INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

• According to Richard Bolles, author of the best-selling career handbook, What Color Is Your Parachute? an informational interview is a meeting in which a job seeker asks for career and industry advice rather than employment
  o Conducting an informational interview is a student’s opportunity to meet with professionals currently working in career areas of interest to the students
  o Students can gather valuable information regarding a career from a professional established in his/her career about and obtain information about the professional’s career path, previous positions, career mobility and educational background
• Informational interviews are initiated by the job seeker and students interview professionals about their jobs, their career paths and seek advice from professionals as a decision-making tool for students
• Informational Interviewing is one of the most effective ways to understand careers and employment options within majors.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

As you prepare to make contact with a professional in your specific career interest area, create a checklist to help you make the most of the informational interview experience.

_____ Identify specific career interest areas.

_____ Identify businesses, agencies, companies and organizations that employ those with interests similar to yours.

_____ Create a list of people you know. Include family, friends, professors, co-workers, and former supervisors. From this list, create a new list of people you know who work in the career field you are interested in.

_____ Contact the people on your list and tell them that you are looking to understand a career field better. Once you have a list of people to contact, research the businesses each are in and find out as much as you can about their business. This will prepare you for your initial contact and with the actual interview.

_____ Contact the Career Services Office. We can assist you with identifying and contacting a professional to interview.

_____ Compose an e-mail or place a phone call to the person you are interested in interviewing. Prepare what you are going to say or write and remember to be professional. The purpose of this initial contact is to introduce yourself and to request an informational interview.

_____ Make an initial contact. Be prepared to explain or describe an informational interview. Request an opportunity to meet with the professional at his/her place of employment. Ask for a brief period of time such 20-30 minutes.

_____ Once you have established a date and time to meet, send a confirmation e-mail.

_____ Prepare or update your resume and take it with you to your informational interview.

_____ Prepare a list of questions for the interview.

_____ After the information interview, write a thank you note, either e-mail or hand-written is acceptable.
MAKING CONTACT FOR AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

If you choose to communicate with your contact through e-mail, the following is a sample e-mail requesting an Informational Interview. If you are using e-mail to communicate, remember that this is your first contact with a professional and his/her company. **Be professional! Do not use texting abbreviations!**

Dear Ms. Smith:

*I am a junior majoring in Business Management at Cazenovia College. I was referred to you by Professor Jones.*

*I am considering several career options and would like to interview someone in the career field of operations management. What I would like to gain from a meeting is a greater understanding of the operations management field, the requirements for employment, the experiences needed to enter and succeed in this area as well as information about your career path.*

*I was wondering if you would consider meeting with me to answer some questions about your career path and field. The meeting time can be short (20-30 minutes) and I will have prepared questions to ask so that I do not waste your valuable time.*

*Thank you for considering my request. I will follow up with you within the next week.*

Sincerely,

*Sarah Reider*
*Cazenovia College, 2010*
*315.655.1111*

If you choose to make contact by phone, prepare a script before placing a phone call. This allows you the opportunity to practice what you want to say and to not forget anything. The following is a sample phone script to be used as a guideline for requesting an Informational Interview.

**INTRODUCE YOURSELF:** Hello, this is __________________. I am a junior business management major at Cazenovia College. I was given your name by my management professor, Dr. Jones. I am in the process of deciding on a specific career path and Dr. Jones thinks that you may be able to answer questions I have about operations management career.

**ASK FOR AN APPOINTMENT TO DISCUSS THE CAREER AREA OF THE PROFESSIONAL:** I would like to ask if I may interview you about your career. I would only need about 20 minutes and I would appreciate it if I could come to your office to see your company and get a feel for how your work is accomplished.

**ARRANGE FOR A CONVENIENT TIME TO MEET:** What would be the best time for you to meet? I can work around your schedule.
CONFIRM THE TIME AND DATE: Thank you for taking time to speak with me and to schedule an appointment. I will see you at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, October 24 at your office.

BEFORE THE INFORMATION INTERVIEW: Research the organization and possibly the person you will be meeting with. Find out about what the organization does, the organization’s philosophy, products the organization makes and/or people served. This will help you in your interview to put the answers you receive in context.

**INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

The questions listed below will give you some ideas for questions you may want to ask during an informational interview. Use this as a guideline or create your own questions. Please be sure to be aware of the time you have requested and try to finish your questions in the amount of time you said you needed.

- What are your duties and responsibilities?
- How do you spend your day?
- How did you get started at this company (or in your profession)?
- What do you like most about your job? What do you like least?
- What kind of person do you think is right for this kind of work?
- How can I learn more about this field? Are there specific trade journals I should be reading or associations I can join?
- How can I meet others in this field?
  What is the best way to get started (in this field or at this company)?
- What was your major in college?
- Does your job affect your personal life? If so, how?
- What educational degrees, licenses or other credentials are required for entry and advancement in this career field?
- How do people usually learn about job openings in your field?
- How do you define success?
- Does the organization view internships as a way of getting into this industry?
- What advice would you give me about pursuing this career field?
- Would you be willing to look at my resume and give me feedback on how it fits in to this industry?

Do keep an eye on the time. Remember this is your interview so start it on time and end it on time. You may not have time to ask all the questions listed; select those that you believe to be most important to you.

Write a follow-up thank you letter!