ALUMNI, REFRESH YOUR NETWORKING SKILLS

Interviewing a professional for career and job search information is a structured meeting through which an alumnus gathers career information from a mentor or other professional about a career field, an occupation, or an organization. The information acquired can be used to help make a decision about a career change or to help find out about job openings and qualifications required in particular fields.

HOW TO BEGIN
Interview a friend, relative, faculty member, former or current coworker, or member of an organization to which you belong. Some people in your network are likely to have information about the career field you are investigating and know someone to whom they can refer you.

The RhodyNet Mentor site is a great way to begin. Through this network, URI alumni and friends have volunteered to share information about their career fields, positions and organizations. In addition, some might offer opportunities for alumni to shadow them at work to experience their career fields more fully.

ARRANGING INTERVIEWS
Most people prefer to send an introductory email introducing themselves, thanking the mentor for his or her commitment to URI, and requesting a convenient time to call or to visit at the mentor’s work site. RhodyNet mentors indicate the ways they prefer to be contacted.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW
Determine which of the THREE PURPOSES below relate to your needs and note the preparation tips and sample questions.

I. Questions about the Career Field and Positions within the Field
Alumni changing careers may interview for information about career fields and positions in those fields. You should have copies of your resume with you, in case someone asks for it, but remember that you are seeking advice, NOT seeking a job!

Preparation Tips
• Learn about the person’s field and organization through Internet
• Develop a list of questions that will help keep you on track during the interview.

Sample Questions
• Describe your major activities during a typical work week.
• What skills, abilities and personal qualities do you find most important in your work?
• How did you enter this field? What preparation did you have?
• What kind of experience and academic work would you recommend to prepare for this work?
• What do you like most about your job?
• What do you see as disadvantages to working in your type of job?
• How does your type of work affect lifestyle (hours required, flexibility, dress; vacation time)?
• What are the trends in this career field? What are the implications of these trends for someone trying to enter the field?
• What are entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level salary ranges in this field?
• Into what kinds of related work do persons in your field sometimes change?
• Do you recommend any professional associations for this field?
• Could you suggest the names of others who might expand my knowledge of this career field?

II Questions on Issues in the Field and on Improving your Resume and Qualifications
People interviewing for this purpose have gathered basic information about the field and are searching for more in-depth career advice.

Preparation Tips
• Take a resume to the interview.
• Use knowledge you have gained from reading and talking with others about the career field and organization to ask informed questions.

Sample Questions
• My reading or research indicates that (name the issue, trend, concern) is an issue in this field. How is this issue affecting the work in this organization?
• What do you see as other significant issues (trends, concerns) in this field? Do you see them affecting your work?
• How well suited is my background for the field? Is there critical experience or education missing?
• For what positions should I realistically apply? Can you suggest other related fields that might be logical for me to explore?
• How well does my resume work for this field? How could I improve it?
• What could I do to improve my qualifications for positions in this field?
• Could you suggest the names of other people in this career field with whom I might talk?

III Questions about Job Hunting and Job Openings
Preparation Tips
• Same as for Purpose Two.

Sample Questions
• How do people at my level find out about careers in your field?
• Can you suggest particular sources (published listings, employment agencies, executive recruiters) that might be helpful for me?
• Do you have advice for someone job hunting or seeking career-related experience in this field?
• Please tell me more about the organizational structure and management style of this organization and how it compares to other organizations.
• What types of formal or on-the-job training does the organization provide?
• Does the organization offer tuition reimbursement?
• What advice do you have for applying at this organization?
• What other organizations would you suggest I contact about openings?
• Could you recommend particular persons for me to contact?

Thank-you after the Interview
Within two to three days of the interview, send a brief thank you letter. This letter can be handwritten or word-processed (but be sure it is free of errors). You might want to call attention to some particular information that you found helpful. An email thank you is acceptable; however, a letter is preferable.

Plan to stay in touch with the people who have helped you. Keep them informed of your progress and, as you begin job hunting, inquire about new referrals and job leads. Share your success as you make career decisions and land that job.
Script

Guidelines for Arranging Interviews

Introducing yourself
Hello, this is (your first and last name). I obtained your name through the RhodyNet Mentors site at URI (or, from the phone book; or, our mutual friend suggested you would be a good person for me to talk to about....). I am an alumnus or alumna of URI and your career field is one that I am researching to help me make a decision about a career change. I am trying to learn more about issues and trends in your field and what employers seek in the persons they hire.

Requesting the interview
I would value meeting with you for 20 minutes to observe your work environment and to ask a few questions. Would that be possible in the near future? Or, would there be a convenient time to meet with me for twenty minutes in the next two weeks?

Note: If an in-person interview is not possible, consider an extended phone conversation or correspondence by email. Remember, though, that an in-person interview at the work site is always preferable.

Setting up the interview
Arrange a mutually convenient time. If necessary, obtain directions and information about parking and transportation. Thank the person for agreeing to meet with 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 krubano@uri.edu or lkuosmanen@uri.edu.