

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

An informational interview provides a “reality test” to your perception of the field. You contact a person who has experience in the area in which you are interested and request an appointment with them. In the meeting you can ask questions to help you decide if you want to pursue that path.

WHAT IS IT?

Informational interviews are an opportunity for you to ask questions of someone working in a position that you would like to learn more about (a major, minor, internship opportunity, or job field).

What is it NOT?

It is important to remember that an informational interview is NOT a job interview and is NOT an opportunity for you to ask for a job; informational interviews are field research to gather information.

How can it help?

Informational interviews can help in two main ways:

1. If you want to learn more about specific careers, jobs, or majors, there is no better way to learn than by going to the source. You can read about jobs online and in Career Connections resources; however, talking with a professional working in that field will provide real-world information.
2. If you are job searching, informational interviews are a great way to build your professional network. You can connect with professionals for insights on their career path and entry into the industry. Informational interviews are a great way to learn about specific companies and organizations that you are considering working or interning with.

Where do I find a contact?

Search for an interview candidate by reaching out to your current network (friends, co-workers, professors, advisors, family, family friends, etc.), let everyone know that you are looking to gain more information about a particular subject, and you will be surprised at the contacts that people will share with you.

You can search Lute Link, the PLU alumni career advisor database, by logging into the Career Connections Opportunities Board (www.plu.edu/career, on the right side of the page).

Once you are logged in, click LuteLink on the top menu bar. Here you will be able to search by your field of interest and locate alumni who are offering informational interviews. Another way to locate an interviewee is by searching the PLU alumni group on LinkedIn or a company's website for people that are in positions in which you are interested.

Initiate Contact?

Sending an email to ask for an informational interview is preferred, but calling is also an option. Introduce yourself as a college student (specifically PLU if you are contacting an alum) who is looking to learn more and then make the request.



Dear Mr. Anderson,

My name is Sophia Lopez, and I am a junior at Pacific Lutheran University majoring in Economics. I am currently building my network in the accounting field and found your information on LuteLink. I am very interested to know about your experience in the field, and I would like to take this opportunity to request a meeting with you at your convenience. If you are unavailable, I would greatly appreciate it if you could connect me with someone in your network that could also share their experiences in the accounting field. I look forward to hearing from you soon and thank you for your help.



Sincerely,
Sophia Lopez



OTHER RESOURCES AND HANDOUTS

How to prepare?

Informational interviews are a way to provide context to what you are reading online about your area of interest. Career Connections (www.plu.edu/career) has great resources and sample questions to help you prepare. You are encouraged to ask questions during the interview that you could not find answers to, or questions that help support what you already researched. If the interview is happening face-to-face, then you should dress business appropriate. While an informational interview is not a job interview, this is your first impression, and by dressing in business appropriate attire you are showing that you are a professional and are taking this meeting seriously.

Questions to ask?

Ask these questions at the end of every interview:

- Can you suggest two other people I would benefit from speaking with?
- May I use your name when contacting these people?

Other questions:

- How did you get started in the field? Is this typical of most people?
- What skills and personal qualities are most important to succeed in this field?
- What do you most enjoy about your work?
- What is a challenge this field is facing?

- What are the opportunities for advancement in the field? Could you describe a typical promotion path?
- Who makes the decision to hire someone for this kind of job?
- Have you noticed whether or not it is necessary to change companies in order to advance in this industry?
- What else do I need to know in order to make a well-informed decision about my career?
- Would you recommend doing an internship to gain more knowledge, experience or a foot in the door?
- Does your organization offer internships?

During the interview?

An ideal informational interview will happen in person, over coffee or in that person's office; however interviews also happen on the phone or via skype. You are not encouraged to conduct an informational interview over email. Arrive early, bring your questions, and be attentive; the interviewee may answer questions you had planned to ask later. You are encouraged to take notes and to get a business card so you can send a thank you. Never go to someone's personal residence.

After the interview?

Send a personal thank you note; handwritten is encouraged, but email is also acceptable. Thank you letters are exceptionally important in maintaining your network (which now include this person). Gently remind the interviewee who you are, how you met, and thank them for their time. This would be a great opportunity to connect with this person on LinkedIn (refer to our LinkedIn handout for more information about how to use LinkedIn).

CAREER COUNSELING

- Resumes and Cover Letters
- Job/Internship Search
- Myers-Briggs Type Inventory
- Strong Interest Inventory
- Interviewing
- LinkedIn
- Seven Academic Division Career Fairs Per Year
- Career Fair Prep
- Networking
- Salary Negotiation
- Career Peer Educators

INTERNSHIPS

- Internship Search
- Student/faculty/Employer Learning Agreements
- Registration for Academic Internships
- Faculty Outreach
- Employer Outreach and Internship Development
- Krise Internship

STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

- On-Campus Jobs
- State Work Study
- I-9 and W-4 Documentation
- Supervisor Training

CAREER CONNECTIONS OPPORTUNITIES BOARD

- Job, Internship, and Volunteer Postings
- Lute Link

EMPLOYER RELATIONS

- Relationship Development
- On-campus Recruiting
- Internship Development
- Career Fair Employer Recruitment
- Event Planning
- Faculty Outreach

career@plu.edu
www.plu.edu/career

253-535-7459

POP IN ADVISING

Cover Letter, Résumé,
and Interview Prep

Monday-Friday @ Ramstad 112
Call 253-535-7459 for hours
(15-20 min sessions)



CAREER CONNECTIONS
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