

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

Informational interviews are conversations with alumni and other people that allow you to explore career paths, learning more about companies and networking with professionals. But remember that an informational interview is NOT a time to ask for a job or internship. Rather it is a time for you to request advice, inquire about opportunities and ask for referrals to other professionals. Before new contacts feel comfortable referring you for an opportunity, they will need to know you a bit better and understand your skills, values, interests and experiences.

1

IDENTIFY SOMEONE TO INTERVIEW

There are so many people that you can reach out to connect with. Friends, family, professors, advisors, professional organizations, alumni, staff, faculty and connections from LinkedIn or the career Network are all people you could consider. When contacting this person, make sure to use the correct spelling and pronunciation of contact's name, job title and salutation. Dear (First and Last Name)/Hiring Manager: *It's always best to address to someone specific.* Don't make assumptions – keep it general to first and last name.

CONTACT

2

Call or email to request a conversation. Be sure to explain why you are contacting them, how much time you are seeking, and how you learned about their work. You can also request a telephone interview, video call or an observational visit/job shadow. Your communication should be professional, clear, and concise.

3

SCHEDULING

Be prepared to adjust your schedule to find a time that is convenient for your contact to meet with you (lunch, coffee, zoom, phone, etc.). Suggest a few dates and times when contacting them. If you meet in person, consider maybe paying for the meal/coffee as a gesture of gratitude for their time to meet with you.

CONFIRM

4

Be sure you have agreed on the date and place of your meeting and send a brief confirmation email.

5

RESEARCH

Be sure to research and read about the career field before the informational interview. Informational interviews should not be a starting point for your career research and should supplement what you have already learned. Prior to the interview, research your contact's place of work/company/organization. This is a way for you to show your interest and knowledge in preparation for the interview.

PREPARATION

6

Prepare a list of relevant questions and an updated resume and business cards in case the person asks for a copy. Be aware that it may be inappropriate to offer it during your meeting. Let the contact determine the formality of the conversation.

7

APPEARANCE & ARRIVAL

The formality of your dress should match or exceed that of your interviewee's workplace. Check the weather and consider how long it will take you to get to the meeting place. Try to arrive 10-15 minutes early; since it is better to be early than late and gives you a bit of time to prepare.

THANK YOU

8

Ask for a business card before you leave and send a short and personalized note thanking the person for their time. Remember, these contacts can continue to serve as resources throughout your career.

STAY CONNECTED

9

Request to connect with your new contact on LinkedIn and occasionally like a post or tag them in one of your posts. Some ways to stay connected are creating a Google Alert for their organization to learn of any new clients, initiatives, and awards and send a congratulatory email. Ask if they are attending an upcoming conference – if so, set up a time to have coffee and catch up.

SAMPLE EMAIL

Dear (Full name of Professional),

My name is (Student Name) and I am a ____ year ____ major at Ithaca College. Currently, I am learning about different career paths in _____. (Career Services Professional Staff Member) at Ithaca College suggested I reach out to you. I was hoping to schedule a brief informational meeting to learn more about your time at IC, career journey and experiences as a _____. (Career Services Professional Staff Member) speaks very highly of you and mentioned you have had some incredible experiences over the past few years! I am in the Chicago area over Winter break and could meet you for coffee at any time between ____ and _____. If you are unable to meet face-to-face, I would greatly appreciate a brief (20-30 minute) phone or Zoom call. Thank you so much for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
“Student Name”
“your phone number”
“link to LinkedIn profile”

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK

- What led you to pursuing this type of work?
- What educational preparation would you recommend for a new hire in this field?
- What experiences do you expect new hires to have for this position?
- What is a typical day like for you?
- What challenges do you face in your position?
- What is the most enjoyable part of your job?
- How are employees typically promoted in this field? Do they typically stay with the company?
- How would you describe the culture of your organization?
- What do you recommend a student should do in order to be a strong applicant for internships and jobs?
- Do you have any more advice or other contacts I could reach out to?