



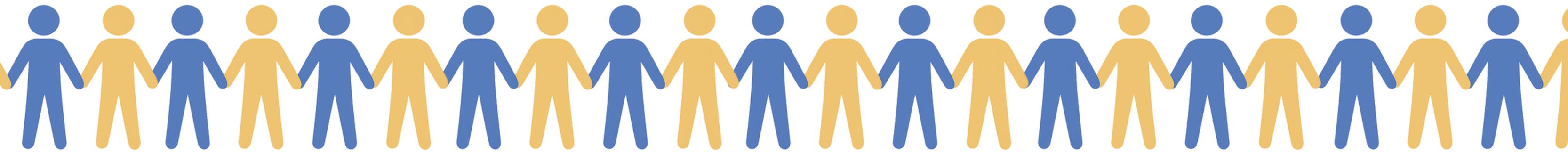
Building Your Professional Village

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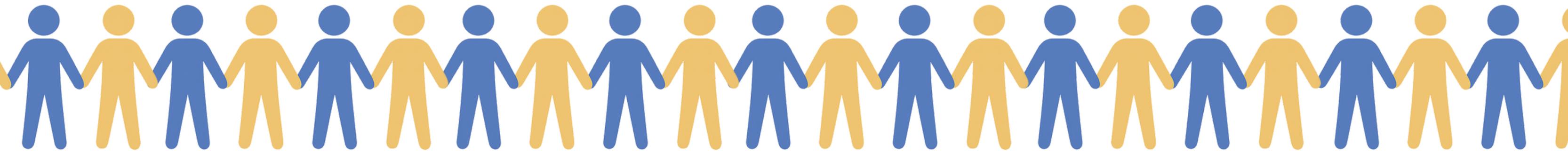
Annual Conference
March 11 - 13, 2026

Part I: Clarify Your Personal Brand

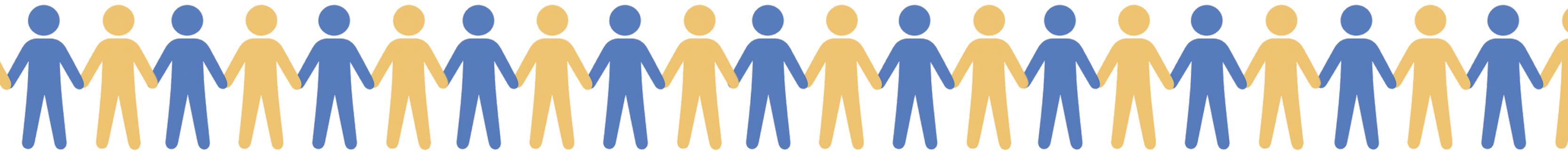


Pair & Share

Share one strength or value you wrote down and where it could show up outside financial aid.

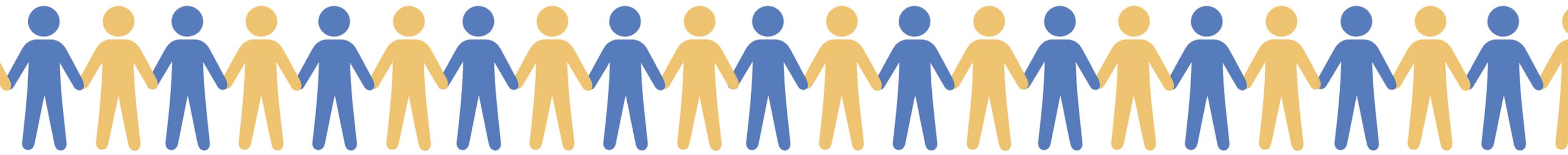


Part II: Map Your Professional Village



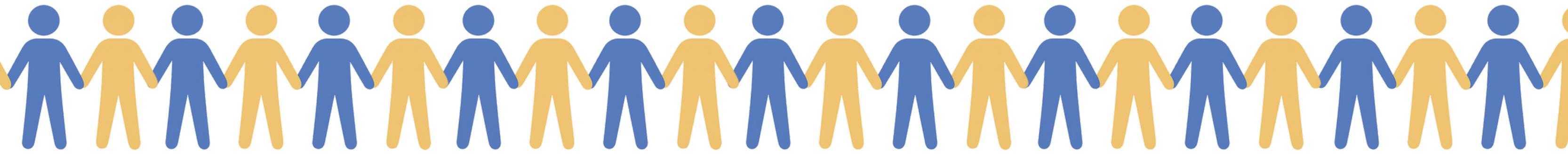
Part III: Level -Based Networking Reality Check

What is one realistic way someone
at this level can build connections
outside financial aid?



