Preparing for an Informational Interview

Research

☐ Spend at least 10 minutes doing research on the professional and their organization. Research will impress the professional, better inform the questions you choose, and allow you to dive deeper into topics during your interview.

☐ Check out the organization’s website to get an idea of what they do, mission, locations, clients, available jobs, current staff, and structure.

☐ Browse the professional’s LinkedIn to learn their work history, educational background, and professional involvement.

Sample Informational Interview Questions

Introductions

• Can you tell me about your career path?
• Why did this type of work interest you and how did you get started?

Trends

• What trends are most impacting your field right now?
• I’ve been reading about a trend ____. How is this impacting your organization?
• In what area has your industry changed the most since you first started?
• How do you think the industry will change in the next several years?
• What do you think the employment outlook in this field will be?

Insights

• What is the best lesson you’ve learned on the job?
• What do you personally find most satisfying about this work? What is the most challenging?
• What skills or strengths do you believe have contributed most to your success in this field/job?
• What have you used the most from your educational background?
• If you were in charge of hiring in your field/for your company, what criteria would you use to make your selection?

Advice

• What would you recommend I do right now to maximize my chances of breaking into this industry?
• What do you know now that you wish you had known when you were in my position?
• Are there any majors or college courses you would recommend?
• How would you advise a student such as me to obtain the necessary experience?

Resources

• What resources would you recommend for me?
• Are there any books, websites, trade magazines, or professional journals you would recommend I read?
• Are there any professional organizations or associations I should look into joining?

Assignments

• Which projects are most common and/or important in your work?
• What is a typical day like for you? What percentage of time is spent doing what?
• What kind of meetings do you participate in? How often?
• What kinds of projects do interns and newly hired graduates work on?
• I saw a posting for the ____ position. What type of projects would this position work on?

Next Steps

• What is the best way to stay connected with you?
• Do you know of any other professionals in this field who might be good for me to connect with?

Framework and questions adapted from Steve Dalton’s book The 2 Hour Job Search.