



Alumni Profiles Guidelines

Professional Development Blog

We suggest the following guidelines for writing a profile of a Graduate School alum.

1. Need to find an alum to interview?
 - You can consult this [list of alumni who've volunteered to be interviewed](#) and reach out to the blog editors at grad-profdev@duke.edu to request LinkedIn profiles for any alums of interest
 - This [video](#), developed by the Duke Career Center, will help you leverage [LinkedIn](#) as a networking and career research tool and introduce you to ways to use the [Duke Alumni Network](#) as part of your research.
 - Still not sure? [Email the blog editors](#) to set up an appointment to discuss strategy.
2. If you have an email address for the alum, send the initial email requesting an interview from your Duke email address so that your common Duke connection is immediately apparent. If you don't have an email address, you can reach out through the [Duke Alumni Network](#) (use the **Contact** button).
3. The interview conversation is a terrific opportunity to grow your professional community. Set up a time to speak to the alum over phone or via Zoom for 20 minutes. In other words, **do not** ask the alum to type answers to the questions and email them back.
4. We recommend that you ask the alum if it's okay to record the conversation, either in Zoom or on your phone. This way you can refer to your recording when it's time to write up the interview, and you can stay in the moment during the conversation.
5. In general, the written profile should follow a conversational, interview-style format, so the question is presented and the subject responds in first-person. **The written profile is not a transcript of the interview** (don't include "um," "uh," etc.). After your conversation, you will need to write and edit the interview so that it flows and makes sense to the broad readership of the blog (graduate students and faculty across 80+ programs). We recommend that you plan to draft the profile within two weeks of the conversation.
6. To enhance the content of your blog post, please remember to include hypertext links where appropriate. Some examples would include linking to the institution(s) with which your subject is now associated; any organizations with which they worked while at Duke (e.g., lab websites); links to relevant publications mentioned, etc.

7. The profile generally goes through a few rounds of edits, during which we'll work to add links where relevant, ensure that the style conforms with other pieces in the series, and provide context, where necessary, for a broad audience of readers. Once the editing process concludes with The Graduate School's team, you'll share the written profile with the alum for final approval before it is published. **Please do not share the profile with the alum before you have received approval from the editors to do so.** At that time you can also request that the alum send their headshot as an image file.
8. The questions listed below should serve as your starting point. Depending on the alum's particular experiences, you may want to add to or adapt this list. Keep in mind that the order of the questions can be rearranged in the written profile, as needed. For example, the question about a favorite memory of Duke makes sense to ask early on, but it's usually published at the end of the written profile.

Sample questions:

- **Tell me about yourself.**
- **What is one of your favorite memories of Duke?**
- **What professional or career plans did you have in mind as you were completing your graduate degree?**
- **What has your career path looked like since you graduated?**
- **Tell me more about your current job. What is your favorite thing about what you do? What has been the most surprising thing about it?**
- **How do you find balance between your professional life and your personal life?**
- **What's the best career advice you've ever received?**
- **Do you have any interesting projects or professional plans in the works?**
- **Any advice you'd like to share with current graduate students at Duke?**
- *Do you have a professional website or LinkedIn profile that you'd like me to include when I write up this interview?*

Sample text for an email introduction:

For an alum that you've identified on your own:

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms./Mx. [INSERT ALUM'S NAME HERE]:

I'm a [DEGREE] student in the [INSERT PROGRAM HERE] department at Duke. I'm writing because I am interested in your career trajectory [ADD SOME SPECIFICS HERE ABOUT WHAT INTERESTS YOU], and I would welcome the chance to talk with you. If you're willing, our interview would be published as part of The Graduate School's [Alumni Profiles series](#), which features alumni who are thriving in their careers.

If you agree, we would speak by phone or via Zoom for about 20 minutes at a convenient time for you. I will then write up the interview, work with the editors at The Graduate School to edit and polish it, and submit it to you for approval before publishing.

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to hearing from you and hope to speak with you soon.

Sincerely,
[YOUR NAME HERE]

For an alum recommended by The Graduate School:

Dear Dr./Mr./Ms./Mx. [INSERT ALUM'S NAME HERE]:

I'm a [DEGREE] student in the [INSERT PROGRAM HERE] department at Duke. I am writing to you because [NAME OF PERSON] shared your name as someone who is interested in being interviewed for an alum profile on The Graduate School's website. I am interested in your career trajectory [ADD SOME SPECIFICS HERE ABOUT WHAT INTERESTS YOU], and I would welcome the chance to interview you. If you're willing, our interview would be published as part of The Graduate School's [Alumni Profiles series](#), which features alumni who are thriving in their careers.

If you agree, we would speak by phone or via Zoom for about 20 minutes at a convenient time for you. I will then write up the interview, work with the editors at The Graduate School to edit and polish it, and submit it to you for approval before publishing.

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to hearing from you and hope to speak with you soon.

Sincerely,
[YOUR NAME HERE]

Guidelines and General Instructions for Alumni Profiles

Our purpose and audience

Our "[Become a Contributor](#)" page provides an overview of our vision for the blog.

<p>1. Drafting your profile As you prepare your profile, keep these guidelines in mind:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Style: posts are typically written in the first person and should be conversational rather than academic in tone.• Length: many of our posts are in the 600-800-word range. Occasionally we publish shorter or longer posts; just ask.• Biosketch: a brief biography including educational and career highlights precedes the interview text when we publish.• File Type: please send your post as a text-based file in Microsoft Word.• Links: we encourage you to reference other web content (blogs, articles, or source citations) in your profile. These should be included as active links; we will be glad to assist you with formatting your links, if needed.• Images: Please send a headshot for yourself when you submit your first draft; attach it as a separate file. You will request a high-resolution headshot for the alum subject when you send a final draft to them for approval.	<p>2. Other materials we need from you Along with the text of your post, please provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short Summary: please provide a short, catchy "teaser" to promote the profile on the blog's front page. Often, an intriguing or pithy quotation from the interview can serve this purpose; other times, a concise sentence about an interesting career path can work ("Her career took her from the Space Center to Syngenta to startup"). Limit: 160 characters (with spaces).• A Short Bio: please include your current status at Duke, your department/program, and a link to your LinkedIn profile or professional website. Include 2-3 sentences about your research and, if desired, your interests outside research.• Your Headshot: If you do not have a professional-looking photo to include with your post, we can help! Contact grad-profdev@duke.edu, and we will schedule a time for you to come to The Graduate School for a high-resolution portrait.
<p>3. General Style Guidelines Unless otherwise noted, follow the Chicago Manual of Style Sixteenth Edition (free access from campus) in matters of writing style, punctuation, and usage. Follow the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary Eleventh Edition on spelling, capitalization, and hyphenation unless superseded by <i>Chicago</i>.</p>	<p>4. Submitting Please send your blog text and images to grad-profdev@duke.edu. We will review your post and send feedback, including comments and suggested revisions. Most posts go through one or two drafts before publishing. If you have any further questions, please ask!</p>