

# Green Networking Night Testimonies



## Ariela Sela

Sustainability Analyst

Novelis, Inc.

Emory College, Class of 2014 – B.S. in Environmental Sciences, minor in Spanish

Concentration in Environment & Sustainability Management

“I first attended Green Networking Night my junior year. I had just declared as an Environmental Science major with concentration in Environment and Sustainability management. I heard about the event from students and professors who all highly recommended it as a way to meet green professionals in the area. To prepare, I studied the manual pretty thoroughly. I think that was pretty necessary when figuring out who I wanted to talk to and what kinds of questions to ask each professional.

In the two years that I attended, I met a variety of professionals from many sectors, many of whom I’ve since networked and kept in touch with. These individuals have explained to me the landscape of sustainability in their particular sector, which has ultimately helped me decide what type of green job I wanted to pursue. I ended up meeting a professor of mine at the event, which after an enlightening semester in his class, led to an internship in corporate sustainability. I later became his teaching assistant for that same class. The experience I got in working for him helped me tremendously to prepare for the post-graduate professional world.

Green Networking Night and the contacts I made at the event helped me develop a career plan. Figuring out that I wanted to work in the green sector what a huge feat in itself, however once I crossed that bridge, there was still no much to discover. The contacts I met at GNN helped guide me through what it is that they did and how they got to where they did. All of their personal anecdotes, pieces of advice, and contacts helped me discover my interest in corporate sustainability. I am now working as a sustainability analyst at Novelis. I know that this is the first step on my path to a long-term career in corporate sustainability.

Networking is an essential skill to have in today’s job market. While many associate it with meeting others for the sake of finding a job, it really is so much more than that. Connecting with others in your industry or sector can lead to various conversations that can be mutually beneficial. Firstly, articulating what it is you want to do to others will help you better understand this yourself and your own

goals. Secondly, networking helps you become comfortable having business conversations and conducting yourself in a professional manner. Thirdly, it's essential to learning what others do, and making connections in sectors that may not necessarily be for you (and discovering that they may not be for you in the first place.) Finally, it can eventually lead to landing that job.

Be confident! The professionals at this event showed up for the purpose of meeting and speaking to you! You would be surprised at how willing and in most cases eager they are to help you. As a word of advice, speak to the individuals you might be more comfortable with initially, and then move on to those who are more intimidating to you. Maybe start off with a recent alumni, someone closer to you in age, someone just starting out in the work force, or someone you might automatically have something in common with (i.e. from the same hometown, same major in college, etc.) Later, after two or three warm-up conversations, move on to those who you are more nervous to speak with, potential employers, company executives, government officials, etc." #



**Asa Posner**, LEED AP BD+C, O+M

**Senior Sustainability Consultant**

**Sustainable Investment Group (SIG)**

**Oxford College, Class of 2006**

**Emory College, Class of 2008 – B.A., Summa Cum Laude,  
Environmental Studies (minor in Music)**

"The first Green Networking night I attended was in 2009, a little over a year after my graduation from Emory (Summa Cum Laude, Environmental Studies). Paul Bredderman, who helped me with some career direction while I was in school, invited me to the event – it may have been the first ever Green Networking Night. I secured my first job directly after graduation, so I had roughly one year of experience at that point. I prepared by reading through the brochure and bios of some of the other professionals attending the event. As a very recent college graduate, I knew I would be able to relate to what the students were going through, but I also wanted to use it as a networking opportunity myself in order to meet some more established professionals.

I remember being surprised at how many students came to the event. Even when I was part of the ENVS department a year or two prior, it still felt like a small department. This event showed a greater level of interest in environmental stewardship and sustainability than I realized had existed at Emory. Many of the students I spoke with were underclassmen and were using the event to gauge their interest in majoring in Environmental Studies and pursuing sustainability as a career path.

As I mentioned, I began working at a small sustainability/green building consulting firm directly after graduating from Emory, so when I actually attended my first Green Networking Night back in 2009, I was only a year or so into my professional career. I was still spending plenty of my professional life learning the green building industry and understanding the design, construction, and operations of green

buildings. At that point, I thought that career path may be a stepping stone towards something else – I just wasn't sure what.

Currently, I'm with a new consulting firm, but still specializing in green buildings and sustainability consulting. My passion for the field has only grown stronger. My first position helped me gain a lot of experience with design and construction, but my new position focuses more on the ongoing operations of green buildings. It's a fascinating dichotomy – one that I find I'm still learning things from even to this day.

