Informational Interviewing

An informational interview is an arranged meeting or telephone call with a person who works in a particular profession or organization that you are interested in learning more about. During an informational interview you are gathering information about a specific job, field of interest or company. You are not asking for a job.

Setting up and conducting an informational interview:

- Have a clear objective before you begin scheduling interviews. What is it you hope to gain? Who do you want to interview and why? Be clear about your goals.
- Have your questions written down and well thought out ahead of time.
- You may contact people by phone or email to request an informational interview. State right up front a time limit and your primary objective for the informational interview. Be polite, positive, and businesslike.
- Be flexible. The caller may wish to have you ask them questions right then and there or may prefer to schedule the interview at a later date. Be conscious of their time and keep the interview to 20–30 minutes.
- Try to schedule a face-to-face meeting whenever possible to gain exposure to the work environment and culture. Treat this meeting like an interview. First impressions count, so dress appropriately, be on time, be prepared and bring a copy of your resume just in case.
- Close by thanking them for their time and follow-up with a brief thank-you email or note.

Questions to Ask – Below are some suggested questions:

About the Career Field

- How did you get into this career? What did you do before entering this career?
- What is a typical day like? What are your responsibilities? What do you like most/least about your job?
- What advice do you have for someone preparing for a career in this field?
- What courses and/or advanced degree(s) would be helpful for me? What experience is necessary to enter this field?

About the Organization/Industry

- How did you get into this organization/industry?
- Describe your work environment.

About Future Growth/Salary Information

- Currently, how secure are positions in your field?
- What is the growth and promotional potential in your field? What areas are growing/changing in this field?
- What is a typical starting salary range in this field?

Follow-up

- Can you recommend other professionals with whom I should speak? May I use your name when I contact them?
- May I contact you again if I have further questions?
- Which professional publications/organizations and other resources do you consider relevant?