

Informational Interviews

What is an Informational Interview?

Informational Interviews are informal opportunities to speak to professionals currently working in a field or company of interest to you. Learn first-hand about working in the job area. Knowledge gained from an informational interview is not usually accessible online. **It is not a job interview and the focus is not to learn about job openings.**

Why should I seek out an Informational Interview opportunity?

- Learn from a professional in a field of interest. What is it “really” like to work in an industry, company, and/or position?
- Build a network of professional contacts within your field of study or major. As these relationships develop, these new contacts may direct you to possible positions or other professional contacts.
- Discover career paths and titles that you may have been unaware existed.
- Gain tips about how to prepare to enter a specific field or industry.
- Meet others with the same or similar majors and learn about the diverse opportunities.
- Find out more about a specific organization (culture, mission, goals, typical day, etc.).
- Gain confidence and experience in communicating with professionals.
- Discover professional associations and networking groups to join.
- Get additional information to assist your career search (contacts, resume, interviewing, networking, etc.).

*Adapted from Berkeley University of California Career Center

Additional resources:

Videos_ Sample Informational Interview Videos – Beyond the Lab, Vanderbilt University

<https://medschool.vanderbilt.edu/career-development/beyond-the-lab-video-series/>

Sample Networking Informational Interviews & Thank You's - Harvard University

<https://hls.harvard.edu/dept/opia/job-search-toolkit/finding-the-right-fit/networking-tips/#h-tab1-1>

Career One Stop – Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor – Informational Interviews

<http://www.careeronestop.org/jobsearch/network/informational-interviews.aspx>

Berkeley University of California Career Center - Informational Interviews

<https://career.berkeley.edu/Info/InfoInterview>

Karin Lawton-Dunn, Graduate College Careers (09.2021)

Send an email or place a phone call to targeted individuals for Informational Interviews. Do **NOT** ask for a job or an internship! You will be seeking information and guidance regarding their career field and request recommendations of other individuals to contact.

Email Invite Template

To: Alumni, professional contact, LinkedIn connection, or recommended individual

Subject: Informational Interview request from Iowa State University (Student Name) Ph.D. Student

Dear Ms. Denison:

We have a shared contact with Dr. David Friend, CEO of Biomedical XYZ. He suggested that I contact you for additional information regarding the latest trends in biomedical sciences.

I want the opportunity to speak with you to discuss your insight into the range of careers to pursue within the biomedical field. I understand that you are on a strict schedule and would appreciate any time that you could spare to meet with me by phone or on a virtual platform.

Any suggestions you could offer would be much appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Name

Phone number (non-work)

Email (ISU or non-work)

Informational Interview Questions

1. How did you get started? (field, position, company)
2. What current issues and trends in the field should I know about/be aware of?
3. What are the primary responsibilities of the position?
4. What skills do you think are most essential to be successful in this field, company, etc.?
5. What professional organizations should someone interested in this field explore?
6. What aspects of your current position have surprised you?
7. **How has the industry changed since COVID-19?**
8. **Do you have any additional advice to help me prepare for my career search?**
9. **Do you suggest I speak to anyone else in particular to learn more about my career goals? Can you introduce me?**

Email Thank You Template

TO: Ms. Denison:

Thank you very much for your time out of your busy schedule to discuss the biomedical field with me. I appreciate your advice to contact Ms. Emilie Biswas with ACME Bio. Ms. Biswas and I have set a date to meet next week.

I passed along your greetings to Dr. Sing, Professor. I am glad we had the opportunity to discuss our shared experiences at Iowa State University. Again, thank you for your help. I will keep you posted on my job search progress.

Sincerely,

Name

Phone number (non-work)

Email (ISU or non-work)

*Adapted from Vanderbilt Graduate School, Harvard Law School

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