I would say that networking (and learning how to network) is one of the most valuable things a student can gain from attending this event. Simply learning how to engage in intelligent, professional conversations in a room full of people you've never met before is an incredibly valuable skill. Some people have a knack for it, while others need more practice.

My first "real" networking opportunities came after I was working at my first job. It was a bit nerve-racking, as I hadn't really experienced professional networking before. The more events I went to, the better and easier it got. The Green Networking Night event is an invaluable opportunity for students to get this sort of practice, which will prepare them for any professional career path.

My first piece of advice would be: COME TO THE EVENT!!! The folks at Emory have done a fantastic job putting this event together for years, and it's a great opportunity to meet students and professionals interested in sustainability and the environment.

Second piece of advice: Being nervous is ok. But remember, the professionals are EXCITED to talk with you. They're excited because there are young people interested in the same thing they are. They're excited because they enjoy hearing about your interests and hopefully being able to provide you with some guidance or advice based on their own experiences. Also, they're just normal people looking for interesting conversation at a networking event, too!

Lastly, even if you're not even sure you want a career path in sustainability or environmentalism, this event is a great opportunity to get some experience and practice networking. Look through the bios of some of the professionals attending the event. If one or two spark your interest, seek them out and get to know them. Most professionals would be glad to keep in touch with you after the event and can be a great resource for you going forward.



## Brandon Bedford

Candidate for Masters in Public Policy, focus on Environmental Policy

University of Maryland, College Park

Emory College, Class of 2011 – B.A., Environmental Studies

“The first time I attended Green Networking Night was I a sophomore in the Environmental Studies program at the College of Arts and Sciences. I heard about this event through an email advertisement from the ENVIS listserv. The first time I attended, I was very excited about meeting professionals in the

environmental field, but did not know what I wanted to do. When I registered and received the bios of attendees, I skimmed the list and did some quick research on some of the people/organizations I found most interesting. This helped me have some questions ready when meeting people I found interesting at the event.

At my first networking night, I connected with Ayanna Williams from Park Pride. A few months later, I applied to the Student Servant Leadership Program at the Emory Center for Ethics and had an interview with Ayanna at Park Pride for an internship. I was hired and that summer immensely shaped my career. I spent the summer working with Park Pride interviewing community groups throughout Atlanta and helping connect them to resources they needed in local government and businesses throughout the city of Atlanta. Through this internship, I learned that I wanted to work on urban issues.

At my first networking night after college graduation, I met Thatcher Young with ignition. A few months later when a job opening became available at ignition in their Sustainability Marketing division, I interviewed with Thatcher and he remembered me from the networking night event. I was hired and spent the next 2.5 years working at ignition. In my time there as Sustainability Manager, I conducted sustainability analyses on marketing event programs and worked on corporate sustainability campaigns for Coca-Cola, NBCUniversal, and other companies. Through this job, I learned a lot about private sector sustainability.

My career goals have changed significantly since first attending the event. When I first attended Green Networking Night, I knew I wanted to work in the environmental field, but still did not know what I wanted to do. As I made more connections and learned about the diversity of opportunities available in the environmental field, I decided that I wanted to work specifically on environmental policy issues in urban areas.

Currently, I am working on my Masters in Public Policy at the University of Maryland College Park with a focus on Environmental Policy. After taking a few years off from school to learn more about sustainability from the private sector perspective, I knew I needed to go back to school to pursue a career in policy. After graduating from UMD, I hope to work in a think tank or government agency in the Washington DC area with a focus on environmental management in urban areas.

Green Networking Night was a critical part of getting me where I am today, as it connected me to people who provided me opportunities that literally changed my life. Every year, I was always excited to make new connections and learn about unique opportunities in the field. In addition to the job and internship, Green Networking Night helped me I make many other contacts that helped me get interviews for jobs and internships in government agencies, businesses, and nonprofit organizations throughout the Atlanta area. Green Networking Night was also an unparalleled opportunity to practice networking with some of the brightest and friendliest professionals in Atlanta.

Certainly attend. Green Networking Night is a very relaxed and friendly atmosphere with fantastic food. You do not have to be an Environmental Studies major or even have much knowledge about the field. These professionals understand because there is no “right path” in sustainability. Everyone in the industry comes from unique backgrounds and has a very different journey that led them to their current position. And who knows where simple conversations could lead. I certainly would not have predicted this journey when I attended my first Green Networking Night my sophomore year of college.”



