Informational Interviews

What is an Informational Interview?

Informational Interviews are informal opportunities to speak to professionals currently working in a field or company of interest to you. Learn first-hand about working in the job area. Knowledge gained from an informational interview is not usually accessible online. It is not a job interview and the focus is not to learn about job openings.

Why should I seek out an Informational Interview opportunity?

- Learn from a professional in an area of your interest what it is “really” like to work in an industry, company and/or position.
- Build a network of professional contacts within your field of study or major. As these relationships develop, these new contacts may be able to direct you to possible positions or other professional contacts.
- Discover career paths and titles that you may have been unaware existed.
- Gain tips about how to prepare to enter a specific field or industry.
- Meet others with the same or similar majors and learn about the diverse opportunities.
- Find out more about a specific organization (culture, mission, goals, typical day, etc.).
- Gain confidence and experience in communicating with professionals. ‘
- Discover professional associations and networking groups to join.
- Get additional information that can assist in your career search (contacts, resume, interviewing, networking, etc.).

*Adapted from Berkeley University of California Career Center

Additional resources:

Videos_ Sample Informational Interview Videos – Beyond the Lab, Vanderbilt University
https://medschool.vanderbilt.edu/career-development/beyond-the-lab-video-series/

Sample Networking Informational Interviews & Thank You’s - Harvard University
https://hls.harvard.edu/dept/opia/job-search-toolkit/finding-the-right-fit/networking-tips/#h-tab1-1

Career One Stop – Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor – Informational Interviews

Berkeley University of California Career Center - Informational Interviews
https://career.berkeley.edu/Info/InfoInterview
Send an email or place a phone call to targeted individuals for Informational Interviews. Do NOT ask for a job or an internship! You will be seeking information and guidance regarding their career field and request recommendations of other individuals to contact.

**Email Invite Template**

To: Alumni, professional contact, LinkedIn connection, or recommended individual  
Subject: Informational Interview request from Iowa State University (Student Name) Ph.D. Student

Dear Ms. Denison:

We have a shared contact with Dr. David Friend, CEO of Biomedical XYZ. He suggested that I contact you for additional information regarding the latest trends in the field of biomedical sciences.

I want the opportunity to speak with you to discuss your insight into the range of careers to pursue within the biomedical field. I understand that you are on a strict schedule and would appreciate any time that you could spare to meet with me by phone or a virtual platform.

Any suggestions you could offer would be much appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Name  
Phone number (non-work)  
Email (ISU or non-work)

**Informational Interview Questions**

1. How did you get started in this field?  
2. What are the primary responsibilities of the position?  
3. How do you spend 80% of your workday?  
4. What skills or abilities are most important to succeed in this job?  
5. What is the typical “chain of command” in this field?  
6. How has the industry changed since COVID-19?  
7. Do you have any additional advice to help me prepare for my career search?  
8. Do you suggest I speak to anyone else in particular to learn more about my career goals?

**Email Thank You Template**

TO: Ms. Denison:

Thank you very much for your time out of your busy schedule to discuss the biomedical field with me. I appreciate your advice to contact Mr. John Smith with ACME Bio. Mr. Smith and I have set a date to meet next week.

I am glad we had the opportunity to discuss our shared experiences at Iowa State University. I passed along your greetings to Dr. Joe Professor. Again, thank you for your help. I will keep you posted on my job search progress.

Sincerely,

Name  
Phone number (non-work)  
Email (ISU or non-work)

*Adapted from Vanderbilt Graduate School, Harvard Law School*