

## WHAT IS AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW?

Information interviews involve seeking information only, not job search assistance or consideration. By phone, in person, or by letter, you could ask: "*Could I meet with you to learn about your background? I am currently researching options, and your field/job is of particular interest. An information interview with you could help me formulate my goals.*" In truth, it is a pre-search activity, not really a job search activity.

Through brief interviews, collect career biographies of individuals who work in fields you are researching. Meeting people and asking pertinent questions is the best way to narrow your goals and identify effective next steps.

The more you learn about career biographies and the more you know about fields and functions, the easier it will be to develop goals and to make decisions regarding appropriate next steps.

(Excerpts from Naked at the Interview. Burton Jay Nadler. NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1994, pp. 56-57. Available for check-out in the Austin College Career Services Library.)

## QUESTIONS FOR INFORMATION INTERVIEW

**USE THE FOLLOWING SET OF QUESTIONS AS YOUR INTERVIEW GUIDE AND TAKE NOTES DURING YOUR INTERVIEW. REMEMBER TO ASK FOR A BUSINESS CARD.**

- ◆ How did you get into this line of work?
- ◆ What do you like best about your job?
- ◆ What do you like least about your job?
- ◆ What education/training do you have that prepared you to do your job?
- ◆ What are the most important skills one needs to do this work effectively?
- ◆ What are your major responsibilities?
- ◆ What does it take to become successful in this field/profession?
- ◆ What is your typical work day/work week like? (E.g., hours, stress less, paperwork, travel, deadlines, working weekends, etc.)
- ◆ What is the salary range for your occupation? Fringe benefits? Personal benefits?
- ◆ What are some of the entry level positions in this field/profession?
- ◆ What is the salary range for these entry-level positions? Fringe benefits? Personal benefits?
- ◆ How difficult will it be to get a job in this field/profession after graduation from college? What are competitive grade point averages?
- ◆ What should I be doing while I am still in college to prepare myself for a career in this field/profession? Are internships available to college students? If so, how does one apply?
- ◆ What is the overall job outlook in this field/profession? Is it a growing/developing profession/business?
- ◆ What advice would you give someone seeking to learn more about career opportunities in this field/profession?
- ◆ Have I left out any important questions that would help me learn more about this field/profession?
- ◆ Who could you suggest I go see if I would like to learn more about this field/profession?

### **ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS AFTER COMPLETING THE INTERVIEW:**

- ◆ What did I expect to hear/learn about this field/profession before I went into the interview?
- ◆ What did I learn that was new or that surprised me?
- ◆ Based on what I know about myself and what I have learned about this field/profession, how well does this field/profession match with my skills, interests, and goals?
- ◆ Am I still interested in career opportunities in this field/profession? Why or why not?

**WITHIN 24 HOURS OF YOUR MEETING, WRITE AND MAIL A THANK YOU NOTE TO THE PERSON WITH WHOM YOU HAD THE INFORMATION INTERVIEW.**

### **TIPS ON SCHEDULING INFORMATION INTERVIEW APPOINTMENTS**

- ◆ **IDENTIFY AT LEAST THREE PEOPLE** to call for potential information interviews.
- ◆ **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE** to try to schedule your appointments.
- ◆ **IF YOU NEED HELP** in identifying people to contact, **ask us for it ASAP**. Try using resources like the yellow pages and Career Services. Ask AC faculty and staff, friends, and relatives for suggestions of people to contact.
- ◆ **DO NOT SCHEDULE APPOINTMENTS WITH RELATIVES**. As hard as they might try, it will be very difficult for a relative to have an objective information interview with you.

### **TIPS ON MAKING THE CALLS**

Call well in advance of the date and time you want to make the appointment. Identify who you are, what you want, and why you want it! For example:

*Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am a student at Austin College. I am researching potential career areas, and I would like to speak with you to learn more about your career. Would it be possible to schedule an appointment to meet with you for about 20 minutes on \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?*

- ◆ **ALWAYS SAY WHO** your contact is (if you have one), why you want the information (not a job), and ask for a specific appointment (when). Offer two choices of when; usually they will choose one or offer you alternative times.
- ◆ **ASK FOR DIRECTIONS** to the specific place of the meeting and agree on an exact time.
- ◆ **BE UPBEAT AND POSITIVE**. No one wants to talk to a whiner!

### **TIPS ON THE APPOINTMENTS THEMSELVES:**

- ◆ **SHOW UP AT LEAST FIVE MINUTES EARLY**. By all means, don't be late!
- ◆ **DRESS APPROPRIATELY**. Neat, clean, pressed, appropriate to the location and career. Make sure your shoes are clean and shined.
- ◆ **GIVE A FIRM HANDSHAKE**. Look the person in the eye.
- ◆ **TAKE NOTES** before, during (after you have asked permission) and after the meeting.
- ◆ **PREPARE YOUR QUESTIONS** before you get to the meeting.
- ◆ **DON'T OVERSTAY YOUR WELCOME**. If you asked for twenty minutes, leave after twenty minutes, unless the person invites you to stay longer.