Informational Interviewing

Overview

While networking is often suggested as a method to effectively find and secure employment opportunities, many students and alumni express the fear of not knowing where to start. **Informational Interviewing can be the solution.** This process involves an organized and structured networking-like experience where the interviewer gathers information about a person, their career/company as well as gains advice on their next steps of their job/internship search.

How to Request an Interview

**Step One:** Research people you admire and would like to learn more about; find alumni or other individuals working in your field/desired company to request interview with.

**Step Two:** Script a professional email or phone call detailing 1. Who you are 2. How you found their contact information 3. What you are requesting (see samples below)

**Step Three:** Schedule Informational Interview preferably in-person and if not, over the phone (Remember you may need to be flexible when scheduling); Length of interviews vary but average length is 30 minutes.

**Step Four:** Prepare a set of questions to ask the person you are interviewing; conduct research on the company, field and individual using online resources.

Sample Questions to Ask

- For NU Alumni: What was your Northwestern Experience like and are there any programs, activities or courses you’d recommend I take advantage of before graduating?
- Describe for me your career path and how you arrived at your current role?
- Describe for me a typical day at your job?
- What has been your proudest career-related accomplishment to date?
- Where do you see yourself in 5, 10, 15 years?
- What advice do you have for students seeking internships/jobs in your field?
- What are some of your top challenges you are facing in your job this year?
- In what ways is this field changing or growing?
- What have you liked most about your job and what would you like to change?
- What skills and personal attributes are necessary for success in your occupation?
- Are there others within your field that you’d recommend I speak with as well?

Do’s and Don’ts

- Do your research and prepare intelligently for the informational interview experience
- Don’t confuse this with a job interview. Be genuine with your interest in learning more about this individual, their career, their industry and their job.
- Do take notes and think about how you can follow-up after the interview given the stories, reflections and answers you receive to your questions.
- Don’t arrive late, expect special treatment or speak with the individual longer than you planned unless they grant you more time.
- Do write a thank you note after the interview and stay in contact with the individual as you build your network, find work, apply to jobs within their company, etc.