How to Conduct an Informational Interview

What's an informational interview?

The idea behind an informational interview is to find someone who is doing something you might want to do in the future, and interview them to learn more about the experiences, education, and opportunities that helped them get to where they are now. You'll also want to learn more from them about their job and what it looks like day-to-day and month-to-month. Can you envision yourself doing that job? What about something similar?

An informational interview has two main purposes:

1. To learn from a professional in your field about their own career journey and current position. They will likely have advice for you and can offer insight into the specifics of obtaining certain qualifications and undergoing the hiring process.
2. To expand your professional network.

Before you begin, check out this 3-minute video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6Pa4ZB4mvQ

STEP 1: Reflect, Research, Repeat!

- This first step involves a process of researching positions and organizations within your field, all the while reflecting on how they might align with your interests and strengths.
- Don't know where to start? Think: What guest speakers have you enjoyed in classes/ at events? Which organizations have you been exposed to through clubs and volunteer work?
- When looking online at organizations, check out their "Our People" and related pages that list current employers and staff. Read their bios if they're provided.
- Use LinkedIn and Google searching to find education and work history, as well as any blogs, personal websites, and publications that person might share publicly.

STEP 2: Reach Out

- Send a **professional** email to the contact that includes the following:
  - Introduce yourself if you've never met (including major and specialization). If you've met them before, remind them of who you are and where and when you met.
  - Briefly explain how you found their information. If you have a mutual contact, mention that.
  - Explain why you are interested in their work/ the organization they represent. (Be specific and genuine.)
  - Request a time to meet with them for 30 minutes to get their insight about next steps, ways to build certain skills, and suggestions they may have about new connections and opportunities to pursue.

STEP 3: Interview

- Prepare thoughtful questions that are specific to the person's work. You will be leading the conversation, so come prepared. Don't expect them to have a plan for a meeting that you initiated.
- Be sure to show up on time, and dress appropriately. If you're meeting in a casual setting like a café, business casual attire is fine. This means nice pants or skirt and collared shirt or blouse.
- If the interview is going well, ask if there are other people they think you should connect with. The person you're meeting with might help you make that connection!

STEP 4: Reflect (Again!)

- Overall, how did it go?
- What stood out to you from the interview? What was surprising? Useful?
- Who might you want to reach out to next?

Step 5: Follow Up

- Follow up promptly with a thank-you note. A handwritten note mailed to the employer or dropped off at their building is best, but an email is also acceptable. Send your email or mail your note the day after the interview if at all possible.
- Consider meeting with a career advisor or faculty mentor to debrief about the interview and help you set goals moving forward.

SENR Career Services is here to assist you with all aspects of career planning and professional development. Schedule an appointment with SENR Career Advisor, Lucia Hadella, by calling 614-292-2265

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