Guidelines for Conducting Informational Interviews

Informational interviews can give you clarity about a specific career, industry, or company. They can help you build a professional network and learn the skills you will need for success in a particular career path or industry.

Prepare Questions:

Prepare 7-10 questions ahead of time and have them written down. You will be driving the conversation since you are the one requesting the interview. Conduct some research on the industry/career path/company so you can ask thoughtful questions.

Here is a sample list of questions but you should modify this list to fit your particular situation:

1) What do you like most about your work? Least?
2) How did you come to choose this profession? What steps did you take to get where you are?
3) What personal qualities are necessary to succeed at this type of work? What skills are important?
4) Do you think this field will grow or decline over the next decade?
5) What kind of position could a college graduate anticipate when entering this field?
6) Are there courses that you would advise taking in college to help prepare for this career?
7) What are your career goals for the future?
8) What advice do you have in regards to seeking a career in this field?
9) What methods would you recommend for doing a job (or internship) search in this field?
10) How would you describe your company culture?

➤ It’s always a good idea to ask if they might suggest additional people you could talk to in order to learn more or who might know of opportunities in this field.

Be Professional and Considerate:

➤ If conducting the interview in-person or by video call, dress professionally.
➤ Expect the interview to last 30 minutes. If you don’t get through your list of prepared questions, ask if you communicate by email for any further questions. The person may offer to have you stay longer, but at least you have been mindful of his/her time.

Follow Up:

➤ Send a thank you message within 24 hours of your meeting. You can reference something you learned in the interview.
➤ Stay in touch over time by letting them know of your progress (e.g. securing an internship in the field) or sending an article you think might be of interest.

The more positive interactions you have with your connections, the more they will be willing to assist you.

If you have additional questions about informational interviewing or networking in general, email one of your MCS Career Consultants: Anne Marie DeGeorge or Rachel Rosenfeld.