LINKEDIN GUIDELINES
How to Create a Professional LinkedIn Profile

WHAT IS LINKEDIN?
LinkedIn is the world’s largest professional network. Because of LinkedIn’s professional nature you can use it to find opportunities, create meaningful connections, and to establish your own professional brand.

Your LinkedIn profile is an enhancement of your resume. Your profile goes beyond what a resume can do by providing a venue to showcase examples of your work, communicating your goals as well as your experience, and getting your skills endorsed by your connections.

LinkedIn is not a place to post updates of a personal nature, especially anything that would take away from your professional image. Remember, even your online persona outside of LinkedIn is important. 85% of employers say that a positive online reputation influences their hiring decisions.

10 STEPS TO BUILDING YOUR PROFILE:

STEP 1: Professional Photo
Your professional photo allows the people you’ve met and previously worked with to quickly identify you. Many people find it far easier to remember a face then a name – photos help bring that comfort to LinkedIn. Choose a high-quality headshot of you alone in professional clothes/setting and a smile.

STEP 2: Headline
Your headline gives people a short, memorable way to understand who you are in a professional context. Think of the headline as the billboard for your professional brand, listing your major, internship title, etc., such as “English Major at Occidental College,” “Research Assistant at Resolution Economics.” You may also consider highlighting your job search goal, for example, “Graduating Occidental senior seeking opportunities in Public Health.”

STEP 3: Custom Link
To increase the professional results that appear when people type your name into a search engine, set your LinkedIn profile to “public” and claim a unique, professional URL for your profile that includes your name. This will also allow you to easily share your LinkedIn presence.

STEP 4: Summary
The summary statement should resemble your answer to the “tell me about yourself” question in an interview. Write a few concise and confident paragraphs highlighting your academic interests, extracurricular involvement, accomplishments, and career goals.

DID YOU KNOW?
70% of employers have rejected a job applicant because of information they found out about that person online.
STEP 5: Experience
Show your background by listing the experiences you’ve had through internships, jobs, volunteer activities, and campus involvement. Avoid importing your resume; consider using this opportunity to enhance what your resume shows by providing more detail and accomplishments. Consider using keywords from other job postings and alumni profiles to attract a recruiter’s attention.

STEP 6: Education
Include information about all the institutions you’ve attended. Include your major and minor if you have one, as well as highlights of your activities. It’s also appropriate to include study abroad programs and summer institutions, although avoid listing your high school unless your school has its own established alumni community with which you want to connect. Be sure to share a high GPA and any honors or awards won in school.

STEP 7: Skills
Use keywords to convey skills you have that an employer could search for. Look at profiles of other people working in your future field to get ideas about what to include. Your connections will have the ability to “endorse” your skills, which provides validation to employers looking at your profile.

STEP 8: Other Categories
Add other fields to highlight projects you’ve completed, languages you speak, honors and awards you’ve received, courses you’ve taken, volunteering and causes. Use the additional information within these categories to further develop your professional persona.

STEP 9: Connections
Connect with everyone you know – friends, family, neighbors, professors, internship colleagues, and others. Then, search for alumni working in fields of interest. When you connect with an individual on LinkedIn you will be given the opportunity to indicate your relationship to that person and to write a short invitation. Avoid using the generic message provided by LinkedIn. Instead, write a brief personal message that conveys who you are and why a connection to that individual is important. For example:

Dear Mr. Flora,
Thank you for taking the time to speak with me at yesterday’s Speed Networking event here at Oxy. I would appreciate the opportunity to connect with you and hope to learn more about your work in the legal field.
Sincerely, Susan Smith

Joining groups is another way to meet potential connections and to further investigate your career interests. Join groups of professional associations, volunteer organizations, and of course, Oxy alumni.

Avoid uploading your address book into LinkedIn, even though you will be prompted to do so. Connection requests are more meaningful and relevant when sought out individually.

STEP 10: Recommendations
The most impressive LinkedIn profiles have at least one recommendation associated with each position listed in an individual’s Experience section. Think about soliciting recommendations from connections who can speak highly about your work, for example: Professors, Internship Supervisors, colleagues, and professional mentors.
COMMON MISTAKES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS ON LINKEDIN

USING THE GENERIC INVITATION TO CONNECT
Sending this to an Oxy alum or to someone working at your dream company may indicate that you’re not putting a whole lot of effort into building a relationship. He/she may think you’re just trying to connect with mass numbers of people and may not even be genuinely interested in talking with him/her as an individual.

LACK OF SELECTIVITY
Everything that you include in your profile should enhance your personal brand and be relevant to your goals. There’s nothing wrong with eliminating irrelevant jobs from your work history and selecting the most meaningful awards and activities to showcase.

SPELLING/GRAMMATICAL ERRORS AND INCONSISTENCIES
Just as you would carefully check over your resume for errors, you should proofread your LinkedIn profile. Additionally, be consistent with how you deliver information within the profile. For example, if you use bullet points to describe your responsibilities at one internship, do so for your other experiences as well.

WEAK HEADLINE
You have leeway to be creative; put some personality into this. Most importantly, clearly identify your career interests.

LACK OF RECOMMENDATIONS
It can be very powerful for a potential employer to see your previous colleagues endorse you. Request recommendations from people who know you well so that the recommendation is both genuine and specific in its praise.

DID YOU KNOW?
There are over 10,000 Occidental College alumni and 2,000+ current and past faculty, administrators, and staff using LinkedIn

SO YOU WANT TO CONNECT WITH THE CDC STAFF ON LINKEDIN?
We require the following criteria when connecting with students and alumni:

- 75% profile completion
- Indicate how you know us or utilized the Career Development Center
- Include a summary within your profile
- Personalize your request
- Click on “have done business with” as the mechanism by which you “know” us
- Complete a Headline and Education section
- Include a professional photo