

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

An informational interview gives you a good chance to talk with someone who is working at an occupation in which you are interested. It may also offer you a chance to consider your possibilities and to get referrals. During an informational interview, you may also be able to observe the work environment. Whether you are starting your job search, changing careers, or still in school, you will find most people are willing to discuss their work with you.

Informational interviews may take place over the telephone, by email, or in a personal meeting.

When doing an informational interview, you can get valuable information that will help prepare you for job interviews. Remember, informational interviews should be approached just for information, advice and possible referrals. It is not a good idea to think of it as a job interview.

An informational interview gives you the opportunity to discuss your experience and potential. In some cases it is possible that your interviewer will find you a good candidate for a job that has not been announced or for a new position.

## **Tips for performing an informational interview:**

- **Know about the occupation.** Know something about the occupation in which you are interested before visiting the company. Occupational descriptions can help you.
- **Know about the company.** Know something about the company you want to visit. Websites provide opportunities to learn about a company and read job descriptions; search for the company name or an industry. Some websites allow you to ask questions of experts by email. Libraries can also help you find company information.
- Friends, librarians, teachers, or counselors can recommend companies they know. You can look in the yellow pages for businesses in a particular industry that may have the type of jobs you are interested in.

## **Be courteous.**

- Remember that you are visiting the person at work. Do not abuse the time they have set aside to help you. When the time has ended, thank them for meeting with you, then leave.
- Be aware that on the day of the visit, the person may have less time than they allowed.
- Make sure that you ask your most important questions first.
- Do not try to make your informational interview into a job interview. That was not the understanding when you asked for an informational interview.

## **Be considerate.**

- Let them know you appreciate their taking the time to talk to you. Ask if this has turned out to be a bad time. If so, ask if they would prefer to shorten this interview and schedule another interview for your remaining questions.

## Follow up.

- Write a short thank you note.

### How to request an Informational Interview:

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a student at Mills College. I found your name through/from \_\_\_\_\_. Although I am not currently looking for a job, I have become very interested in \_\_\_\_\_ and would like to find out as much as I can about the field. Would it be possible to schedule 15 to 30 minutes with you at your convenience to ask you a few questions and get your advice on how to best prepare to enter the field?

## Sample Questions.

- What is your job like?
- What do you do in a typical day?
- What kinds of problems do you deal with?
- What kinds of decisions do you make?
- What are the most important personal satisfactions and dissatisfactions connected with your job? Your career field?
- What do you like most about your work?
- What part of your work would you like to change?
- What social obligations go along with a job in your field?
- Are there organizations you are expected to join?
- Are there other things you are expected to do outside of work hours?
- What things did you do before you entered this occupation?
- What other jobs can you get without further education? Or going back to school?
- What types of changes are occurring in your field or industry?
- How does a person progress in your field?
- What is the best way to enter this occupation?
- What are the advancement opportunities?
- What are the major qualifications for success in this particular occupation?
- Are there any special licenses, certificates, or degrees required for your job? Could someone without a special license, certificate and/ or degree be hired into this field?
- What could an entry level person expect to make in this field? What could an experienced person expect to make in this field?

## Remember:

- **Personal problems.** Do not expect a person you visit for occupational information to help you with your personal or career-related problems. There are other resources for personal counseling and career guidance, such as a Mills College career counselor.
- **How occupations differ.** If you decide to enter an occupation, remember that every job, even with the same job title, and even in the same field or industry, may be both similar and slightly different. You can get and compare information about industries.