

Interview Assignment

Requires: 60-90 minutes outside of class

Description

This assignment is designed to introduce you to the process of networking, interviewing people whose lives you admire, identifying key questions to help you design your own path, and, in strictly pragmatic terms, help you identify the steps you'll need to take in order to pursue that path. At best, the person you interview may become part of your own "network" of resources and mentors. This assignment is being given to you several weeks before the deadline because it can be hard to pin down interviewees. Don't delay in making the appointments.

What to Do

First, identify a person whose profession is related to your field of interest or who is currently affiliated with an organization for which you would like to work in the future. Without delay, make an appointment to interview them! The person could be an affiliated faculty, or it can be a mentor or contact outside of the University. Even better, I recommend you choose somebody at an organization you could imagine yourself applying to someday. Ideally, you will meet this person face-to-face, but if you can talk on the phone with somebody who has your dream job in Washington, DC or Costa Rica or wherever, then by all means, do whatever you need to do to talk to the person who best speaks to your interests and passions.

Once you've secured a person and an interview date, write a list of 4-5 questions that you'd like to ask about the person's job, life, career path, background, training, etc. The questions you ask are up to you. They can be about lifestyle ("Do you have a healthy work/life balance?"), training ("what 2-3 experiences, coursework, or training prepared you for the work you do now?"), or whatever you want. But avoid asking for an interview or indicate that you're fishing for a job there; that may feel duplicitous to the interviewee. Figure out how you're going to take notes of their answers (record, type, field notes, etc).

What to Submit

Write up your questions and their answers to submit. After you transcribe the actual interview, provide your own analysis of the experience. What did you learn? What surprised you? What specific tasks or goals will you set for yourself now that you've learned a bit more about the field? Did the interview provide any crucial insights for you? Don't be limited by these questions; they're just to get you going.

Be sure to send a thank you note or email after the interview!

See the attached handout from the Academic and Career Advising Center on informational interviewing to help yourself get started and to make initial contact with an interviewee.