Resume Errors to Avoid

- **Listing only job duties, not achievements**
- **Overloading with jargon or acronyms** – Committees may include non -aid staff
- **Failing to show student impact** – Highlight how your work improved student outcomes (e.g., increased FAFSA completion, improved financial literacy, reduced default rates).
- **Ignoring compliance and accuracy** – Not showing knowledge of Title IV, state, or institutional policy compliance
- **Not tailoring to the institution** – Using a generic resume instead of emphasizing experience that matches the university's demographics, systems (Banner, PeopleSoft, Workday), or priorities.
- **Leaving out professional development** – Forgetting to list NASFAA credentials, association involvement, or training
- **Typos or formatting inconsistencies**
- **Lose the objective statement**



Consider a Functional Resume

Organizes by skills or areas of expertise (e.g., “Compliance,” “Student Counseling,” “Data & Reporting”) with less emphasis on job timeline.

- **Strengths:**

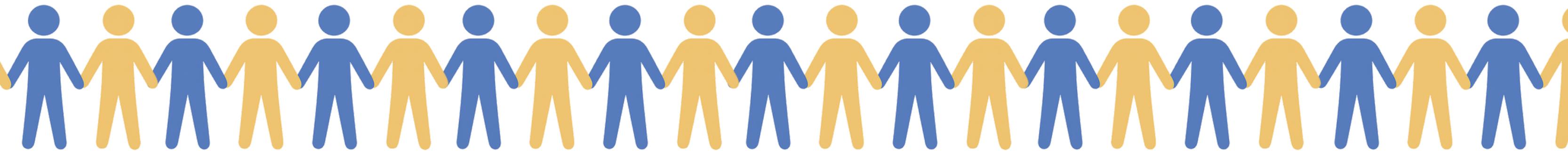
- Spotlights transferable skills across roles or industries.
- De-emphasizes employment gaps or short-term roles.
- Useful if you’ve done varied work but want to highlight specific strengths (e.g., compliance, verification, outreach).

- **Weaknesses:**

- Less familiar to hiring committees —sometimes seen as hiding gaps.
- Harder to show career progression or specific accomplishments tied to roles.

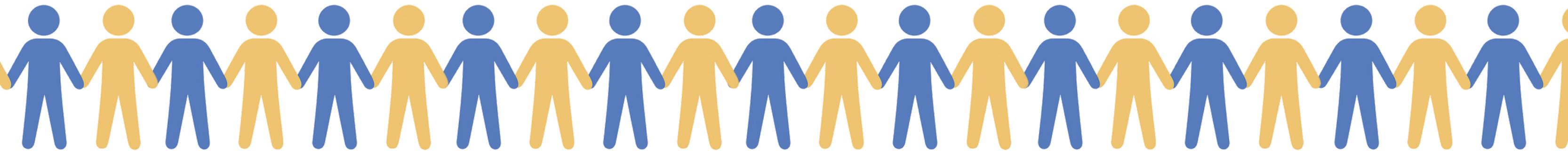
- **Best For:**

- Candidates with strong skill sets but less traditional work history.
- Transitioning to a new area of higher education or an entirely new career path.

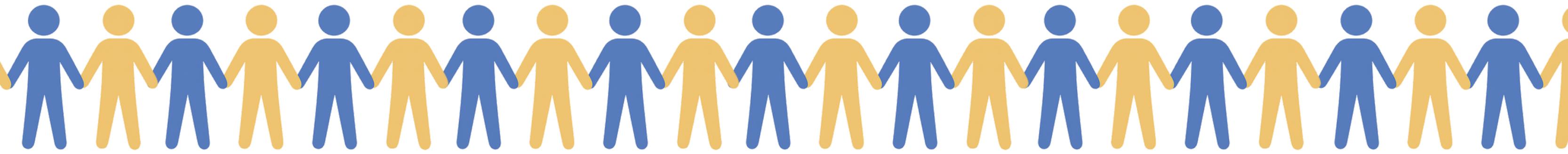


Why Use LinkedIn?

