

Informational Interviewing

One great way to learn more about majors, careers and opportunities is to talk directly with someone already in the field. Learning first-hand about the expectations and tasks involved in a major or occupation can help you make more informed choices about your future. Most professionals are very happy to share their knowledge and expertise about their field of study/work.

1. Decide with whom to talk

When considering who you might interview, consult those who are closest to you first.

- CDC staff
- Professors
- Fellow students/classmates
- Parents
- Parents of your friends
- Friends of your parents
- Relatives (Aunts/ Uncles/ Cousins)
- Neighbors

Once you are comfortable with the informational interview process, expand your reach. Look for “experts” in the field(s) you are interested in pursuing. Here are some resources you can use to identify other professionals.

- College Central Network
- KU Alumni Association
- Social Networking sites i.e. LinkedIn
- Business or Prof. Journals & Associations
- Telephone book (Yellow pages)
- Newspaper articles or feature stories

2. Arrange the Interview

When you know who you would like to interview, contact the individual to set up an appointment. Explain who you are, the purpose of your contact, and that you would appreciate 20-30 minutes of their time. Be sure to let him/her know that that you are not seeking a job, only advice and information about their career field. Interviews can be conducted through a face-to-face meeting, telephone conversation, or email correspondence.

Sample Email Request

Dear Ms./Mrs./Mr./ Dr. and last name:

I am a sophomore at Kutztown University and I am interested in learning more about the field of _____ . Specifically, I'm looking for some candid advice about how to get into this field, what the future prospects are, and what the pros and cons are, as you see it. Would you be willing to give me a few minutes of your time?

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

*Name
phone number*



3. Prepare for the Interview

- Research the department and/or position of the professional so that you can ask intelligent, informed questions.
- Prepare questions for the interview (several provided below). You are in a position to guide the conversation through the type of questions you ask. Walking in and asking, "Tell me about your work" may not result in getting the information you need. Your interest, preparation, and planning will be remembered by the interviewee.
- If scheduling a face-to-face interview, map out your route and plan to arrive 10 minutes early.
- Present yourself professionally. The contact may be invaluable later, so don't miss the opportunity to make a good impression.

4. Questions to Ask...

for Major Exploration...

- How did you first become interested in this major?
- Why did you choose this major?
- What do you like most/least about your academic major?
- What type of skills do you think are needed to be successful in this major?
- Describe a typical class in regard to class size, academic demands, and expectations.
- What type of internship and employment opportunities are available for students in this program?
- What advice would you give to someone interested in pursuing this major?

for Career Exploration...

- How did you first become interested in this field?
- Please describe a typical workday in this industry.
- How did you prepare for the work that you do?
- What skills and qualities are needed to be successful?
- What is most rewarding about your work?
- What are your biggest frustrations?
- What advice would you give a student interested in pursuing this field?
- What types of internship and employment opportunities are available for this major/career field?
- Is there anything I can do to make myself more qualified for this type of career?

5. Interview Follow-up

- When you get home, jot down some notes about the interview that you can refer to later. These may help you make some future decisions.
- Send a brief thank you note. It helps to keep the door open for future contact!

Sample Thank-you Note

Date

Dear Ms./Mrs./Mr./Dr. and last name:

It was a pleasure speaking with you on _____. Thank you taking time from your busy schedule to answer my questions. Your insight was very helpful and has given me a more realistic view of this major or career field.

I appreciate the interest you have shown in helping me with my career plans!

Sincerely,

Signature

Name

Email and phone