

The idea of networking terrifies me. The process of having to go up to strangers and chat about myself is not something I find enjoyable at all, however I understand the merits behind networking as well as enjoy pushing myself my boundaries. I also had become rather lost and confused during my career search so when my career counselor suggested that I apply for Career Quest I jumped at the opportunity. I thought that this might be the push I needed to break out of my introverted shell and network and learn about other companies and job opportunities that I might not have researched yet. When I learned that I had been accepted into the program I knew this was the time to hone in on my networking skills. I prepared ways of speaking about myself and practiced answering questions that I was unprepared for. This was probably my first lesson that I gained from Career Quest. Practice really does make perfect (I know, a cliché, but it's true). By practicing and preparing for whatever questions might be thrown at me, including the dreaded tell me about yourself question, I gained a confidence in myself that I had never before reached in professional settings. That confidence boost is the key behind being able to answer questions from any future contact or employer. When you believe in yourself and your qualifications, whomever you speak with will as well. Now I didn't necessarily get asked these questions or had personal chat time with everyone at every job site we visited but preparing did wonders to assuage my fears that had made the beginning of this trip so scary. I think that from preparing for this process I am now more comfortable going to future networking events and have been given the tools to aptly speak about myself professionally.

The next important lesson I learned from Career Quest is to be prepared for anything. I truly did not expect for there to be a snow storm in New York at the exact same time I would be there. We had arrived at the hotel the night before the program began and were told that there was a potential that our second day job sites would be cancelled due to snow. At first I couldn't believe that this would happen, after all it's New York and not DC so surely they must be more prepared to keep things running in case of snow. However as the first day of awesome job sites carried on, more and more of our next day job sites cancelled due to transportation shut downs. I had thoroughly enjoyed the job sites we had gone to on Monday and the job site I was most excited for was supposed to happen Tuesday morning. This was also the last job site to cancel and so I woke up Tuesday morning with still no idea if we would be trekking out in the snow to continue our visitation of companies. Unfortunately our site visit was cancelled as well in the morning leaving us with a free day to spend as we wished. While I was extremely disappointed I decided to make the most of the situation and chose to be productive in other ways on our final day. Our program leaders made sure that we were able to do as much as possible such as the site reflections and there were offers of LinkedIn and resume bootcamps. I also was able to spend more time doing further research into the companies we had visited and the ones we were meant to visit. This whole situation showed me the importance of rolling with the punches and making the most of the situations you're in. Career Quest provided me with the tools to improve my networking skills, resume, and general understanding of the professional world and its innerworkings.