



## Career Development Center Guide to Informational Interviews

Informational interviews are fact-finding meetings that will help you gain insight into an industry, occupation or a specific employer, learn what types of skills are needed in the job, and establish contacts that may help you find employment in the future.

What you can learn:

- Firsthand information about a career field in which you have an interest.
- Knowledge about the skills and qualifications needed for a job in that field, so that you can relate this information to your own skills, interests, and values.
- An understanding of how people feel about their work and what they do in a typical day.
- Knowledge of the industry, recent trends and developments, and jargon used.
- Contacts and a network for the future.

Who to call:

- Ask friends, parents, family members, professors, GAs, career counselors, and acquaintances if they know anyone employed in the career you are researching.
- Tell them that you are seeking their advice and information on their field, not a job!
- Use directories, databases, and resources available through the Career Development Center website

How to prepare for an informational interview:

- It is a process that you initiate. You select the people with whom you wish to talk, schedule the meetings, begin the questions and guide the flow of conversation.
- Learn as much as you can about the organization. Research and prepare before your meeting. You should gain some knowledge about the person you will meet, the employer, its products or services, size, etc. You should never ask about information that you could obtain on your own.
- Write a cover letter to the contact person. Follow up with a phone call approximately one week later.
- The day of the meeting you should dress professionally like you are interviewing with the employer and bring a copy of your resume.
- Prepare questions (10-15). Remember you are the one asking the questions and directing the conversation. Be genuine and ask questions for which you would really like to know the answers.

Making the initial call:

- Approximately a week after you send the letter, call to arrange an appointment. Usually before 9:30 and after 4:00 are the best times to reach an individual. If applicable, mention that you were referred by a mutual acquaintance.
- Tell them your name, who referred you (if applicable), why you are contacting them and how you would like to meet (remember to mention that you will only take 20-30 minutes of their time - and then stick to that!).

During the interview:

- Arrive 10-15 minutes before your appointment.
- Be prepared to initiate the conversation.
- Adhere to the original time constraint of 20-30 minutes.
- Ask for referrals to other appropriate individuals in the field or in related organizations.
- Remember that this interview is for information gathering and advice seeking; ask what you want to know!
- Take notes.
- Do not ask for a job, but you may ask their opinion on how to obtain one in the field!
- It is important to make a favorable impression; you never know how this person may help you.

Some sample questions that you might ask:

- How did you decide on this career? What was your career path? Your major in college?
- What skills, education, and experience are needed to enter this field?
- What are the entry-level jobs?
- What skills are needed most for this type of job?
- What type of individual usually succeeds?
- What are some of the problems/decisions you are likely to face in a day?
- What are the rewards/challenges/frustrations of your work?
- What do you wish you would have known prior to entering this field?
- What is it like to work in this organization?
- How does your job affect your general lifestyle?
- What would you change about your job if you could?
- Where do you see yourself going from here?
- What are the new developments in the field?
- What steps would you recommend that I take to prepare to enter this field?
- Can you suggest anyone else whom I could contact for additional information?
- What are the professional journals in this field that I should read?
- In which professional associations would you recommend that I participate?

After the interview:

- Always follow up after the interview by writing a thank you note!