Informational Interview Worksheet

Informational interviewing is perhaps one of the most rewarding, yet underutilized, career development tools. As the name suggests, the goal of talking to people working in the field or occupation you are considering is to get information, not a job.

Informational interviews are opportunities to help you:

- Determine whether you’re in the right major for your career goals
- Make better choices about your career path and next steps
- Learn what a typical day or week is like on the job
- Build a network of professional contacts
- Gain confidence for job interviews by asking questions and providing information about yourself
- Map out strategies for making yourself more marketable when you are looking for work

Your Assignment

1. Find someone to interview

There are lots of ways to find people working in your field of interest, including:

- Career fairs and other on-campus networking events
- Referrals from professors, friends, colleagues, parents, classmates, etc.
- The Employer Directory of CareerLINK
- Recent graduates of your academic program
- LinkedIn connections (1st or 2nd degree)
- Professional associations

Once you’ve identified someone you’d like to talk to, make contact with that person via phone, email, or LinkedIn. If you are contacting this person in writing, try something like:

Dear Ms. Jones:
I obtained your name from the UMass Lowell Career Services & Cooperative Education Center. I’m a Civil Engineering student at UMass Lowell, planning to graduate in 2016. I am currently in the process of defining my career goals and attempting to learn more about my areas of interest, specifically ______________ and ______________. I thought you would be a great resource for information about this field, and was hoping you might be available for a short informational interview (either in person or over the phone) sometime during the next few weeks. Please let me know by return email or, if you prefer, by calling me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. Thank you for considering this request! I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Jake Smith
2. Prepare

Assuming you are successful in scheduling your informational interview, the following are things that you should do well in advance to be prepared:

- Research the company via LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and/or the organization’s website
- Write down all of the questions you plan to ask (hint: stick to open-ended questions, rather than those that require simply a “yes” or “no”)
- Plan to dress professionally
- Make sure your resume is up to date, and plan to bring it with you
- Know how to get to the interview and plan to arrive approximately 10 minutes early

3. Go on the interview

When interviewing people for information (versus them interviewing you for a job), there is less pressure to “sell” yourself; still, you should attempt to make a positive first impression.

You should be prepared to ask questions about the person’s job, industry, or organization, such as:

- What do you consider to be the best part of this job?
- Is there anything about this job (or industry) that doesn’t appeal to you?
- What has your career path been so far?
- What was your college major?
- If you could do it over, would you choose a different major, or do anything else differently?
- What recommendations would you have for a college student considering this profession?
- What pressing professional challenges do you see for this industry?
- What does a “typical” work day look like?
- Who else would you recommend I talk to, to further explore this field? When I contact them, may I mention your name?

Remember:

- Try to relax and enjoy yourself, but always behave professionally
- Introduce yourself and offer a firm, confident handshake
- Reiterate your promise to stay only 30 minutes (or however long you agreed upon)
- Ask your questions, but try to make it a conversation rather than an interrogation
- Take brief notes if it seems appropriate
- As the conversation comes to a natural close, thank the person for his/her time, ask for a business card, and shake hands before leaving

4. Follow up

Within 24 hours, send a thank-you note (email is fine). Express your appreciation for the time spent with you and mention your plan to follow through on any suggestions offered during the conversation.
5. Reflect

Type up a brief reflection of this experience and upload it to your CareerLINK account, following these steps:

- Include the wording “Informational Interview” in your file name
- Log into CareerLINK
- Click on “My Account” and then “My Documents”
- Next to “ProPath Documents,” click on “Add”