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## WesCAN, e-portfolio offer networking opportunities

As Wesleyan students, we have access to so many resources that it is difficult to take advantage of them all. Although sometimes overlooked, our E-portfolios contain more than the links to essentials like e-mail and WesMaps. Features like WesCAN, an innovative website operated by the Career Resource Center (CRC), are also accessible through students' portfolios.

WesCAN is the Wesleyan Career Advisor Network, a program that allows students to contact alumni and parents whose careers they find interesting. It is located under Tools and Links on the website. According to Mike Sciola, Director of the CRC, WesCAN has existed in some form for more than 18 years.

We recently moved it into the student portfolio to give students easier access, Sciola said. While all alumni with few exceptions are included in the database, parents are added only when they specifically volunteer. "

The WesCAN home page includes one huge disclaimer.

Do not ask them for a job. Sciola said, quoting the website verbatim.

It is very important for students to understand that alumni and parents should be asked for advice, not help, he said. There is a big distinction. While hundreds of positive networking contacts take place every year and we hear very positive feedback from both the student and alumni, once in a while we receive feedback that a student has been too casual, poorly prepared, or in one recent case, just plain rude. This reflects poorly not only on the student, but also on Wesleyan. "

To ensure that networking is a positive experience, the CRC offers a step-by-step guide that includes a sample contact letter and a list of appropriate questions to ask alumni (<http://www.wesleyan.edu/crc/networking/>). The CRC staff is also available for coaching.

Sciola cited a study conducted by the Harvard Business School, which found that 80 percent of job seekers find employment through networking.

While there are many job-posting sites, millions of students are using them, Sciola said. Tapping into the network will get you specific information about job and internship possibilities that match your interests that may not be listed in a database. "

Many students, particularly freshman and sophomores, reported that they were not familiar with WesCAN. Jennifer Curran, the Functional Project Manager for ITS who runs E-portfolios, believes that more students could benefit from the features available on their portfolios if they explored further.

The feedback I get from talking with students here and there is that they are very comfortable using the E-portfolio for its required purposes, like online registration, and they use it as a quick place to check their grades or email, for instance, " Curran said. I don't get the impression that all the tools and resources in the portfolio are being utilized to the fullest. Over 400 students have posted resumes, and more than 500 have entered information or attachments to the Welcome page and other pages in their portfolios, and that is great. But I would love to see those numbers go up. "

The portfolio has a lot of potential to be really helpful, but it takes a lot of effort to use, said Gabi Fondiller '07.

It is not for lack of computer skills that many students have not used these features, according to Curran. In fact, she sees Wesleyan students as very technologically inclined.

While one of the primary goals of this tool is to house and present academic and advising information and reports, we also realize that we have a real challenge to make it fast, make it interesting and frankly, to try to meet the expectations of such a tech-savvy group who spends a lot of time on the Internet, Curran said.