An informational interview is an opportunity to spend time (usually 30 minutes) with a professional who is working in a career field of interest to you. By talking with someone already in the field, you will acquire practical career information and expand your professional network. Most professionals enjoy talking to students about their experiences. Because they are doing you a favor, prepare for the informational interview to make it a positive experience for both parties. Remember, this is NOT an employment interview.

### Why Conduct an Informational Interview?

- For career exploration
- To explore fields of interests prior to picking a major, applying to graduate school, or starting the job search
- To identify potential internship sites
- For “fine-tuning” likely career options
- To network within a field of interest during the job search
- To identify potential permanent jobs

### Identify a Professional in a Field of Interest

- Talk to members of your personal, professional, and academic networks:
  - Personal Network-Family and Friends
  - Professional Network-Professional Associations, Business Contacts, Former Employers
  - Academic Network-Career Counselors, Professors, Alumni and Classmates
- Ask what they know that may be helpful
- Ask whom they know who may be helpful

### Contact the Professional

- Speak to the person directly if possible
- If that person is not available, explain your intentions and ask if someone else may be helpful
- When you talk to the contact, explain:
  - How you found out about them
  - Why you are calling
  - What kind of information you hope to get from the meeting
- Once a meeting time is established, verify the location, date and time
- If the contact is unable to meet with you, ask if he/she could recommend someone else
- If necessary, write a “script” of what you will say ahead of time
BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Identify specific information this person may be able to provide to you
- Prepare to dress appropriately
- Put together a nice notebook with a pen, updated resumes and your questions
- Compile a list of questions to ask during the interview

Sample Questions include:
- How did you get started in the field?
- How did your academic major prepare you to work in this field?
- What kinds of experiences would help me become competitive in this field?
- What do you like most/least about your job?
- What is a typical day for you?
- What are some entry-level positions in this field?
- What kind of salary range and benefits could an entry-level person expect to receive?
- What are the most important factors looked at when hiring?
- What preparation would you recommend to get into this field?
- How do people usually find out about openings in this field?
- What advice do you have for someone entering the field?
- Can you recommend someone else for me to talk with about this field?

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Arrive 10-15 minutes early
- Treat everyone you meet in a professional manner
- Greet the interviewer by formal name and with a firm handshake
- Do not spend more than the agreed upon time unless the professional insists
- Ask your questions as the opportunities arise
- If the professional thinks different topics would be more beneficial to discuss, go with it
- Ask them if there is anyone else they would recommend you talk to
- At the end, thank them for their time and assistance, and shake hands as you leave

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Immediately after the interview, sit down and review the answers to the questions you asked
- Make note of any additional information gathered
- Make sure to note additional contact names offered by the professional
- Send a thank you letter to the professional within two days after the meeting. Thank them for their time and information. Mention anything that was particularly helpful for you. Tell them you would like to stay in contact with them
- Keep your contacts updated on your career progress. Some may have job leads for you in the future. Let them know when you have followed-up with contact names they gave you. Some will be interested in your career success
- Always maintain a professional relationship with any contacts

The Office of Career Services does not endorse this information as a full example of career possibilities. Additional research will assist you in making your career decisions.