Informational Interviewing

What is an Informational Interview
An informational interview is different from a job interview as you are not interviewing for a job. In an informational interview, you will be meeting with a person who is working in a certain industry or field. Your goal is to learn more about the industry, field, or career path.

Identify Contacts
The first step in informational interviewing is collecting contacts that you can interview. These contacts can come from your personal network of family or friends. You should also reach out to past employers or peers to see what contacts they can offer. LinkedIn is also a very helpful tool as you can connect with past alumni and professionals who are in the field you are looking into. Your goal is to find contacts specific to a company or industry that you are interested in pursuing and need more information about.

Resources on Campus
- UW Alumni Association
- Cowboy 2 Cowboy Informational Interview Program

Determine Interview Goals
Before going into an informational interview, it is important to have goals in mind. What do you want to gain from this interview? Some examples of interview goals include finding information about the career path you want to follow, finding out information about a specific company, and learning about other positions offered in the industry. Your goals will guide the interview and will help you think of important questions to ask the professional you are interviewing.

Prepare Questions
Prior to the interview you should have questions prepared that will help you gain the information that you need. These questions should help you reach your previously determined goal.

Continue Networking
At the end of the informational interview ask the professional if there are any other contacts that they recommend you talk to. Also, ask them what other industries or companies that they recommend you look into. You may not be able to gather all the information you need from one informational interview so looking for more contacts for future informational interviews is beneficial. After the interview, connect with the interviewee on LinkedIn to keep in touch. This may be helpful when you are job searching in the future.

Thank the Interviewee
Don’t forget to thank the interviewee as they were helpful and went out of their way to provide you with beneficial information. A thank you can come in the form of an email or a handwritten letter. Like a job interview, it is important to send this thank you within 24 hours of the interview.
Sample Questions:

- What are various jobs available in this field?
- How does your work relate to the courses you took in college?
- What are the greatest challenges in your career?
- If you were to relive your college years, how would you prepare better?
- What positions represent the areas of greatest growth?
- What do you find most interesting or unique about your career field?
- What personal sacrifices have you made to get to where you are in your career?
- What parts of the country offer the best opportunities for this career?
- Are there any trends in this career field that will impact someone just entering this career?
- What are the major components of your job?
- How do you see your job changing in the next 10 years?
- If you could go back and change anything in your career, what would it be?
- I saw that you worked at (company A) and (company B), how did these positions fit into your career path? What career path lead you to your current job?
- How many hours do you work? Are you able to balance your work and family life?
- What have you done that allows you to stand out from others in your career?
- How well did college prepare you for your career?
- What classes were the most helpful to your career?
- What are the biggest obstacles when transferring into your career field?