Initial Outreach To Professionals With Whom You Wish To Connect: Advice & Examples

An introductory letter or email to a professional with whom you’d like to connect, and from whom you hope to gain insight about a certain career path, should be relatively brief. In it, you will concisely introduce yourself, describe why you are contacting the person and ask politely for a few moments of the person’s time. Your contact should understand from a glance what you are asking of him or her, as well as why you believe he or she can provide it. If writing a letter, use correct business letter formatting as shown in the Career Manual. If writing an email, maintain a formal style and be sure to include your contact information within the email’s signature block. Three particularly effective examples of student-initiated outreach in the job search are below for your consideration.

Dear Mr. Jones,

I am a rising second-year student at Duke University School of Law with a developing interest in commercial real estate law. In reading the July 1, 2011 edition of the Triangle Business Journal, I noticed that your firm represents Triangle Developers Inc. in its plans to build a luxury condominium and retail complex in northern Durham County. I would be quite interested to learn more about this transaction.

Moreover, if you are able to find no more than twenty minutes within your undoubtedly demanding schedule, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to learn about your career more broadly, as well as seek your personal advice concerning how I can deliberately use the next two years at Duke Law – both academically and experientially – to achieve that combination of subject matter expertise and practice-ready skills most often possessed by highly successful real estate attorneys such as yourself and, thus, expected of those students who seek to join a well-regarded real estate team upon graduation. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Sam Smith

Dear Ms. Kim,

I am a rising second-year student at Duke University School of Law hoping to practice appellate law upon graduation. Professor Charles, my civil procedure professor, suggested that I contact you to learn more about the field and, specifically, your Washington D.C. practice. Might you be willing to speak with me by telephone for no more than twenty minutes at a mutually convenient time? Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request and I look forward to speaking with you.

Best regards,

Joe Jackson

Dear Mr. Rodriguez,

I am a rising second-year student at Duke University School of Law with a background in environmental activism. I entered law school with a very clear and impassioned commitment to build a practice focused on the preservation of wetlands which, as you know, are depleting at an alarming rate worldwide.

As such, I would be thrilled for the opportunity to speak with you, however briefly, about your work at the Everglades Project. I will be in South Florida from August 1 – 5 before returning to Duke and, if your schedule permits, would be delighted to meet you over morning coffee before your workday officially begins, or at any other time you might suggest. Of course, if such a meeting within that regrettable narrow window of time would inconvenience you in any way, I would be equally glad to speak with you by phone from Durham. Thank you very much for your kind consideration, and I look forward to making your acquaintance.

Best regards,

Carrie Crawford