WalkAbout
Student Orientation

Austin College’s Job Shadowing Experience
How to choose your WalkAbout host!

• Start by selecting a career field that you are interested in
• Where do you want to do the *WalkAbout*? (Geographic location)
• What time frame do you have in mind for the WalkAbout?
• Do you have an AC alumna(us) in mind?
• Have you checked on our Austin College Sherman, TX Alumni Group on LinkedIn?
• Make an appointment with Career Services to help you narrow down your choices of Alumni
Contacting your WalkAbout Host

- Email your potential host to let him/her know you are interested in a shadow experience
- Let him/her know of the time frame
- Tell him that you would like to speak with him and that you will call (give day and time you will call) to discuss details
Professionalism: Demonstrate good character and professionalism by dressing appropriately, not being late, and showing maturity, reliability, and conscientiousness.

Appropriate attire: While the dress code in each organization will be different, it is important to dress conservatively! When in doubt, err on the side of being more formal. You never have a second chance to make a first impression. Make sure you ask your host for the appropriate attire, don’t assume!

Confidentiality: Anything you hear or see within an organization may be confidential, including business plans, customer/patient lists, product specifications, and employee records. Keep it confidential!

Punctuality: Be on time! Make sure you have directions, know the route, and allow for rush hour traffic.

Represent yourself and Austin College: While shadowing, you are in essence an ambassador for Austin College, representing both yourself and the school. Act in a sensible and wise manner so as not to embarrass or draw undue attention to your Host, Austin College, or yourself.
How to make the most of your shadowing experience

What do I take to a job shadow?
1. Pen and paper for note-taking
2. Money to cover parking, sodas/snacks, lunch or any other personal expenses
3. Feel free to bring your lunch if you will be on-site during lunchtime
4. Questions to ask your sponsor (your informational interviewing questions)
   • **Set goals**: Goal setting will allow you to clarify what you want to learn and to make the most of the experience.
   • **Ask questions and focus on learning**: See if this is the career field for you and learn how to prepare for it now.
   • **Ask to meet with different people**: Get their perspective on their job duties and career stage — it can be very different person-to-person.
   • **Act natural and be yourself**: It is quite common to feel slightly anxious about job shadowing, but relax...the sponsors are there to assist you.
   • **Be professional and show your appreciation**: Thank the sponsor at the end of the day and be sure to send him/her a thank you letter.
   • **Reflect and evaluate**: Think critically about your experience and its implication on your career choice/preparation.
Informational interviewing has several benefits, including:

• Discovering "first-hand" information about an occupation
• Improving self-confidence and interviewing skills
• Establishing and/or expanding your professional network
• Finding out what you should be reading and which professional associations you should join to remain up-to-date in your area of interest
Here are some suggestions on how to set up and conduct an informational interview. The more prepared you are, the more you will get out of it!

**Step 1: Identify areas of exploration:**
- What career fields or occupations are you interested in and want to know more about? What elements of those are you particularly interested in?

**Step 2: Plan your goals:**
- Planning your goals for the interview will help you clarify what you want to know and assist you in forming a plan for whom to interview and what questions to ask.

**Step 3: Identify potential contacts:**
- From your goals and areas of exploration identify potential professionals to interview. Family, friends, instructors, and community members are all valuable contacts and can provide a starting point for identifying professionals.
**Step 4: Schedule information interviews:**
Contact the Alumnus(a) via his/her preferred method of contact. Alums are busy so you may need to make 2 or more attempts to reach them and remember to specify that you are just trying to obtain information.

**Step 5: Prepare your questions:**
Based upon your goals for the interview and the results of your research of the area, prepare your questions for the interview. *For ideas on what questions to ask, see the next page.*

**Step 6: Conduct the interview:**
Dress for success, arrive early, shake hands and exchange greetings. Remind the Sponsor of your purpose for shadowing and be ready to ask your questions as the opportunity arises.

**Step 7: Conclude the interview:**
Shake hands again and express your appreciation for the interview, and ask for a business card.

**Step 8: Send a thank you letter:**
This professional touch can go a long way.
Sample Informational Interview Questions

Preparation

• What skills, talents, and personal characteristics are needed for working in this field?
• How do your education and experience relate to what you are doing now?
• How does my major relate to this career?
• What kind of experience will help me enter this field? Do you recommend volunteer work, internships, co-ops, part-time jobs or summer work?
• Could you recommend some courses that I should be taking now in preparation for a career in this field?
• Is a graduate degree necessary for entry into this field? What schools offer this degree?
• Do I need a special license or certification to work in this area?
• Is there any advice you would give someone just entering the field, maybe something that you wish someone had mentioned when you were starting?
• What professional journals, books, newspapers or publications do people in your field generally read?
• What trade or professional associations exist in this industry? What are the benefits of joining?
Job Routine

• Describe how you spend your time during a typical work day/week.
• What do you find most intrinsically rewarding in your job?
• What are some of the issues/problems that you must deal with in your work?
• How many hours do you work in a typical week? What hours do you typically work?
• Is there travel involved in your job? If so, how often do you travel?
• Do individuals in this field tend to interact frequently with people (co-workers, managers, clients, vendors)?
• Has your work experience differed very much from what you imagined it would be? In what way?
• What are the opportunities for advancement? What might a typical career path be in this field?
• What trends do you see developing in the field? Are educational requirements changing? Is employment expected to grow, decrease, or remain stable?
• What is the average salary range for an entry-, mid-, and upper-level position?
• Is there a high turnover rate in this field? If so, why?
• What alternate careers are related to this line of work?
Job Search Techniques

• What types of employers hire individuals in this field?
• What types of questions should I expect when interviewing for a job in this field?
• What do you think of the experience I have so far, in terms of getting into this field?
• How did you get into this field and into this position? What are some alternative routes into the field?
• What strategies would you use if you were in a job search for a position in this field?
• What companies have the best track record for promoting women and minorities?
Writing a Thank You Letter

• As a note of courtesy and appreciation, you should always send a well-written and thoughtful thank you letter by mail within one to two days to individuals with whom you conducted an informational interview or job shadow. Make sure you collect business cards from those you meet.

• The reasoning is simple: currently working professionals in your career field can become excellent networking contacts for you. It is important that your letter is sent in a timely fashion.
What to include in the Thank You?

• At the top, include your address and the date.
• Next include the contact information of the addressee. Make sure all information is correct.
• In the opening paragraph, express your appreciation for their time and effort in allowing you to shadow.
• Next emphasize some of the highlights of your experience, what you learned, and some of the implications it has on your future plans.
• Conclude the letter by thanking them again for their efforts.
• Finish the letter with your signature. See sample on next page.
February 25, 201_

Ms. Pamela Jones
Marketing Specialist
Any Organization
Post Office Box 12345
Dallas, TX  75201

Dear Ms. Jones:

Thank you for taking the time to answer my many questions and for allowing me to shadow you over the past two days. I enjoyed meeting you and learning more about the marketing field. It was especially helpful to visit your company and receive a tour of the Marketing Department.

Your explanation of the differences and similarities between advertising, marketing, and public relations was most helpful. I had not previously realized there were so many varied industries in which to apply my skills and interests, including the Non-Profit Administration arena. This experience really opened my eyes!

I appreciate your time and advice, and thank you for all your career tips on the marketing field.

Sincerely,

Kelly Roo Career (Signature)
Remember to fill out an online post-job shadow evaluation at the end of your WalkAbout!

Click here to verify completion of this WalkAbout Orientation: http://www.austincollege.edu/walkabout-student-orientation