

# Resources for Students of Color

In this resource you will find information specifically for students of color. Topics include:

- How to evaluate an organization
- How to handle workplace discrimination
- Practicing self-care and positive mental health
- Networking
- Resources for your career exploration

We hope that the information in this resource is helpful to you, no matter where you are on your career journey.

As we are always looking to improve our services for students, if there are topics specific to your needs as a student of color that you would like to see addressed here, please send us your feedback at [cdc@wpi.edu](mailto:cdc@wpi.edu).

## How to Evaluate an Organization

Many organizations these days include diversity statements somewhere on their website or in their job postings, but are they really fulfilling their commitments to be an inclusive and equitable employer? The best way to evaluate a potential employer is to talk to the employees, past and present. They can share with you their first-hand experiences of the company culture and shed light on structural racism and other forms of oppression within the company. Remember, one person's experiences are just that, but if you talk to a few different people and hear the same stories being told, positive or negative, then you know there is a pattern. See the Networking section below to learn more about conducting these informational interviews.

Here are a few tips to assist you in evaluating an organization's true commitment to supporting and uplifting their employees of color:

- Is the organization on **Diversity Inc.'s Top 50 List** or other national lists that evaluate and recognize companies for the work they are doing to create a diverse and inclusive culture?
- Beyond the company, what is the surrounding area like? Would you feel comfortable and safe living there?
- Is there significant diverse representation throughout their entire workforce, including amongst the top leadership?
- Does the company go beyond a standard diversity statement/policy and make an effort to infuse socially just content throughout their website and social media?
- Do they engage with social justice movements in a meaningful way? La'Nita Walker's article, **How to Tell If a Company's Black Lives Matter Statement Actually Means Anything**, gives a good overview on evaluating company statements.
- What programs and resources do they have for employees of color and other underrepresented and/or marginalized identities? Are any of their programs or resources intersectional?
- What are they doing to engage White employees, and employees with other dominant identities, in examining their own biases?
- What do people, especially current or former employees, have to say about the company culture? Check out reviews on sites like **Glassdoor** and peer reviews in Handshake.
- After receiving a job offer, consider asking them for a copy of the employee handbook. Are their policies and procedures inclusive and equitable?



# Resources for Students of Color

## Networking

Networking is a powerful tool to use in your career exploration and development. Through networking you can evaluate an organization's commitment to hiring, supporting, and uplifting people of color and gain helpful insights and advice from professionals in the field.

There are different types of networking with different benefits to you. The most common types of networking events that you will see on campus are: career fairs, networking nights, career expos, and company info sessions. These are all great opportunities for you to engage with employer representatives and learn more about their organization. Learn more about these types of networking events in our [Networking tipsheet](#).

## Informational Interviewing

Another incredibly powerful form of networking is the informational interview. Informational interviews are great ways to gather information about a career, company, or both that are of interest to you from a professional in the field. You can use an informational interview to gain insights into a company's culture and the steps that they have/are taking to create and maintain an environment where their employees of color can belong and thrive. You can also get valuable advice on the whole job search and application process, from resume all the way through evaluating and negotiating a job offer.

It's important to go into an informational interview with several questions prepared. Just ask yourself, what do I want to know? What kind of insights do I think this person can share with me? Your questions could look like:

- What has a supportive work environment looked like for you vs. one that was less than ideal?
- What tips do you have for evaluating an organization during the job search and interview process?

- How have you found and engaged with mentors and other support systems in your professional life? What professional organizations would you recommend?
- How does the organization support their employees of color beyond a commitment to diversity recruitment?
- Can you tell me more about your company's employee resource groups (ERG)? Do they play an active role in helping enhance the culture of your company?
- Have there been instances of workplace discrimination/harassment at the organization? How have they been handled to ensure this does not happen again?
- What is the surrounding area like? Are there businesses that are centered on the needs of and owned by people of color?

For more information, check out our [Informational Interviewing tipsheet](#).

Many times after networking with someone, engaging in an informational interview, and a few additional conversations, you might realize that this person has become a mentor. Think about crafting your network to include mentors that can advise you as you develop personally and professionally.

If you have questions about networking, we encourage you to set up an appointment with a CDC staff member through your Handshake account to discuss networking in greater detail.

## How to Handle Workplace Discrimination

Experiencing discrimination and other forms of racism in the workplace is physically and mentally draining and damaging. If you encounter workplace discrimination, use your support system of your family, friends, mentors, and/or the Career Development Center to share your experience and brainstorm ways to respond.

