

Informational Interviewing Fact Sheet

What is informational interviewing?

- Gathering information about a career, occupation, or organization.
- Beginning to develop professional networks.
- Helps verify or uncover career objectives.
- Clarifies career plans based on real-world input.

Where to obtain the names of people to interview?

- Approach anyone including family, friends, friends of family, faculty, advisors, coaches, supervisors, or anyone with whom you have had a conversation with about careers or is in a role of interests.
- LinkedIn: Create a LinkedIn profile. Join groups related to your career interests (including groups of Geneseo alumni) and reach out to other members of that group.
- Contact a professional in the field of interest. Ask if they will spend a few minutes speaking with you about their profession and career path.

How to make contact or arrange an informational interview?

- Either call or email the person and introduce yourself and provide a clear and concise reason for making contact
- **Emphasize** that you are NOT looking for a job; you are merely trying to gather information about that field.
- If your contact is open to it, you will gain the most from an informational interview conducted at their place of work. The second-best method is a telephone conversation, and the third is email.

Preparing for and Conducting the Informational Interview

- Have questions prepared. Twelve to fifteen questions should fill a 30-minute interview. Be conversational, flexible, and change questions as needed.
- Do some research on the occupation and background of the interviewee.
- Before concluding, ask the interviewee for the names of 2 more people in that field they feel might chat with you.
- If interviewing in person, dress professionally. You only have one chance to make a first impression!

After the Informational Interview

- Follow-up with a "thank you" within 48 hours. A handwritten note is impressive but emailed "thank-yous" are acceptable if sent within 24 hours.
- Evaluate the experience:
 - Is this career an option? Why or Why not?
 - Is additional information needed to decide on this career path?

Informational Interview Questions

Occupational/organizational interests

- How did you become interested in this occupation/organization?
- What do you like most about this organization?

Getting started in this occupation

- What are some typical entry-level jobs in this field?
- What is the progression of jobs from the beginning to the top?

Job search techniques

- How did you get into this occupation/organization?
- What steps did you take to get where you are now?
- What are the important 'key words' to include in a resume and cover letter when job hunting in the field?

Preparation and background needed

- How well did your college experience prepare you for this job?
- What degree or certificate are employers seeking?
- What kind of work/internship experience would employers look for in a job applicant?

Values and personal satisfaction

- What is there about this occupation/organization that gives you personal satisfaction?
- What work-related values are most influential in this type of work (security, high income, variety, independence)?
- How has your job affected your lifestyle?
- If you could do things over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why?

Working conditions

- Describe a typical day.
- What are some tasks? What are the functions/responsibilities of the job?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- Do you find your job exciting or boring? Why?
- What are the most significant pressures, strains, or anxieties at work?

Salary ranges

- What is the beginning, average, and top salaries or wages in this occupation?
- How does your organization pay in comparison to other organizations in the same industry?

Advancement opportunities

- What opportunities exist for advancement, promotion, or change of jobs within this field?
- What does the company do to contribute to its employees' professional development?
- If your career progresses as you like, what would be the next step in your career?

Future projections

- What sort of changes are occurring in your occupation?
- What are the employment prospects in your geographic area?

Other information or advice

- With the information provided about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research further before making a career decision?
- What professional journals and organizations would help me learn more about this field?
- Can you suggest two other individuals who might be willing to speak with me about this field?