THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Information about interesting job opportunities often emerges from networking contacts and informational interviewing is a powerful way to expand your network. Below are some suggestions for conducting successful informational interviews.

- Conduct yourself as though the meeting was a job interview even though it is not. First impressions are important.
- Research prior to the meeting to learn as much as possible about the person with whom you’re meeting and the company or the area in which s/he works.
- Arrive on time and be respectful of your contact’s time. Ask or plan for 20-30 minutes at the most and stick to it.
- Ask questions you prepared prior to the meeting. (see below for examples) This is not a job interview, so the agenda is yours to create and implement. Do not expect the person with whom you’re speaking to run the meeting.
- Discuss your qualifications, interests and background, but be very brief and to the point.
- Bring a copy of your résumé and/or a business card and offer it at the end of the interview. If s/he has already seen your résumé or has a chance to look at it at the end of the meeting, ask for any suggestions s/he might have.
- Ask for suggestions of others you should contact. Ask if you can use the name of the person with whom you are meeting to make the connection to the person s/he is suggesting.
- Ask if you can keep in touch and how often would be appropriate. Follow up accordingly.
- Write a thank you note (hard copy, US mail) immediately.
- Keep a summary of all your interviews, including any contact names that were provided.

Possible questions may vary depending on whether you are meeting with someone who is performing a job that is interesting to you or whether you are meeting someone from human resources who has a general overview and understanding of the jobs in his/her company or area or may be recruiting now or in the future. The decision about what to ask is yours to make, but some suggestions follow.

For a meeting with someone from human resources, you might ask:
- What is a typical entry to mid-level job in this area?
- What is the salary range of people in such jobs?
- What the potential career path?
- How would my abilities transfer to this field/ area college/unit?
- How realistic is my job goal at your workplace?
- How might I better position myself to be a successful applicant at your company?

For someone working in a field of interest you might ask:
- What kind of background or ability is helpful in this field?
- What kind of formal training is required?
- What are the responsibilities?
- Can you describe the local market?
- What are the advantages or disadvantages of this occupation?
- Describe a typical day for you
- Are there any local professional organizations or affiliations you would recommend?