



Informational Interviewing

To conduct an informational interview, set up an appointment with an individual to learn more about a specific occupation. The informational interview will help you:

- Focus on your career path and research your ideal job.
- Determine industry segments which are growing/expanding.
- Seek out “trouble areas” within your field and determine which skills you have, or need to gain, in order to fill that gap within your field.
- Gain information that is local, specific, and up-to-date in your chosen field.
- Make an informed career decision and explore your qualifications for specific positions.
- Gain contacts and expand your network, which will likely be useful in any job search you conduct.

With whom should you do informational interviews and where should you speak with organizational representatives?

- **Career Fairs and Company Info Sessions-** Ask for information about each company and ask each representative for a business card.
- **Professors-** They should know of alumni who are employed in organizations of interest to you. Employers may contact them directly about job openings. They may have had guest lecturers that are contacts in a company or industry.
- **Alumni-** Use the LinkedIn Alumni Search to find CSU alumni in your industry.
- **Student Clubs-** Network with the guest speakers and club members.
- **Professional or Trade Organizations-** Meet professionals in your career by joining worthwhile organizations, or attending monthly meetings and conferences as a guest.
- **People-** Ask friends, your friend’s parents, family acquaintances and people mentioned in newspapers, radio, or television.
- **Companies & Organizations-** Contact directly.

The steps you should take in organizing the informational interview are as follows:

- Write a letter requesting asking for 15-30 minutes of someone’s time to talk about their career path/current position (and try to respect the time limit that you set)
- If possible, gather some information regarding the company before the interview.
- Think ahead; plan an agenda of topics you want to cover.
- You are setting up the interview, so you can take the lead in asking questions and gathering information. The questions that you ask will reflect your preparation and interest in the field.
- Follow up your informational interview with a thank you note.

While you’re at the informational interview be sure to:

- Observe the surroundings/atmosphere, interaction of employees, attitude of person being interviewed, and the presence or absence of a diverse mix of employees and management.
- Make sure people understand you are gathering information about an occupation and not asking for a job.



Sample Questions for Informational Interviewing

Opening/General Questions:

- How did you get started in this field/industry? Why did this particular occupation or industry interest you?
- How did you view this career before you got into it? Is your view different now?
- How did you prepare for this career before you entered it? What is your educational background?
- What interests you most about your job and which aspects do you find most rewarding? What are some of the challenges?

Career Questions:

- What are your main responsibilities in this occupation?
- What does a typical daily or week look like?
- Would you suggest any specific academic areas that would be helpful in this career? How well did your educational training prepare you?
- What do you perceive as the major rewards of this field?
- What are the most important skills/ abilities and traits for this career?
- What are the major frustrations, pressures, or anxieties you have experienced in this field?
- What restrictions or freedoms do you find in this position?
- How does your career affect your general lifestyle?
- What special problems might someone new to this career have in adjusting to it?
- What professional organizations or journals do you belong to in reference to your career? How has your membership affected your career?
- Do you work with a team or alone?
- What is the best way to enter this occupation? Are there occupations that are similar?

Organization/Industry Questions:

- What are the major trends, changes, or issues facing your organization or industry? How might they affect new college graduates entering the job market?
- Is promotion generally from within the organization or with external candidates?
- What type of training programs/management programs does the organization offer?
- What is the entry level salary range for this industry?
- Is an advanced academic degree required for promotion?
- Is relocation expected for advancement in this career field?
- What is the company “culture” and work environment like here?
- Are there any other individuals or companies you would suggest I contact? If so, may I use your name as a referral?
- What are the growth projections for your company over the next five years?



Closing Questions:

- What methods do you use at your company to post employment opportunities?
- How do most folks find and attain positions here? (internal promotions, employee referrals, Employment agencies, classified ads, internet postings, college career fairs)?
- What are the most important factors that are considered in the hiring process for this type of work? (ex. education, work experience, language skills, job specific skills, personality traits, work ethic, etc.)
- Do you offer any internships or volunteer opportunities at your company? If so, how do you apply for one? What types of job duties would an intern or volunteer have?
- Can you suggest anyone else I get in contact with for additional information?