**Informational Interviewing**

**Benefits**

- Obtain firsthand and relevant information about the realities of working within a particular field, industry, organization, or position
- Find out about Career Paths you may not have known existed
- Clarify your goals
- Improve your communication skills
- Develop job search skills
- Initiate a professional relationship while expanding your network

**Rules**

- Do not ask for a job, you are there to gather information
- Treat as an interview (arrive early, come prepared, dress professionally)
- Be polite and friendly
- Listen carefully to what the employer has to say; take notes
- Meet at the employer’s convenience

**Get Started - Identify Individuals to Informational Interview**

**Option #1:**
Talk to everyone you know to find people who work in your field of interest or who know someone who works in a position related to your area of interest

**Option #2:**
Identify companies/organizations of interest and contact an individual in the appropriate department. Most companies have a directory so you can identify the best person to contact.

**Contact by Telephone-Example**

Hello. My name is Jane Wilson and I am a 3rd year Urban Development student at UWO. I heard you speak at an event sponsored by the Geography student association last semester. Although I am not looking for a job, I have become very interested in Urban Development and would like to find out as much as I can about the field. Would it be possible to schedule 20-30 minutes with you at your convenience for an informational interview to ask you a few questions and to get your advice on how best to prepare to enter the field?

**Contact through Email-Example**

To: Jane Doe jdoe@bestjob.ca
From: Bill Smith bsmith@uwo.ca
Subject: Informational Interview
Date: February 9th, 2010

Dear Ms. Doe,

I am a 3rd year student majoring in Urban Development at The University of Western Ontario and was given your number by a friend of my family, Roberta Jones.

Although I am not currently looking for a job, I am very interested in learning all I can about typical career paths in the field of Urban Development and what skills I might need to develop during my last year at UWO. I would greatly appreciate 20-30 minutes of your time to ask you a few questions about your position with the City of London, as well as other opportunities in the field.

Thank you for your consideration. I will contact you next week and if you are able, we can arrange a convenient time to meet.

Kindly,
Jane Doe
HOW TO PREPARE/AT THE INTERVIEW

- Research the company and the career field so you can ask appropriate questions and to show the employer you have done your homework and are truly interested
- Map out the location ahead of time, so you know where you are going and do not arrive late
- Dress neatly and be well groomed
- Prepare an elevator pitch
  - A 30 second overview of yourself including:
    - Introduction (why you are there)
    - Education (what you are studying/have studied)
    - Experience (what has made you interested in this area/why it is a good fit)
    - Any other information that would be a positive introduction of yourself
- Have questions prepared

Sample Questions:
- How did you get started in your career?
- What qualifications do you have?
- How would someone get started in the field now?
- What experiences have helped you most?
- Do you know anyone else that might be helpful for me to speak with?
- What experience or preparation would you recommend?
- What job titles are common in this field?
- What are alternative career paths related to this field?
- What professional organizations do you belong to?

- Listen carefully; take notes
- Respect the time limit you have agreed upon
- Remember to thank the individual for their time

FOLLOW UP

- Send a thank you to the employer within 1-2 days after the informational interview thanking them for their time and highlighting something valuable you learned from them
- Sending a thank you letter/card is preferred over an email

Written Thank You Letter-Example

Dear Mr. Johns,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to informational interview with you on December 12, 2010. I really appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the Urban Development field and how your multitude of experiences has been an asset in your current role as Department Manager at ABC Company.

Thank you again for your time.

Sincerely,

Mary Smith
msmith@uwo.ca
555-555-1234