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## Suggested Practices for Making I-O Connections: Let's Build Bridges and Grow I-O!

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## Suggested Practices for Making I-O Connections: Let's Build Bridges and Grow I-O!

From the SIOP Education and Training Committee

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It may come as no surprise, but there are an awful lot of people who have no idea what I-O psychology is or what I-O psychologists do. Common reactions from new acquaintances include, “Ooo, I could really use some help organizing my home and be a more industrious person” or “Wow, that’s a mouthful” or “No really, what do you do for a living?” Perhaps even more alarming is the number of students across universities who aren’t intro-

duced to I-O—even if they are psychology majors! We are struck by the number of prospective graduate students who tell us that they wouldn’t know that I-O existed had it not been for a chance encounter with an I-O psychologist. For every one of these talented young people who join the field, there are 10 more who don’t have that chance encounter and end up in a different field.

In short, there is a clear need for I-O psychologists to make connections, build bridges of knowledge, and grow I-O from the bottom up. That’s the main purpose of a new subcommittee of the Education and Training Committee. Education and Training Committee Chair **Scott Tonidandel** reached out to committee members and asked that we take

up the charge to start a grass-roots initiative to grow I-O in our own departments, universities, corporations, and communities. That is, we seek volunteers who will reach out to their local universities, alma maters, high schools, and civic groups, and offer to meet with employees and students to introduce them to I-O psychology. In essence, we want you to become “Bridge Builders” and connect I-O with people who otherwise wouldn’t be introduced to the field.

### **SIOP Members Who Are Making Connections and Building Bridges**

In speaking with our colleagues in both academic and applied settings, we learned of some amazing and inspirational efforts that are already building bridges. For example, program directors and faculty of The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), Louisiana Tech University (La Tech), and Seattle Pacific University (SPU) are actively involved in making connections with undergraduate students, other departments on campus, and organizations in their community. Each of these programs offers programs and services that provide value to organizations and the community, create unique real-world learning for students, and increase the visibility of I-O. Jason Dahling, associate professor at TCNJ, is passionate about introducing I-O to students early in their education. TCNJ I-O professors give talks in freshman advis-

ing courses. Their I-O students have the opportunity to work under faculty supervision and develop training programs and structured interview guides for local businesses. La Tech’s doctoral program has a consulting group, AROS (Applied Research for Organizational Solutions), that provides consulting services for the local Chamber of Commerce, large corporations, and several nonprofits. AROS connects with high school and undergraduate students through job searching and interviewing workshops developed and delivered by doctoral students. **Tilman Sheets**, director of La Tech’s I-O program, says that the work of AROS has created a lot of positive buzz in the community, even gaining the attention of the university’s new president. At SPU, the recent development of the Center for Leadership Research and Development (CLRD) has created a “storefront” for I-O on campus and in the greater Seattle area. They partner with corporations and nonprofits, bringing I-O principles to organizations near and far. They just returned from a trip to India! **Rob McKenna**, department chair of I-O Psychology at SPU, says that the CLRD events, including leadership conferences, have been immensely effective in making connections with students and the community. As a result, nearly every SPU undergrad student knows what I-O is.

From a practitioner perspective, **Lauren McEntire**, senior manager, Organization

and Management Development for Frito-Lay, **Chloe Lemelle**, Senior HR Consultant at AT&T, and **Kathryn Keeton**, I-O psychologist with Wyle/NASA-Johnson Space Center, all have had similar experiences of making connections in their local communities and with students. These practitioners have gone back to speak to the programs from which they graduated, as well as universities in communities where they currently work. Chloe says that students found such value in her initial talk, she now has a standing invitation to speak annually at her alma mater, the University of Texas at Arlington.

Lauren used tools from the SIOP website but believes that meshing those in with your personal career story can be most helpful. She says the students really want to latch onto something at their level, so having them ask questions in advance of your interaction to help you tailor to their interests and fully engage them has been most successful for her. Chloe agrees that sharing stories of her personal career journey is what really resonates with students. Lauren adds that giving these talks also led to some organic mentoring relationships that are very rewarding!

