

Informational Interview Summary

I interviewed with a Mr. Mitch Sherwood, who is a systems and network engineer at the University of Oregon. I connected with him by finding his faculty listing on the university's website, and I emailed him asking if he would be willing to have an informational interview.

I prepared for this interview by taking questions from the assignment guidelines, the assigned videos for this class, and by reflecting on what questions I would like to have answered. I wrote the questions down in an order I thought would make for a good interview. Beyond that, there was mental preparation in making sure I make healthy decisions the night before, and in reassuring myself that things will be okay because I have never approached someone in a professional position like this.

The interview took place at 1715 Franklin St, which is the business and administrative building for the university. We sat in a conference room there and began talking. Humorously, my prep work with the questions turned out to be useless because he went right into talking about many different things! Thus, the interview was a bit of unorganized chaos and I decided to let the interview flow wherever he went, instead of trying to put us back on track. Looking back, I probably could have been better about leading more, but I thoroughly enjoyed listening to everything he had to say.

There were a few questions I was able to ask. I asked him for a summary of his position, which he responded that he supports the university's power station network, mostly on the server side. He divided his work into 2 categories: issues and projects. Issues are, of course, requests to fix or modify existing structures. Projects referred to replacing servers, addressing security for devices, applying GPO changes, and more. We also talked a little bit about how he got to his current position, though I only learned that he used to work in the private sector in the midwest. I asked him a little bit about the servers he manages, which he informed me of a Windows-to-Linux balance of about 60/40. He also broke down the division of IT in the university: network services handles the internal campus networks and the architecture of them, information services handles physical/virtual machine management, and administrative services handles managing law enforcement and power stations.

Despite its more chaotic nature, I really loved having this interview with Mitch (he said he prefers to be called this). He was a very interesting person to talk to and seemed invested in the meeting. Throughout the meeting he offered some suggestions on things I should do, such as checking out CISA for keeping up to date with technologies and possibly attending free events, investing time in learning data security and Powershell scripting, and possibly arranging a trip to a data center. He also was very forthcoming with recommendations for people to talk to. He mentioned many people he could refer me to and offered to connect me with them himself. Further, he offered to send me more resources he uses to learn about emerging technologies in the IT field. But most of all, my greatest take-away was him as a person and his complete willingness to talk to me. I've been afraid of entering the professional world because I've spent most of my life working in food service or warehouses. I'd built up this image of cold businessmen holding the keys to my entry, which would require me

to act better than I can ever imagine myself being. I'm sure that sounds ridiculous but it's a long-standing delusion I've held. Mitch was, however, willing to meet with a total stranger that emailed him randomly, his presence was very human and relatable, and he was also extremely kind to mention connecting me to other folks without me even requesting it of him.