Student Informational Interview Guide

An informational interview is a meeting conducted with an industry professional to collect information about a job, career field, industry, and/or company culture. It typically lasts between 30 minutes and an hour.

It is not a job interview. The purpose is to discover what an employer’s job is like, what they do, what responsibilities they have, and what it's like to work in their position at their company.

What are the Benefits of Conducting an Informational Interview?

An informational interview is an excellent tool to explore your career options and help you through other decision making processes such as choosing an academic major, making career choices, or beginning a job search. You will have the opportunity to:

- Clarify your career goals
- Expand your professional network
- Build confidence for your job interviews
- Access the most up-to-date career information
- Identify your professional strengths and weaknesses
- Obtain critical feedback on your resume/job-search goals

How Can I Best Prepare for an Informational Interview?

Preparation is the key to success. In advance of the interview, you should prepare as you would for a traditional interview:

- Know your own career interests and skills and how they could relate to the career field of your Host
- Check to see if the Host has a LinkedIn profile
- If you are communicating via Skype, dress appropriately in interview attire. You want to give a good first impression and look like someone who could be an asset to the profession
- Compose an opening statement that gives a brief introduction about yourself and what you hope to gain from the interview
- Prepare a list of appropriate questions to stimulate a meaningful discussion

Some Sample Interview Questions

1. How did you get started in this field? Is that a typical path for most people?
2. Describe a typical work day/week.
3. What skills and personal qualities are most important for success in this job?
4. What are some of the benefits and challenges of your work?
5. What are some growth areas in this field and what impact is likely to have on job opportunities?
6. What courses might a student take that could also be helpful for a future position in this field?
7. What projects could a student get involved in to be helpful for a future position in this field?
8. Are there any professional organizations that could help a student to build a network in this field?
9. Where do people in this field typically look for in terms of internship and job opportunities?

How Do I Follow Up with My Contacts?

Send a thank you note to the person you interviewed. A nice touch is to share with them your reflections about the interview experience and how you plan to apply the advice you received.
Reminders and Tips:

- Although this is not a job interview you should dress professionally and be punctual and polite
- Stick to information gathering, the purpose is not to ask about available employment
- Follow up with a thank you note right after the interview
- Consider signing up for a Job Shadowing experience during Winter or Spring Break. Sign-ups for Winter Break begin November 3rd on TartanTRAK

How Do I Set Up an Informational Interview?

1. Visit the CPDC website, under Job Shadowing, to view a list of available employers
2. Once you have your top three choices, fill out the Student Registration form on the same page
3. Within three days of signing up, a member of the CPDC will contact you with your host match information
4. Within one week of receiving your employer contact information, you will email them to begin setting up a time for your Tartan Talk. You do not need to have your talk within this one week period, but you must initiate the conversation. Copy the takeatatartantowork@gmail.com email to this correspondence.