URI ALUMNI TO ALUMNI INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

*Clarify career change objectives, explore career fields and specific companies, expand your professional network, develop leads and, perhaps, land a job!*

An informational interview consists of having a conversation with someone who is knowledgeable regarding a career about which you want to learn more. It is not an interview for a job but an interview to gather information.

As you gather information through this method, your views and beliefs about your career change decisions will solidify. The more experience you have talking with people in careers that interest you, the better prepared you'll be to make an informed career change decision.

- Collect information about a career, occupation, or organization that interests you
- Learn about job opportunities and career paths in a given field
- Develop a network of contacts with key people
- Enhance your confidence by speaking to a variety of professionals
- Visit people in various work settings to gain insight into different environments
- Find hidden job markets

**Where Do I Find Contacts?**

A good informational interview starts with research. After you decide what areas you are interested in, you need to figure out who has the information you need. Start with a list of people you know: former professors, former URI classmates, friends, neighbors, co-workers, supervisors, former and current employers, and family members. Tell them what you are interested in. Consider them as a potential interviewee or a connection to an interviewee and ask for appropriate referrals.

**Use Career Tracker in Linkedin!**

Go to the URI Alumni Career Services website, [www.alumni.uri.edu/careerservices](http://www.alumni.uri.edu/careerservices). Scroll down to Career Tracker, and find the more than 53,000 people with a URI connection. Find people who had the same major you had, or people working at a specific company, or in a specific geographic location or industry.

Professional associations can provide possible informational interview contacts along with trade papers and newsletters. To find these organizations look up your field of interest in the *Encyclopedia of Associations* in the URI Career Resource Center or search online.
Why should people, especially strangers, be willing to give you their valuable time and information? Most people like to help others and will be flattered that you asked for their advice. Be appreciative and thank them. As you set up your informational interview, be sure to say something such as, "Thank you. You’re very nice to take the time to do this."

Calling people is the easiest way to connect with contacts. You may be a bit nervous, but remember you have nothing to lose. Write out your ideas and rehearse what you want to say. Sound upbeat and positive. Briefly introduce yourself, explain how you received their name and ask if they have a few minutes to talk. If No, ask for a good time to call back. If yes, explain that you’d like to set up a twenty minute informational interview. Stress that you are not applying for a job, but rather seeking career information. Set a date, place and time. Ask for directions and make sure you give your name and telephone number in case the person needs to reschedule.

Before the interview, decide what it is you what to gain. Prepare a list of questions and bring a note pad to jot down responses. Arrive promptly, give a strong handshake and introduce yourself with confidence. If someone recommended this interviewee, mention the person’s name, it’s usually a good icebreaker. Listen carefully and maintain eye contact. Towards the end of the interview, you may want to ask if they will take a look at your resume and give some constructive feedback. Be sure to close on a positive note. Thank the person for his or her time and information. Here are some sample questions to ask:

What do you do as a ______?
   How do you spend the day/week?
   What kinds of problems do you deal with or decisions do you make?
   What do you find most satisfying and least satisfying about your job?

Tell me about this career field.
   What are the positive and negative aspects of working in this field?
   How did you enter the field, what has been your career path?
   What are typical entry-level jobs? Is there a definite career path in this field?

What is it like to work in this organization?
   How does your job fit into the organization or department?
   What are the toughest challenges you face in this organization?

What is the corporate climate? How do you balance company demands with everyday life?

Can you give me advice on how to break into this field?
   What skills, education and experience are required?
   Can you suggest anyone else whom I could contact for additional information?
   What are the professional journals and associations in this field?
   Do you participate in any of those organizations?
   If I wanted to apply for a job, whom should I contact in this organization?

Within a week of the interview, send a short, typed or hand written (only if you have nice penmanship) thank you letter to the person you interviewed. If the career still interests you, say it in your letter. Your thank you letter leaves a positive reminder of you.

Free, confidential, career counseling is available to all URI alumni, no matter when you graduated. Please contact Karen Rubano or Lisa Kuosmanen, URI Alumni Career Advisors, at 401 874 9404 or at kruano@uri.edu or lkuosmanen@uri.edu.