

# INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING & NETWORKING

## NETWORKING

Network to gain knowledge of specific jobs/career options and make contacts for referrals in the job search process. These people can coach you in cover letter and resume writing as well as interviewing. Networking allows you to learn industry specific behaviors which may help confirm your interest in a chosen field.

Your network is everyone you know, a giant web, tying each contact to another. It includes family, friends, organization and church members, professional associations, civic groups and LinkedIn connections. A meeting can be as casual as "Can I ask you a few questions about how you got into \_\_\_\_\_?" to arranging an appointment.

### Evaluate Your Network

- Inform your closest contacts of your job search status/goals.
- Identify areas of needed growth. For example, should you reach out to professors who specialize in a chosen career field?
- Here is a list to help you get started:
  - Family members
  - Friends (school, email, Facebook, etc.)
  - UT Martin alumni, instructors, staff, advisors, etc.
  - Co-workers from your last five jobs
  - People at the gym or intramural field
  - Salespeople with whom you interact
  - Maintenance workers attending to your apartment/house
  - People you meet at the grocery store, bank, etc.
  - Your barber/hairdresser, manicurist, physical trainer, etc.
  - Wait staff and managers at your favorite restaurants
  - Your walking, exercise, etc. partners
  - Doctors, dentists, etc.
  - People at church, synagogue, mosque, etc.
  - People who are in the same social or service organization
  - Casual acquaintances and new introductions

Every person you meet, stumble across or blunder into, during your job search, whose name, email and number you have the grace to ask for, is a contact. (Always have the grace to ask for it.)

### Connect

- Ideally, ask for an introduction from a mutual connection.
- Join professional/civic organizations and leadership programs.
- Send a message before requesting to connect on LinkedIn.
- Clarify your intentions when making the connection. If you are looking for career advice, say so in your message.

### Cultivate Your Connections

- Focus on building quality relationships with your network.
- Give first, receive second - it's not just about you.
- Never ask for a job outright.

## INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

These conversations can guide you in your career choice as you gain more realistic insight into your career area of interest and network with professionals. It should help you develop career-related contacts and evaluate the environment as a fit for your career goals. It is not a job-seeking method.

### Preparation

- Research the industry and company
- Develop a list of questions
- Prepare to respond to questions as well
- Start with people you are familiar with and practice
- Schedule an appointment

### During

- Refer to list of questions as needed; it shows you are prepared
- Dress professionally, be on time and use positive social skills
- Observe work environment, people, dress, etc.
- Thank everyone for their time and assistance
- Ask for business cards and two or three other contacts

### Networking and Informational Interview Questions

- How did you get started? What did you study?
- What short- and long-term trends affect your industry?
- What are the positive and challenging aspects of this industry?
- What are the major rewards of your job?
- What are the major frustrations? How do you deal with them?
- What fringe benefits are offered on your job?
- Based on my research, I see that the average salary range is \$\_\_\_ to \$\_\_\_. Would you say that is accurate?
- Who are the recognized leaders in this industry?
- What professional associations represent this industry?
- Who else do you recommend I talk with about this field?
- What are good sources to further research this industry?
- What are career trends in this field?
- Is it more likely that I will be hired through direct application or via a referral from a current employee in this field?
- What is the typical career path for entry-level hires?
- What skills and education make up an attractive candidate?
- Is training typically formal or on-the-job training?
- Would you mind reviewing my resume? What strengths and/or weaknesses do you see in my qualifications?
- May I follow-up if I have more questions?

### Follow-up:

- Summarize information you gathered
- Send thank you email within 24 hours and written note within 48
- Keep contact informed if they expressed interest
- Contact new leads