- Tool to build and promote your personal brand
- Stay connected to your existing network
- Expand your network within higher education
 - Colleagues at other institutions, policy makers, vendors, and associations
- Stay informed and discover best practices
- Learn about collaborative opportunities
- Recruit for open positions within your office or learn about positions you may want to apply for
- Showcase your contributions
 - Conference presentation/attendance, articles/blog posts, etc.



Part IV: Commit to One Action



Resources to
Continue
Your Growth:



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Stronger Together:
Resilience Through Community

NAME:



Building Your Professional Village

Part I: Clarify Your Personal Brand

Your brand is not your job title. It's what people experience when they work with you.

List the Top 3 values you bring to your work:

1.

.....

2.

.....

3.

.....

Roles & Identities I Embrace:

Examples: problem-solver, mentor, learner, advocate, data-translator

.....

Strengths Others Often Come to Me For:

Think skills, approaches or perspectives - not just tasks

.....

How These Strengths Translate Beyond Financial Aid:

Who else on campus could benefit from this?

.....

Part II: Map Your Professional Village



Networking is about relationships, not job searching. List names in each circle.

A. Inner Circle - People Who Know My Work Well

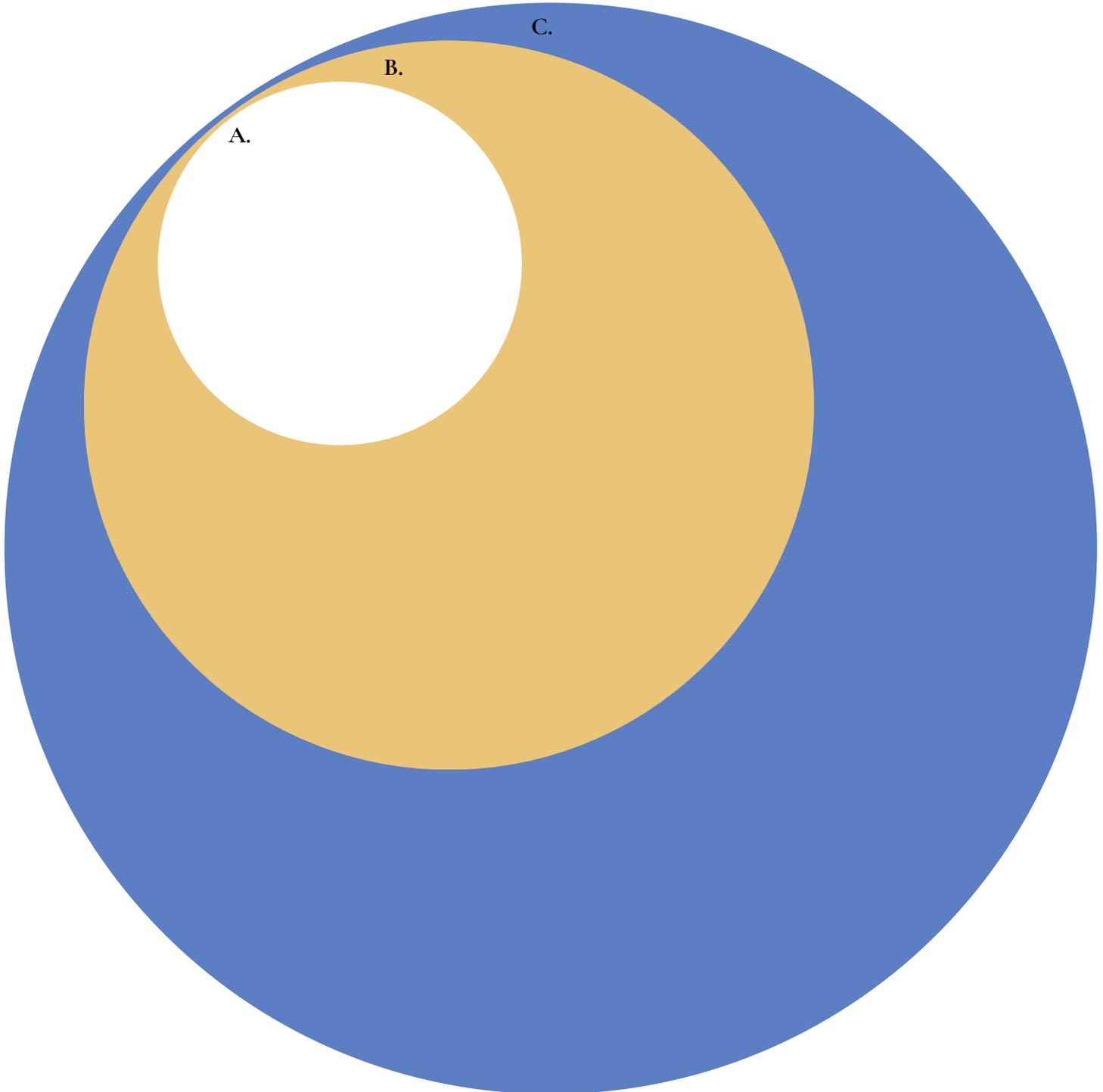
(Supervisor, close colleagues, trusted collaborators)

