

## Informational Interviewing

When you are considering a potential career, it just makes sense to talk to people in that field. An informational interview gives you the opportunity to talk with professionals who are currently working in the field to gain a better understanding of an occupation. You will benefit by gathering information and advice from experienced professionals, while also building your professional network.

Steps to informational interviewing:

### **1. Identify one or more occupations for informational interviews**

- Read all you can about the field before the interview.
- Read about the interviewee and workplace on the organization's website before the interview.
- Decide what you would like to learn about the occupation, and prepare a list of questions that you would like to have answered.

See below for sample questions to ask.

### **2. Identify people to interview**

- Start with people you already know: Parents' friends, friends' parents, neighbors, fellow church members, past and present instructors, etc.
- Expand out: Alumni (career services), professional organizations, the yellow pages, and guest speakers from your classes are good resources.
- You may also call an organization and ask for the name of the person by job title. Remember that people like to help students out with job information. One student whose dream job was to run a Fortune 500 company called the president of Levi Strauss & Co., asked for an interview, and got it.

### **3. Scheduling the informational interview**

- Contact the resource person by telephone or email. You can also have someone who knows the interviewee make the appointment for you.
- Briefly introduce yourself, and explain why you are contacting this individual.
- Briefly explain your interests or experiences in the person's field.
- Be straightforward and tell him/her you are seeking information and advice.

See below for sample introductions.

#### **4. Conducting the informational interview**

-Be an attentive listener.

-Have a notepad and take notes during or right after the interview.

-This is an informal discussion so don't be nervous or intimidated—just relax and be yourself!

-Be respectful of your interviewee's time. If you have asked to talk with them for 30 minutes, do not take longer, even if some of your questions are left unanswered. It is ok to ask the interviewee if they are open to you following up with them in the future if you have other questions.

#### **5. Follow-up with a thank you**

-Be sure to thank them for their time. A thank-you card, letter, email, or phone call shows your appreciation and can go a long way.

Sample letter: "Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to serve as a job shadow mentor for the afternoon. I learned a great deal about how an engineer uses computers, and I really enjoyed taking a tour of the facility."

## Sample Introductions

Email:

Dear Mr. \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a student at Baylor University, and am currently majoring in \_\_\_\_/undecided about my major. \_\_\_\_\_ has been of interest to me since I took a class in that subject during my first semester at Baylor. Your company has an outstanding reputation in the field.

I would appreciate the opportunity to talk with you for 15-30 minutes and discuss the practice of your specialty. I am available \_\_\_\_\_. Is there a time that would be convenient for you?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Joey Baylor

Phone:

“Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I’m a student from Baylor University. I got your name from \_\_\_\_\_. You’re in the line of work that I’m interested in, and I was hoping that you could help me gain insights into the profession. I would like to talk with you for 15-30 minutes so that I can find out more about your expertise in the field. Any information and advice you can give me would be much appreciated.”

## Sample Informational Interview Questions

What is your job like? What is a typical day or week like?

What are the duties/responsibilities of your job?

What percentage of your time is spent doing what?

Are there busy and slow times or is the work activity fairly constant?

What education or skills are needed to do this?

What are the major qualifications and experiences needed for success?

Can you suggest some ways a student could obtain the necessary experience?

What are the most challenging aspects about the job?

Why did this type of work interest you, and how did you get started?

How would you describe the work atmosphere/culture?

What do you enjoy most about the work? What do you like the least?

How well did your college experience prepare you for this job?

If you could do things over again, would you choose the same path? What would you change?

How is the economy affecting this industry?

What is the employment outlook? How much demand is there for people in the field?

What are the salary ranges? How much can I expect to make starting out?

What advice would you offer someone considering this career?

Do you know of other people whom I might talk to who have similar jobs?