Acknowledge what you can and cannot control and plan your next steps. It is important to practice good self-care and know that it is not your role to educate someone, or an organization, that has been racist or discriminatory toward you. Always take care of yourself first and make it a priority.



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### How to Handle Workplace Discrimination (cont.)

After an incident occurs, it is important to document what happened, whether or not you decide to take action. Writing down the interaction(s) can help you to process and identify patterns and trends, especially if the behavior continues and evolves. Record what happened in a step-by-step, factual way. Include date/time of each event, who was around, what people said and to who, the order of what happened, any action or response you took, your supervisor's response, and any other pertinent information.

After you document the incident, review the resources and policies within your organization related to workplace discrimination. Some organizations have bias response teams, or other reporting processes, that you could report the incident to, such as Human Resources, a Chief Diversity Officer, and/or an Ombudsperson. You may want to seek out nonprofits that offer support and resources, attorneys that offer free consultation, and you can visit the **U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission** to file a claim. You may also want to familiarize yourself with your state and local anti-discrimination laws. You can find an overview of Massachusetts's protections against workplace discrimination [here](#).

In some cases you may decide to resign from your role and be able to quickly find a new opportunity in an environment that strives for anti-racist practices. If you decide to leave the organization, plan out how you might respond to an interview question such as, "why did you leave your last place of employment?".

Other times, you may need to continue to work until you are able to find a better environment and opportunity. If this is the case you will need to make a plan for how you are going to take care of yourself while you carry out a job search.

Remember, the Career Development Center is here to help you brainstorm your options and make a plan, whether you are a current student or an alumni.

### Practicing Self-care and Positive Mental Health

Below are some suggestions for different ways of engaging in self-care and positive mental health. It is important to pick practices that work for you and that you actually enjoy doing.

- Use your support system. Identify your network of family, friends, and mentors to talk about what you're experiencing and to seek advice on how to handle it.
- Look for support groups that have had similar experiences to be a resource to one another.
- Find activities that you can do with family and friends (entertainment, exercising, cooking, etc.).
- Find ways to incorporate foods, activities, music, movies, books, traditions, and other things that reflect and uplift your culture and lived experience into your day.
- Exercise or go for a walk. Physical activity is proven to reduce stress.
- Take 10-20 minutes to practice deep breathing or meditation. Practice mindfulness techniques.
- Spend time journaling - sometimes daily, in the morning or before bed. Write down your thoughts, experiences, and reflect on them. Sometimes jotting down positive things that happened or affirmations is helpful.
- Limit your media consumption. Use your computer settings to look at how long you spend on media and set a goal to minimize your interactions. After you disconnect from social media and the news, take a moment to process how you feel afterwards.
- Counseling and therapy are another option that can help you reflect on and discuss ongoing stressful situations and to receive support in processing what you're experiencing and feeling.
- If spirituality is a part of your life, connect with a religious group and individuals that share your beliefs, participate in rituals, and confide in your spiritual leaders.
- Podcasts are another tool for practicing self-care; or, identifying strategies for self-care, such as the podcast **Therapy for Black Girls** that is conversations with psychologists on race, stress, and other topics.



# Resources for Students of Color

## Resources

There are many professional associations and online resources that center the needs and experiences of people of color. These are great places to identify resources, support, mentors, and job boards. We have provided some links below to help you identify organizations and resources. Don't see an organization that fits your needs? Try doing a quick, targeted Google search (e.g. professional association for Black mathematicians).

When exploring professional associations, if you do not see a discount for students, reach out and ask as many organizations do provide a discount (even if unadvertised).

## Black/African-American Resources

- **List of Black Professional Associations and Organizations:** a list of organizations that hold a variety of networking events and professional development programs to bring like-minded African-American professionals together.
- **African American Organizations to Know:** Diversity Best Practices provides a list of key organizations serving the African-American community.

## Latinx Resources

- **Latino Organizations to Know:** Diversity Best Practices has compiled a list of key organizations serving the Latinx community.
- **List of Hispanic Professional Associations & Organizations:** a key resource for those interested in pursuing professional development or connecting with like-minded Hispanic professionals.

## Asian American/Asian/Pacific Islander Resources

- **Asian American Organizations to Know:** Diversity Best Practices has put together a list of key organizations serving the Asian-American and Pacific Islander community.
- **National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA):** NCAPA is a coalition of 36 national Asian Pacific American organizations around the country.

## Native American/Indigenous/Aboriginal Resources

- **Native American Organizations to Know:** Diversity Best Practices has curated a list of key organizations serving the Native American community.
- **Tribal Organizations:** The National Congress of American Indians provides a listing of regional and national organizations.

**Career Development Center**  
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