Informational Interviewing

What it is: An informational interview is an informal conversation with someone working in a field that’s interesting to you – someone who can give you information and advice.

What it is NOT: A job interview.

Sample Questions:

Work environment and activities:
- What are your main responsibilities?
- What is a typical day/week like?
- What kinds of problems and decisions do you face?
- How would you describe the environment you work in?
- How much contact do you have with customers/clients/co-workers/supervisors/general public?

Personal views:
- How did you become interested in this field?
- How did your undergraduate major and other classes prepare you for this field?
- What kind of experience did you have prior to this job?
- What do you wish you had known before entering this field?
- What do you like most/least about your work?

Preparation and qualifications:
- How did you begin your career?
- What steps would you recommend I take to prepare to enter this field?
- What kind of education, training, and background does your job require?
- What kinds of experiences would be good background for this position/field?
- What skills and personal qualities are essential for success in this field?
- What are the characteristics of someone who is successful in this field?

Outlook and hiring:
- What is the profile of the person most recently hired at my level?
- What are the opportunities for advancement in this field?
- What trends do you see in this field?
- I’ve read that the entry-level salary range for this field is usually __________. Does this fit with what you’ve seen?

Advice to you:
- What suggestions do you have for me as I select coursework?
- Can you recommend professional associations or trade journals that would be helpful for my professional development?
- What advice would you give someone who is considering this type of job/field?
- Can you suggest people I can contact for more information? May I use your name when contacting them?
Sample Email Script

Subject: Informational Interview

Dear Ms. Matthews:

I’m a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (or just UW-Madison if the person is in Wisconsin). I heard you speak at an Economics Student Association event last semester.

Although I’m not looking for a job right now, I’m very interested in a career in economic policy and I’m trying to find out as much I can about the field. Would it be possible to schedule a 20-30-minute meeting with you to ask a few questions about your position as Health Policy Analyst, and about other opportunities in the field?

Thank you for your time. I will contact you next week to arrange a time to meet with you.

Sincerely,

Jordan Nelson
Add your e-mail and phone number

Sample Phone Script

Hello, my name is Erin Rogers and I’m a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (or just UW-Madison if you’re calling someone in Wisconsin). Is this a good time to talk for a few minutes?

I got your name from Professor Randy Cobb in the Communication Arts department here at UW-Madison. I’m interested in learning more about careers in public relations, and he recommended I talk to you.

Would it be possible to schedule a 20-30-minute meeting to ask you a few questions about your position as Public Relations Coordinator, and about other opportunities in the field?