## Shira Weintraub

Marketing Programs Manager

Urjanet, Inc.

Emory College, Class of 2014 – B.S. in Environmental Studies and Economics

“I first attended Green Networking Night as a freshman. At the time, I hadn’t picked a major yet, but I knew that I was interested in ecosystem functions and how humans were impacting the environment. I heard about the event from one of my peer’s Sophomore Advisors. I prepared for the event by reading through all of the bios and figuring out with whom I wanted to talk and what areas I found most interesting. Having such a comprehensive list of professionals in the sustainability realm really facilitated my networking, which ultimately helped me focus my interests and career goals.

In my Senior year, I had made networking an even greater priority. I reached out to make appointments to meet with several of the Green Networking Night guests *after* the event, as part of networking for my job search. I’ll give you some insights to what I learned from each:

I first started developing my networking skills at Green Networking Night. Participating in the event gave me more confidence. I liked how I could join in on a group conversation and also have one-on-one discussions. I liked that it wasn’t as formal as a career fair. I felt I could have genuine conversations; I was not seen as just a “job seeker”, but instead as someone who was genuinely passionate about sustainability and wanted to learn more. I would definitely recommend following up with everyone you talk to at Green Networking Night. Relationship building doesn’t happen overnight!

When I first attended, I wasn’t sure what role in sustainability I wanted. I was considering eventually working for the EPA or taking on a more technical or research-oriented role. As I continued to network throughout my years at Emory, I discovered that I wanted to work in a fast-paced and dynamic business

environment. I enjoyed learning about innovative products and technologies geared towards saving resources and improving operational efficiencies.

I am currently the Marketing Programs Manager for Urjanet, the world's first and only provider of automated Big Energy Data that enables organizations across all industries to make smarter, more profitable, and eco-friendly energy decisions. Urjanet's platform automatically delivers high-quality utility data directly to business intelligence, energy management, accounting, and procurement systems – the systems that rely on accurate energy data to cut energy costs and reduce carbon footprints.

In my role, I am responsible for an array of different projects involving content management, demand generation, and the development of new market penetration strategies. The work I am doing now plays directly into my long-term goals of helping large companies reduce their environmental impacts in cost-effective ways.

Participating in networking has helped me build real relationships with sustainability professionals in the Atlanta area. I actually found out about Urjanet through networking. I met with Barkha Malik, the CEO of Barkha's Custom Sourcing, a woman-owned eco-textile development and sourcing company based in Atlanta, to talk about how she coordinates project logistics and develops sustainable products to meet her clients' needs. During our conversation, she mentioned that I might be interested in her husband's company, Urjanet. She then spoke with her husband and helped set up an interview!

For your first time networking at a mixer, being nervous is okay! To reduce your nerves, I would suggest coming prepared with a few questions to ask and an idea of how you will describe yourself. There is so much to gain from attending, and really nothing to lose. Building relationships early on will absolutely help in the long run. Professionals who you make connections with are much more likely to keep you in mind when opportunities arise in the future.”

## Zachary Hennessee

Senior Research Analyst / Environmental Scientist II

Toeroek Associates

Oxford College, Class of 2008

Emory College, Class of 2010 – B.A. in Environmental Studies



“I began attending environmental networking events at Emory when I was a junior in 2008. After declaring my major as Environmental Studies, I began to ask myself what it meant to have a career in environmental studies. At that point, I began to take advantage of the many resources offered to me by the Career Center, including the Green

Networking Nights. These events enabled me to have a more thorough understanding of the breadth of opportunities afforded to Emory students interested in the environmental field. Professionals from the

public, private, and non-profit sectors were represented, in fields ranging from engineering to policy to law. As a student who was passionate about the environment but unsure about how I wanted to focus my energies, the networking nights helped me hone in on the types of work that interested me.

I chose to focus on environmental consulting, with a specific concentration in environmental justice issues. Through one of my professors at Emory, I had the opportunity to serve on the board of a local non-profit that provided technical support to environmentally marginalized communities in Georgia. That work led me to an interest in EPA's Superfund program, which led me to my current job with Toeroek Associates. Since 2010, I have worked to provide legal support services for EPA's Superfund Enforcement Division. I plan to attend law school for environmental law in the Fall of 2015."