead, “I’ll spend two hours at the Conference, attend one workshop, and try to meet two new people.”
- Remember that Career Conversations are not interrogations or interviews. You’ll have time to schedule and prepare for them in advance, and the objective is not to get a job — it’s to ask some interesting questions and get to know organizations and alums.
- The stakes are *way lower* than might be apparent.
- Find a Beyond Barnard staffer at any point throughout the day to practice your introduction, to express anxiety, or just to work through a question or a challenge. We’re there to support you!

Should I bring a resume?

- You can certainly print out and bring copies of your resume! Some employers will definitely value having hard copies in front of them. You won’t need resumes for Career Conversations with alums.
- That said, don’t be surprised if employers ask you to send your materials digitally. That’s totally fine – and be sure to follow up by asking for their email address.

Can I polish my resume at Beyond Barnard prior to the Opportunities Conference?

- Yes, and don’t hesitate to make an appointment via Handshake with a Beyond Barnard Advisor or Peer Career Advisor (PCA) to have it reviewed before the conference.
- Drop in hours are Tuesday - Thursday, 1:00 - 2:00pm at Beyond Barnard, Elliott Hall, 2nd Floor. We’ll also offer special additional drop-in hours on Wednesday 9/25 and Thursday 9/26 from 12:00 - 1:00 PM to help with any last-minute questions about preparing for the conference!
- Even if you can’t make it to the office, we can help! There are resume guides and sample resumes in the “Resources” section of Handshake.

I see that Barnard alums will be attending the Conference; will they be hiring students?

- Attending Barnard alums at the Conference will be a great resource for potential mentoring, networking and sharing their personal lived experience in their field and organizations..
- Focus your questions for alums on gaining information about their industry, roles, and organizations. Career Conversations with Alums should be focused on building relationships and learning. ***Save questions about hiring opportunities and sponsorship of international candidates for Career Conversations with Employers.***

How should I research organizations and alums before attending the Conference?

- Each registered employer has a Handshake profile that you can review prior to the conference. This profile will include an internet site and brief description.
- We also recommend reviewing organizations' websites — particularly “about us” sections. These are a great and quick way to get a general sense of the values of an organization and their approach to their work — all great fodder for questions.
- Some organizations will also have “example cases,” or a page about “our projects.” These are often brief descriptions of current and past engagements (clients, exhibitions, major initiatives, etc.) that can help you get a really clear sense of the kind of work they do.
- A great — and underutilized — way to research organizations is to look them up on LinkedIn. You'll be able to see some biographical information about their staff (and can even filter by Barnard alums to see if the organization has hired recently from the College).
- Alum Bios as well as graduate school and employer descriptions will all be provided on [this page](#).
- For graduate schools that will be in attendance, explore the admissions pages of their programs prior to meeting with reps at the conference.

What should I wear to the Conference?

- In general, it is good practice to dress for an in-person fair the same way you would for the in-person workplaces that are visiting the Opportunities Conference.
- Even in an environment of increased remote flexibility and hybrid work, jeans, t-shirts, and other casual wear are still not the norm for most in-person office spaces.
- We absolutely want you to feel comfortable in what you're wearing — and be able to express a version of your professional identity that you would feel confident presenting in the office.