**Informational Interview Assignment - Faculty Instructions**

**Module 4: Identifying and Researching Career Options**

An informational interview is when you sit down with a professional working in the career field or industry you are interested in or planning to pursue, and ask questions to obtain information and advice about that career.

An informational interview can be conducted for several different purposes, including:

1. To get a better feel for whether a career of interest is truly a good fit (students still trying to decide on a career path)
2. To explore different career paths within an industry of interest (students who have a general direction but aren’t sure of their specific options)
3. To find out how to successfully prepare for a given career (students with a defined career goal who are ready for the next step of finding out the specific requirements and how to make themselves competitive)
4. To build a network of contacts in the intended career field (students who have established a career goal, found out what they need to do, and are now actively preparing for their career)

Because of the topic of this module, the main focus of this particular informational interview assignment will be on the first two. Even if the majority of your students are decided upon a career path, this assignment will still be relevant, as it is unlikely that most of them have researched their career of interest as thoroughly as they should, or conducted any information interviews. (Those that have will still benefit from the opportunity to expand their professional network.)

The instructions for you to give to your students (or modify and give to your students) are on the following page.

On the third page, you will find a tip sheet on informational interviewing which you can also provide to your students to help them complete the assignment.

**Informational Interview Assignment - Student Instructions**

As you learned in this module, an informational interview is when you sit down with a professional working in the career field or industry you are interested in and ask questions to obtain information and advice about the career. Conducting informational interviews is a critical step in the process of researching your career options, as you will get a better feel for what the career is really like, and learn things you won’t find on the internet.

For this assignment, you will need to conduct an informational interview with a professional currently working in a career field you’re considering or planning to pursue. (You must choose a career you are legitimately considering.) Your interviewee may not be an immediate family member, and should not be one of your instructors, unless your career goal is specifically to become a university instructor or professor.

Ask the following questions in your interview, plus at least two that you will write yourself. Base the questions you write on what else you need or want to know. For example, if you’re already decided on a career path, you will want to ask specific questions about what qualifications you’ll need to be competitive for jobs and what skills, experiences, and contacts you’ll need to be seeking out while you’re in school.

Take notes during your interview, and afterwards, type up a summary of the response you received to each question, which you will turn in.

**Informational Interview Questions:**

1. Tell me what a typical day on the job is like for you.

2. How and why did you decide to pursue this career?

3. What do you like most and least about your job and the field you’re in?

4. What are the qualities or personal characteristics you feel makes someone a good fit for this career? What would make this NOT the right fit for someone?

5. What are the specific job options within this career field?

6. What job would I start in right out of school, and what would my career progression look like?

7. What is the job market like? How difficult is it to get a job? What types of companies hire people for this job?

8. What are the educational requirements for this career? What will I need in addition to my degree to be able to get a job?

9. *Write your own question here*:

10. *Write your own question here*:

**Informational Interviewing Quick Tips**

**Finding Someone to Interview**

* If there is a local professional organization for your career field, check their website for a member directory. If there isn’t one, contact the main phone number or email address provided and ask if they can refer you to someone to contact for your interview. Use Google, the “Links” section of “What Can I do With This Major?” to identify national organizations, then search for local chapters (career.boisestate.edu → Students [on the main menu] → Career Planning → What Can I do With This Major?), and ask your faculty about relevant local organizations.
* Look on the websites of companies who might employ people in your career field, and take the same approach described above. To find companies, use the company search section of LinkedIn, or the “Idaho Businesses” section of Idaho Career Information System (career.boisestate.edu → Students [on the main menu] → Career Planning → eCIS (under Step 2) → Occupations tab → Occupations [under “What can I learn about occupations”] → select occupation → Idaho Businesses [under the Related Information menu]).
* Ask faculty teaching in a related area if they know someone working in your career field they could refer you to.
* Ask your friends and family members if they know of someone working in your career field.

**Requesting the Interview**

* Many students prefer making their request via email because they can ensure the request is worded perfectly.
* If you send an email and don’t hear back within about a week, follow up with a phone call.
* Be respectful of their time and schedule, and express that you appreciate them taking the time to talk to you.
* Write professionally - do not use any “textspeak”, and PROOFREAD!

**When and Where to Meet**

* Most often, informational interviews take place at the interviewee’s office or place of business. Ask your interviewee the time and location that is most convenient, and try to work around their schedule as much as possible.
* Be safety conscious. Only meet in a public place or at the person’s office during a time others will be around.
* If you want to do something nice for your interviewee to show appreciation (and can afford it), consider meeting at a coffee shop and treating the interviewee to coffee while you conduct your interview.

**How to Dress and What to Bring**

* Remember that conducting informational interviews is one of the BEST ways to build a professional network in your career field, so making a good impression is very important. What you wear to the interview says a lot about how serious you are about a future career. Dressing like you would for a job interview is usually a good idea.
* Bring your questions, something to write with, and a nice looking folder or binder to keep those things in.
* Optionally, you can choose to bring copies of your resume, but DO NOT offer this to the interviewee. Only provide it if they specifically ask for a resume. If you do not bring one, make sure you have an updated and polished resume ready to go so that if they do ask, you can email it to them immediately following the interview.

**After the Interview**

* Send a thank-you email right after the interview – no later than the next morning. This will show you are grateful for the time they took out of their schedule and for the information and advice they provided, and will enhance their impression of you.