

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW AND JOB SHADOW

## SUCCESS STRATEGIES

Informational interviews and job shadows are opportunities for you to explore and develop a deeper understanding of fields that interest you as well as help build your professional network.

An **informational interview** is when you interview a professional to learn more about his or her job, organization, or industry. The ultimate goal is to gather information and knowledge, not ask for favors. These interviews can be done in person, on the phone, or conducted virtually. Interviews typically last between 30-60 minutes; confirm the length when setting it up. A **job shadow** will last longer than a typical interview – anywhere from half a day to a couple of days – and often includes meeting with key staff at the organization, and incorporates aspects of informational interviews.

### Conducting an informational interview or job shadow:

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#### Find a professional to interview or job shadow

- Start with your own network (e.g., friends, family, supervisors, advisors, alumni).
- Consider employers you interacted with at career fairs, information sessions, or networking events.
- Utilize the UConn alumni network by searching for alumni on LinkedIn.
- Call an organization directly; connect with someone who could provide career advice.
- Research the individual (before the interview) through company sites and LinkedIn.

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#### Reach out to request the interview or job shadow

- Make a request via phone, email, or LinkedIn account. Be respectful of their time; ask for 30-60 minutes to get advice for someone learning about the field.
- See p.15 of the CCD's Résumé and Professional Writing Guide for additional communication tips.

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#### Prepare for your meeting

- Research organization's website and social media accounts for trends.
- Review recent articles for industry and company.
- Prepare questions for your interview. Your contact will most likely be expecting you to lead the conversation since you requested the meeting (sample questions on back).
- Select appropriate attire for the informational interview and/or job shadow; dress as you would for a formal interview.
- Bring a padfolio for note taking, as well as your current industry-oriented résumé.
- Confirm the location and meeting time the day before the interview and/or job search; review directions to the location and arrive five to ten minutes early.

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#### Conduct your interview or job shadow

- Use your prepared questions and present yourself professionally and intelligently.
- Set phone to silent or turn off before you arrive.

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#### Send a thank you note and follow up regularly

- Collect business cards of the individual(s) you meet during the informational interview and/or job shadow.
- Send a follow-up note (or email) within 24 to 48 hours, thanking everyone you met for taking the time to meet with you; include specific aspects of the interaction that were beneficial to you.
- Reflect upon the information and guidance you received. Keep in mind that each interview highlights one person's experience, so compare multiple people's advice.
- Check in regularly with professional updates and share relevant news stories two to four times a year. Networking should be mutually beneficial to both parties involved.

## **Preparing Informational Interview or Job Shadow Questions**

- Think about your goals for having the meeting. Are you exploring a variety of career options; learning about a specific job or career path; evaluating targeted companies; proposing a potential internship; strategically building your network?
- Be prepared to lead the conversation with questions you developed ahead of time, as well as ones that come up in the moment.

Provided below are lists of sample questions for job shadows and informational interviews. You should also create a customized list with your own questions for your specific goals.

### **Questions about the individual's career path/specific job:**

- Why did you decide to work in this industry?
- Why did you decide to take a job with this organization? What do you do in your job?
- What do you like most about your position? What do you like least?
- Does your job offer you some variety, or do you do the same type of work each day?
- Do you have busy and slow times of the year?
- What are the challenges in this occupation/career? How have you dealt with them?
- What do you know now that you wish you had known when you were starting out?

### **Questions about company culture:**

- What is the culture like in this company? What do you like about working here?
- What similarities/differences does this culture bear to any of your previous positions?

### **Questions to learn about the industry in general:**

- How is the economy affecting this industry?
- What professional associations have you joined?
- What kind of lifestyle can one expect in this line of work? What are the demands on your time?
- What types of jobs, activities, or classes would you recommend I join or take if I were interested in pursuing an entry-level position in this field when I graduate?
- What changes have you seen occur in this field, and what changes are occurring now?
- Is there anyone else you can recommend I speak with to learn more about this career field?

### **Questions when seeking a future internship:**

- Has your company or department previously hired interns? If so, what type of roles do they have?
- What needs does your department have that could be supported by an intern?
- How and when does your department promote its internships?

### **Questions when seeking a future job:**

- How does your company or department promote or advertise openings?
- What opportunities for advancement or professional development exist at your organization?
- What types of entry level positions exist at your organization?

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