

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

CAREER SERVICES

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Informational interviewing simply means speaking with someone in a particular career or field to learn more about it. You may have an e-mail exchange, a phone conversation, or an in-person meeting. Most alumni and/or professionals really enjoy helping others and like to share the story of their career journey, as well as provide valuable advice about entering a particular field.

Benefits of Informational Interviewing

- ❖ Increases your knowledge and understanding of the field/occupation you are exploring.
- ❖ Assists you in making the best decisions for your major, your future career, or a possible career change.
- ❖ Enables you to develop/enhance your social skills related to feeling comfortable and knowledgeable while you are having the conversation.
- ❖ Creates the potential to develop professional contacts.
- ❖ Provides reliable information about what a career is “really” like.
- ❖ Gives you realistic data to help you determine whether or not a certain field or career may be a good “fit” for you based on your skills, interests, abilities and values.
- ❖ Learn about career paths and trends in the field, internship/employment opportunities, and what skills, training and qualities a person needs in order to be successful in that career.

The Process

1. **Identify** a career path, job title, an organization or alumni/professional of interest to you. You can do this in a variety of ways such as talking with friends, family, neighbors, or professors to see who they know. Don't forget to ask people in your clubs, organizations, and community service groups if they know professionals in your field of interest. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are good sources to find people in a variety of career paths too. Individual schools on campus may have their own social media groups and the [University of Hartford Alumni Group on LinkedIn](#) as well as the [Alumni On-Line Directory](#) are good resources.
2. **Research** before making any contact with a potential alumni/professional to interview! Research the field and the company beforehand so you can converse intelligently with the alumni/professional. There are many resources to utilize such as Vault and Facts-On-File found on [CareerBridge](#), the [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#) and specific professional organizations.
3. **Make an appointment** with Career Services to learn about best practices and how to properly conduct informational interviews.
4. **Prepare** questions ahead of time to ask the alumni/professional.
5. **Contact the alumni/professional and explain** who you are, how you obtained this person's name, and why you are contacting him/her.
6. **Ask** when a convenient time would be for the alumni/professional to speak with you and if he/she prefers to correspond by e-mail, phone call, or an in-person meeting.
7. **Meet, talk on the phone, or e-mail** the interviewee at an agreed upon time. Be professional at all times in your interaction with the alumni/professional!
8. **Thank** the person for sharing his/her time, expertise and advice.
9. **Follow up** with a personalized e-mail thank you note or a handwritten thank you note.

Tips to be Successful

- ❖ Do follow up with your contact at the agreed upon time. The alumni/professional is nice enough to speak with you. Make sure you follow through!
- ❖ Again, be prepared and do research about the alumni/professional, company, and/or field ahead of time. It makes a big difference regarding how professionally and seriously you come across to other professionals.
- ❖ Be professional at all times. First impressions are important. In your e-mail, make sure you properly address the person by his or her last name and that there are no spelling, spacing, typos or grammatical errors in the text. You are not texting your best friend, you are reaching out to a professional within a career field. If you leave a phone message, speak clearly, explain who you are, and leave a phone number as well as your e-mail so they may contact you. Make sure that your own phone message, as well as your email address, is professional in case someone needs to leave a message.
- ❖ Only contact the alumni/professional twice! If the person does not call or respond to you, it means they are not interested and you need to move on. You don't want to stalk anyone.
- ❖ If you have the opportunity to meet with the alumni/professional in person, dress and act appropriately. Although it is not an interview to hire you for a job, the meeting may be a precursor to potential future employment. At the very least, you may run into this person again in social circles or professional organizations.
- ❖ Turn off your cell phone during meetings!
- ❖ Be courteous and thank the alumni/professional at the conclusion of your meeting.
- ❖ Send an e-mailed thank you note or a handwritten thank you note 24 – 48 hours after your phone, e-mail, or in-person meeting.

Examples of Contacting Potential People to Interview

PHONE: (Leaving a voice mail message):

Hello, my name is Sheila James and I am a sophomore at the University of Hartford majoring in civil engineering. I received your name from Professor Lori Shaffer who suggested I contact you to learn more about your career as a civil engineer at Tighe & Bond Consulting Engineers. I realize you are very busy, but I was hoping to speak with you about trends in green careers and what additional classes or internships would be a good idea for me to take while I am a student. I may be reached at (860) 555-5555 or at shjames@hartford.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

E-MAIL:

Dear Ms. Asbury:

I came across your name on LinkedIn, through the University of Hartford's Alumni Group. Currently, I work in finance and I am seriously thinking of changing careers. In your profile, it appears you may have worked in a business environment and made a career change to become a math teacher in a high school. I was hoping I may speak with you about your career transition. I may be reached by this e-mail, or my cell phone number is (203) 555-5555. Any advice you can give me would be greatly appreciated. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Joel Hailey

Sample Informational Interview Questions

How did you get into this field/career?

What did you major in? Do you have to have a particular major to do this job?

What kind of training, certifications, education or experience does one need to succeed in this profession?

What is a “typical” day or work week like?

What do you like/dislike about your job?

What are the qualifications for entry-level and more experienced positions?

What kind of traits or skills should a person have to do well in this field?

What suggestions do you have for an individual to enter this field?

What tasks do you perform on the job and what is the approximate breakdown of time spent on those tasks? For example, do you spend 20% of your time writing reports, 30% of your time in meetings, etc?

What skills are most important for a position within this field?

How is the economy affecting this industry?

What trends or changes do you foresee happening in this field in the next 3, 5, or 10 years?

Are there specific classes I should take or internships / volunteer experience / community service that I should participate in to make myself more marketable for a career in (name of field)?

What kind of technology will I need to know in order to be successful in this field?

What opportunities are available for professional development or training?

What is a typical “career ladder” from entry-level to senior-level positions within this field?