Networking is an essential way of making connections with potential employers. Since it’s not appropriate to hand out your resume to every person you meet, it’s a good idea to use business cards to help market yourself even if you aren’t employed. Most professionals have business cards and you should, too.

**WHAT TO INCLUDE** Contact information should be the main focus of a business card. At a minimum include:

- First and last name
- Your major or career field
- **Cell:** (000) 000-0000  **Home** (if you have a landline): (111) 111-1111 Remember that employers may call, so your voice mail messages and ring tones must be professional and appropriate. Always answer the phone as if a prospective employer is calling. Check your voice mail often; to ensure that you’re prepared to talk to an employer, review messages before you return calls; and return messages promptly.
- **E-mail address** While you are a student, you can use your Western email address, if you like. If you use another email account, make sure the address is professional. Usually some combination using your name works best. Check your email account often and respond professionally.
- **LinkedIn.com url or QR Code** This is your online profile on the social networking site used by professionals.
- **Online portfolio url or QR Code** (optional)
- **URL or QR Code for your webpage** (optional) Be sure that your webpage is professional in appearance and content.

**APPEARANCE** Professional business cards don’t have to be costly. Online sites, copy centers, and office supply stores offer inexpensive, quality business cards. Simple, tasteful graphics and clean typography that make a professional statement are always appropriate. You don’t have to go over the top to make a good impression. A simple design of black ink on white or cream card stock is a safe option. Make sure the font is big enough so people of all generations and visual abilities can read your card. If you are in a creative field, you can think of your card as a “mini-portfolio” but remember that you are aiming for professionalism and not shock value.

**CARD EXCHANGE ETIQUETTE** When exchanging business cards, be confident, but know the appropriate setting and time to conduct business. Do not hand out your business card to everyone you meet. To make the best impression, give your card to people with whom you’ve had a conversation; those who seem interested in you; or to those who have offered to help you, or who want to stay in touch.

Generally, in networking situations (receptions, conferences, club presentations, informal meetings, etc.) you will give out your business card at the end of a conversation. For example, when closing a conversation you can say “I really enjoyed talking to you. Here’s my card so we can stay in touch.” In an interview or meeting, you can exchange cards at the beginning. Be sure to look at the other person’s card and treat it with respect. Write a note on the back with reminders of where you met, how you will follow up, etc.