**WHAT IS AN “INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW”?**

“Informational Interviews” are professionally-oriented meetings where you ask questions to obtain information and advice about organizations, fields and industries, job functions, and career path opportunities. While you may hope the meeting leads to a full-time or internship position, it will serve you best if that is a secondary motive for the meeting: **the primary and overt motive must be for information, insight, and guidance.**

**WHY SHOULD YOU SPEND TIME DOING “INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS”?**

- Educate yourself about a career field
- Learn about issues and trends in an industry or organization
- Acquaint yourself with an organization’s culture, philosophy, services, and products
- Develop a network of people who know about your goals, interests, and skills
- Gather information about career transition and progression
- Meet people who may become valued resources and professional friends
- Receive advice about course selection and projects as well as refining your resume or cover letter
- Present yourself as an interested candidate who is eager to learn about an industry or organization
- Develop leads to full-time employment and internships

**HOW DO YOU SET UP AN “INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW”?**

**Identify what type of information you want to obtain**

- Do you want to learn about a particular position/functional area, organization, or industry?
- Are you hoping to learn more about a geographic region?
- Would you like to gain insight on issues and trends in the field or how an organization is responding to those issues and trends?
- Do you want to learn about the career path of an individual or within an industry or organization?
- Would you like suggestions on how you can best conduct a job or internship search using all the resources available to you?

**Identify people who can best provide or lead to the information you hope to obtain**

- Use Smeal Connect, Alumni Association, LinkedIn, student organizations, etc.
- Get referrals from colleagues, professors, and staff (and anyone else who may have a lead...)
- Ask for referral suggestions from associations in your industry as well as organizations you target
- Speak with guest presenters, company presentations, and club functions and ask for referrals

**Develop a contact plan**

- Clearly states your intention for meeting and convey your professionalism
- Use LinkedIn, email, or personal phone call to connect
- Be brief and to the point and specifically list how you are connected

**Contact the individual and set up a meeting**

- Recognizing that the individual may be busy, request a 20-minute meeting and be thrilled if the individual offers you more time
  - You might agree to meet at the person’s place of business or for coffee or you may have to schedule a phone call instead
Verify the meeting date, location, and time
- If helpful to your discussion, attach or enclose your resume so that they know more about your background

Prepare for the meeting and then meet!
- Do your research ahead of time
- Understand what you want to gain from the meeting and have questions prepared
- Take time to research the person’s organization, position, etc. so that you have a sense of what he/she does
- Visit http://careerconnections.smeal.psu.edu/resources/ and explore the resources on University Libraries and Career Services to access comprehensive profiles of organizations and industries

Send a “thank you” e-mail, notecard, or letter after the meeting
- Reiterate your gratitude for the time the individual took to meet with you

Keep in touch as appropriate
- When relevant, provide an update on how you are doing and what steps you are taking based on the meeting

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK

- What do you do on a “typical” day?
- What part of this job do you find most satisfying? What challenges you?
- What has been your career path and how did you get into your current position?
- What are the “typical” career paths in this field?
- What are particular advantages and disadvantages of working in this field?
- What training or education is required for this type of work? Should I pursue specific classes or internships?
- What makes a person most marketable for positions in this field? What personal qualities or abilities are important to being successful in this job?
- What opportunities for advancement are there in this field and what is the current demand for people?
- In what ways is this field changing or growing?
- What issues are affecting the field, your position, or your organization?
- What special advice would you give someone entering this field?
- Which professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
- What suggestions do you have for me to enhance my background and/or resume?
- What are general salary ranges for positions in this field and/or type of position?
- How would you describe your organization's culture?
- With what other individuals should I speak to gain additional information?

(Adapted from Purdue University's Graduate Career Services Resources)