In addition to giving talks in the classroom setting, Kathryn emphasizes the importance of creating visibility in your workplace and educating your peers on I-O applications relevant to their work. Lauren also encourages practitioners to get in-

involved with existing community programs. For example, Frito-Lay participates in a junior achievement program through which Lauren gives talks to middle school and junior high students. Lauren also suggests inviting a select few advanced students to do a half-day job shadow during the summer.

### **How to Make Your Own Connections and Become a Bridge Builder**

We've put together some suggestions to help get you started making connections. In creating this guide, we realized that SIOP members and student affiliates have all kinds of networks that can be starting places for connections. The suggestions list contained here was created by brainstorming and talking to past volunteers; you may have creative ideas too! We've grouped this guide into three sections: Who to Contact, What to Share, and What Resources are Available to You. In addition, we created a my.siop group where everyone who becomes or wants to become a "Bridge Builder" can share their experiences. We also created a "Building Bridges" link under the ["Resources" tab on SIOP.org](#). Go there to find all the resources listed on our suggested practices list and more.

## **Suggested Practices for Making I-O Connections**

### **WHO TO CONTACT**

#### **At Universities**

***Consider: Local area universities; your alma mater; universities you currently attend or work for***

- Contact the career center and see if you can volunteer to give a workshop to job-seeking students about different kinds of career assessments
- See if the career advisors in the psychology department know about I-O; offer to talk to majors
- Contact instructors who teach Intro to Psych and offer to teach a module about I-O
- See if there are student groups who host guest speakers: Try Psi Chi, SHRM student chapters, honors programs, or student chapters of civic groups like Rotaract

#### **At High Schools**

***Consider local area private, public, and charter schools; schools that focus on science***

- Speak with psychology teachers and offer to speak with the class about I-O
- Find out who organizes Career Day and offer to speak about your work as an I-O psychologist

#### **In Communities**

- Contact civic groups and offer to give a brief talk: Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, and so forth

- Contact business groups and see if you are eligible to attend an event or give a presentation on how I-O can connect to the group's work
- Work with regional SIOP and SHRM groups who may already be doing outreach; if they aren't, offer to start a program
- Take advantage of take your kids to work day—if you don't have kids, take someone else's or give a presentation to the group of kids who come to your office

### **RESOURCES TO SHARE**

Visibility brochure by SIOP entitled "Top Minds and Bottom Lines: What Can I-O Psychology do for your business?"

<http://www.siop.org/visibilitybrochure/topminds.pdf>

Visibility marketing slick by SIOP entitled "What in a Name?: Job Titles for I-O Psychologists"

<http://www.siop.org/userfiles/file/What's%20In%20A%20Name.pdf>

Visibility brochure from SIOP entitled "Maximizing Human Potential Within Organizations: Learning the Science Behind Talent Management"

<https://www.siop.org/visibilitybrochure/visibility.aspx>

Connect with a community of I-O psychologists using My.SIOP.org

<http://my.siop.org/Home/Login?returnurl=%2f>

## WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO YOU

- The Educational Outreach program (THEO; formerly the SIOP Teacher's Bureau); maybe use it to find a [partner](#)
- Education and Training Committee for SIOP
- Other Visibility volunteers
- Resources on [siop.org](#) such as the ones listed above, and more

This year's annual conference is about "Making Connections." Connections need to happen on an international level with connections between East and West but also close to your home with the university, high school, and civic groups. In honor of this year's theme, we are launching the "Bridge Builders" initiative and encourage everyone to volunteer. "Bridge Builders" are those who are will-

ing to make a commitment to reach out to share their research, work, or a general orientation to I-O to at least one university, high school, or civic group. Just think, if even half of the 8,000 SIOP members were willing to make a connection this year, and give one talk to 25 people, we'll have reached 100,000 people by next year. In 10 years, we'll introduce I-O psychology to over 1,000,000 people. Incredible, but true. At the conference this year, connect with one of us at the "Building Bridges" booth on the first full day of the conference. We'll give you a button as a visual expression of your commitment to making a connection for I-O this year. We'll also be available to help you strategize about how you can best make the connection and connect you with available resources.

