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, organization or job field).

- An informational interview provides a "reality test" to your perception of the field. You contact a person who has experience in the area you are interested in 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 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:
- 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.

- 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 where you are considering working or interning.

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. 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 an organization's website for people that are working 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 PLU student who is looking to learn more and then make the request.

Example:

Dear Mr. Anderson,

I hope this email finds you well. 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 came across your information on LuteLink.

I am very interested to learn 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.

Thank you for your time,
Sophia Lopez
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 professionally. While an informational interview is not a job interview, this is your first impression, and by dressing in business appropriate clothing you are showing that you are a professional and 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 how a professional would typically advance in this field?

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 (letter, note, email).

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 this person is now a part of). Gently remind the interviewee who you are and 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.)

Other Resources
Resume Handout, Interviewing Preparation, Thank You Letters, References & Recommendations, Cover Letter, Informational Interview, Graduate School Preparation, Networking for Introverts

Career Connections 253-535-7459 career@plu.edu www.plu.edu/career

Pop-In Hours
Cover Letter, Resume, and Interview Preparation
Monday-Friday @ Ramstad 112
Call 253-535-7459 for times (15-20 min sessions)