

## **Benefits of Joining Professional Associations and Organizations**

Professional associations and organizations are groups of people from the same industry or profession gathered together to represent the industry or profession in some way. They are often the source of standards within a profession, and can also be key advocates for or against legislation that impacts the profession or overall industry. Additionally, they can provide resources, information and opportunities exclusively to members that non-members might not be eligible for.

Types of memberships vary and usually include student or new professional memberships at discount or low cost rates. Professional Associations/Organizations may offer participation on national, international, state, regional, or local levels. Some provide benefits to members including discounts on products or services, events, or CEUs (continuing education units).

Review the individual qualities of any given Professional Associations/Organizations to determine whether obtaining a membership will be beneficial for you and your career.

### **Why join a professional association/organization?**

#### ***Professional Designation***

Putting your membership on your resume instantly communicates that you are interested in staying connected and are committed to the field.

#### ***Networking opportunities***

Once you join a professional association you are instantly connected with like-minded professionals on the local and sometimes even global level. You will have access to thought leaders in your industry and potential hiring managers for your next career move.

#### ***Idea sharing***

Have a question on a best practice or a difficult situation you've not encountered? Associations are a great place to get assistance as there are probably others who have already encountered the issue and can provide insight to their experience.

### ***Career opportunities***

Many associations provide “members only” job boards. Some industries start their job search within a recognized association and only seek candidates elsewhere if no candidates can be found.

### ***Leadership/Volunteer opportunities***

There are many opportunities to grow, develop and highlight your leadership skills. Most associations are run on volunteerism which can range from being on the Board of Directors, to being a Mentor, or even to help organize an event. All are opportunities to expand your knowledge, influence and overall network.

### ***Access to information***

Membership will typically give access to free or low cost links to professional journals and/or various publications, industry standards and trends, as well as changes in legislation, how changes can impact your profession and how to prepare.

### ***Award opportunities***

Any award is great, but being recognized within your profession or industry is a particularly impressive way to boost your resume. Being recognized by your peers is indicative of your overall performance and capabilities.

### ***Scholarship opportunities***

Many offer educational scholarships to students as a way to promote their organization, and grow within their industries.

### **How to locate a Professional Association:**

#### ***Ask professionals in the industry***

- If you are currently a student, talk to the faculty who teach related subjects. Which organizations do they belong to? Which do they recommend?
- Talk to those in your network who work in that industry and find out which are the most recognized and/or respected.

### ***Search online***

- Google it! Simply type in the name of your industry followed by the words “professional association” into any search engine. You will get a nice long list of options. Just make sure you properly research and vet an association prior to purchasing membership.
- CareerOneStop offers a search function to locate national professional associations by occupation or industry served.

### ***The Library***

- Visit your school or local library and ask for the “National Trade & Professional Associations Directory (published by Columbia Books).

UMass Global University students should review the “What Can I do with a Major in...” guide for your major for associations aligned with your degree.

UMass Global also offers Student Organizations to connect students together across the University. Visit the Student Organizations page for additional information.