B. Middle Circle - Cross-Campus Collaborators

(Advising, student success, registrar, faculty, IT, etc.)

C. Outer Circle - Connections I'd Like to Build

(Committees, offices, institutions, or individuals)



Part III: Level-Appropriate Networking



My Current Role Level:

- Entry-Level / Early Career
- Mid-Level / Lead / Assistant Director
- Senior / Associate Director / Director

One realistic way someone at my level can network outside financial aid:

.....

.....

Part IV: Commit to One Action

Small steps build strong networks.

One action I will take in the next 30 days:

(Example: attend a meeting, request a coffee chat, volunteer for a workgroup)

.....

Who does this involve?

.....

When will I do it?

.....

Part V: Reflection Prompt

How might expanding my professional village make my work more effective - or more sustainable?

.....

.....

.....

You are not building your career alone. Strong networks grow through shared work, shared purpose, and shared curiosity.

Continue Building Your Professional Village

This resource is designed to help you continue the work you started during the session. You don't need to do everything at once—small, intentional steps build strong professional networks over time.

Turning Your Personal Brand into Action

Your personal brand shows up in:

- How you describe your work
- How others experience collaborating with you
- What people remember about you after a meeting

If you feel “stuck” with resumes, LinkedIn, or networking, revisit these questions:

- What problems do people trust me to solve?
- What values guide how I show up?
- What kind of colleague do I want to be known as?

Resume Refresh

Focus on These 3 Things First:

- Shift from tasks to outcomes
 - Instead of: “Processed financial aid files”
 - Try: “Resolved complex aid issues to support student enrollment and persistence”
- Use plain language
 - Assume the reader is *not* a financial aid expert
 - Spell out acronyms the first time
 - Focus on student impact, compliance, collaboration, or systems improvement
- Align bullets with your brand
 - Ask yourself:
 - Does this bullet reflect one of my strengths or values?
 - Would someone outside financial aid understand its importance?

★ Check out your student employment or career services office for possible free resume reviews!



LinkedIn Optimization

You do not need to post content or be “active” to benefit from LinkedIn. Three sections matter most:

1. **Headline**

- Not just your job title
- Add context or focus (Example: Financial Aid Counselor | Student Access & Equity | Process Improvement)

2. **About Section (3-4 sentences)**

- Who you are
- What you care about
- What kind of work energizes you

3. **Experience**

- Use resume bullets
- Focus on impact, not internal jargon

Networking

Networking is:

- Working alongside others
- Asking good questions
- Showing up consistently

Networking is NOT:

- Cold outreach
- Self-promotion
- Asking for favors

Easy Entry Points:

- Committee or workgroup participation
- Coffee chats with colleagues in other offices
- Asking someone how their role connects to yours
- Following up after a meeting with a thank-you or insight

Other ways to connect with colleagues outside financial aid:

- Orientation planning team
- Guest speaker for first-year seminars
- Financial literacy workshops with career services or housing
- Staff Council participation
- Veteran services or disability access committee
- Campus affinity or identity-based councils
- Campus mentorship program
- Participate in hiring search committees
- Facilitate academic advisor, success coach, or faculty trainings
- Statewide or system-level working group
- Retention, persistence or compliance initiatives or implementation teams

★ Consider volunteering for ISFAA to continue growing your network!

