INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

PURPOSE OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

- To learn about career fields from an insider's perspective.
- To determine if a particular career is right for you.
- To make connections with people and expand your network.
- To develop a skill which will be useful throughout your life when you want to change jobs or simply learn something new.

RESEARCH AND PREPARE

- Making decisions about career options requires accurate information. One of the best ways to obtain such information is to talk to multiple professionals currently working in your field of interest.
- The XPD staff can help you get started. Use a variety of resources to learn about your career area before you conduct your informational interview. Write down questions that arise during your research and take them with you to the interview. Your informational interview questions should be open-ended, starting with words like "how," "what," "why," "when," and "in what way."

QUESTIONS TO ASK TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL:

- How did you decide to get into this field and what steps did you take to enter the field?
- What are some examples of the projects you work on and problems you solve in your work?
- What is something that would surprise people about your day-to-day activities?
- Describe the work environment(s) in which you work. (Location, amount of pressure, aesthetics, pace, variety, amount of supervision, flexible work schedules, amount of overtime, etc.)
- What do you like most about your job and why?
- What do you like least about your job and why?
- Describe ways you stay up-to-date in your field.

QUESTIONS TO ASK TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE CAREER:

- What training would you recommend for someone wanting to enter this field?
- How would you describe someone (what qualities) who would excel in this career?
- What undergraduate courses do you recommend for a good educational background in this field?
- What are the opportunities for promotion?
- What might an entry-level salary range be for someone starting in this field? Entry-level to top salary?
- What type of stress/stressors do you experience on the job?
- What are the employment trends in this field? Is the field expanding? Taking any new directions?
- What related occupations might I investigate?
- What kind of work/internship/volunteer experiences would be helpful to prepare for such work?
- Can you give me the contact info of a few individuals who share your enthusiasm for this kind of work?
- What else do you think is important for me to know about this field?

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XPD – EXPERIENCE & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
www.csbsju.edu/xpd
Open Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

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IDENTIFY PEOPLE TO INTERVIEW

- Start with your friends, relatives, parents of friends or neighbors involved in the field; they can talk with you about their occupation or refer you to a potential contact.
- Contact Saint Ben's and/or Saint John's alums through the CAreer NEtworking (CANE) database which is located in the XPD Resource Centers on both campuses.
- Your professors and XPD staff may be able to suggest names of people to call.
- Alums can utilize Bennies Connect/Johnnies Connect - the online alum directory.

SAMPLE EMAIL

Dear John,

I am a junior at the College of Saint Benedict majoring in Communication. This year I have been studying marketing and am very interested in learning more about this area. One of the XPD staff, _____, suggested I contact you for an informational interview to learn more. Would you be willing to meet and/or talk with me at a time convenient for you? I look forward to the opportunity to learn more about marketing. Thank you!

CONTACT AND SET UP AN INTERVIEW

People generally enjoy talking about their work and being asked for advice if they are approached respectfully and with understanding about the time pressures under which they work. You may want to first send an email introducing you/your request for an information interview; then follow up with a phone call.

Utilize MANGO Connects (on XPD's website) to help you initiate conversations to set up information interviews.

- Introduce yourself clearly, telling him/her how you got his/her name.
- Indicate that you seek personalized information about their field.
- Make sure they know you are not calling for an internship or job.
- Sound enthusiastic and delighted to reach them.
- Refer to the research you have already reviewed about the field and/or company.
- Request an appointment several days in advance.
- Ask for a specific amount of time (i.e. 20-30 min.) for the appointment.
- Try to arrange the interview at the person's work site so it is easier for them and so that you can determine first-hand how it might feel to work there.
- In-person contact will provide a valuable experience, however phone or skype conversations may be done due to geographic and time constraints.

TIPS ON CONDUCTING THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

- Dress: business casual (contact XPD if you have questions).
- Arrive at your information interview ahead of time. Give yourself plenty of time to park and locate the office/site.
- Be confident and friendly with people you approach.
- Smile and give a firm handshake as you meet others.
- Take a few minutes to get acquainted with your contact person. Then, reiterate the purpose of your visit and indicate that you have prepared some specific questions you would like to ask.
- Have paper/pencil handy to take notes; keep your notes brief so you can maintain eye contact.
- At the end of the interview, thank them for their time and information. Ask for a business card if you have not already received one.

FOLLOW UP

Immediately after the interview, write down key information you received from this person. List new ideas and questions which have come to mind. Follow up with a handwritten thank you note within 24 to 48 hours. The note should mention something of specific value that the person said during the interview. If your handwriting is difficult to read, you may wish to type the note instead. To gain additional information, consider contacting a professional in your interest area to inquire about possibilities for "shadowing" them on the job.