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INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW WORKSHOP

Career Access Mentor Program

TODAY'S GOAL

To understand the role informational interviews play in career development, and practice the proper steps in fulfilling an informational interview.

AGENDA

- Introduction to Informational Interviews
- How to conduct an Informational Interview
- Wrap Up

INTRODUCTION TO INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

VIDEO DISCUSSION

Discuss: What role do Informational Interviews play in your career development? (Why is it important to do them?)

HOW TO CONDUCT AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

PRE INTERVIEW – DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK

- Reach out to people you have a genuine interest in learning more about, and know why you want to learn from them.
 - It is most appropriate to reach out to individuals who can speak about jobs at the current level you are at (ie: HR, entry level employees, hiring managers).
- Send the person a friendly, concise email that gets right to the point.
 - Start with a personable message—leverage your relationship.
 - Interview requests should be made within a minimum of 1-2 weeks, and interviews should be 15-30 minutes.
 - Send a meeting reminder 24 hours in advance.
 - Sample language: “I’m a recent college graduate and would love to learn from your experience and how you got to the position you are in today.”

ACTIVITY

Write a request for an informational interview

Prepare for the challenge-of-the-month where we will be having informational interviews with your mentors!

Tips:

- Create a compelling subject line
- Be brief
- Include your intent for the meeting
- Suggest flexible dates and times

PRE INTERVIEW – DO YOUR RESEARCH

- Learn as much as you can about them and their industry before the interview. Consider the following:
 - Research the industry and what will be happening in this field over the next few years.
 - Spend a lot of time on the company's website to understand their products and services, locations, names of key executives, and what's going on with the company now.
 - Conduct a LinkedIn or Google search on the person meeting with you. Note similarities you share.

PRE INTERVIEW – PREPARE YOUR QUESTIONS

- Prepare information on yourself (1-2 minutes).
 - College background
 - Current work
 - Future direction
- Prepare interview questions. If the meeting is 15-30 minutes, you will only have time for about 5 questions total. (See “Questions” handout for examples.)
 - Only ask questions that can’t be answered through an internet search.
 - Use this opportunity to ask the questions you might not want to ask in a job interview.
- Update and polish your resume to bring with you, but don't offer it unless requested.

ACTIVITY

Prepare questions for your informational interview with your mentor.

In pairs, prepare a brief intro and come up with the five questions you will ask at you informational interview.

INTERVIEW DAY – CONDUCT YOURSELF AS A PROFESSIONAL

- Dress and act the role of the position you are seeking.
- Wear a watch; glancing at your phone is poorly received.
- Bring a notepad, pen, and business cards.

INTERVIEW DAY – MAKE IT A CONVERSATION

- The best interviews, informational or otherwise, are the ones that naturally flow.
- Express your gratitude early on. Start by thanking them earnestly for their time and information.
- Be enthusiastic and impress them by being articulate about what your background is.
- Focus your early questions on the interviewer. (See “Questions” handout for examples.)
 - Sample language: "Mary gave me your name and told me you're considered to be an expert in your field. How did you get started?"
- When you have about 5 minutes left before your meeting is scheduled to end, note the time you have left and mention that you want to be “mindful of their time.” This gives the person you’re interviewing the opportunity to either extend the interview, or transition to a graceful conclusion.

ACTIVITY

Role play an informational interview.

In pairs, practice your intro, 1-2 questions, and “being mindful of their time.”

POST INTERVIEW – CEMENT THE CONNECTION

- Ask for other contacts in the field. If no names are suggested, be grateful for information or suggestions obtained, and ask for recommended next steps.
- Always send a thank-you note.
 - Send the thank-you note or e-mail within two days of the informational interview.
 - Paper thank you is best; email is most common (within 24 hours).
 - Go the extra mile and find an article or something similar which is related to a topic you discussed. Include a link with your thank-you, noting how your conversation with them inspired you to look this up.
- Stay in touch with your contacts by writing notes or emails, informing the person how helpful their suggestions have been to you.
 - Keep them in the loop by e-mailing the person you interviewed after you've met with one of their referrals or after you've gotten a job.

PRE INTERVIEW – REFLECT AND MOVE FORWARD

- Review the notes you took during the interview.
- Considering what you learned.
 - Does it impact your thinking?
 - Does it impact your actions?

ACTIVITY

Write a thank you note for your informational interview.

Prepare for the challenge-of-the-month where we will be having informational interviews with your mentors.

WRAP UP

TAKEAWAYS

- Ask specific questions that will be beneficial for your career.
- Refer to handout for details and reference to the PD; useful sample questions.
- Be mindful of your interviewee's time.
- Use LinkedIn to connect with people and message them with our info interview templates.

EVALUATION

NEXT STEPS

- Next Workshop: Overcoming Adversity and Developing Professionalism
 - November TBD



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THANK YOU.

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