EXPLORE JOBS AND CAREERS THROUGH INFORMATION INTERVIEWS AND JOB SHADOWING!

**What is an information interview and job shadowing?**

An information, research, or networking interview is an appointment which you schedule with a specific person for the purpose of gaining career information from an “insider” point of view. Job shadowing is when you go to this person’s place of employment and observe or “shadow” them to get a first-hand glimpse of what a day in that job is really like.

Most people are very receptive to doing informational interviews or having you shadow them on the job (after all, who doesn’t like to talk about themselves and their work?) as long as you DO NOT ask them for a job.

**Why should I do information interviews and job shadowing?**

- To get valuable information for your career planning and job search. It’s a good way to “reality check” what you’ve read, heard and think!
- To learn about a particular organization, how you might fit in, what problems or needs the employer has. Knowing these things will help you to slant your qualifications toward the needs of the organization.
- To gain experience and self-confidence in interviewing with professionals through discussing yourself and your career interests.
- To expand your network! Networking is how 80% of people find their internships and jobs! You should ask each person with whom you speak for referrals (i.e. other people they know that may be willing to speak with you!)
- To get your foot in the door. While an employer may not grant a job interview because vacancies do not exist, information interviews can often be arranged regardless of whether vacancies exist.

**How do I find people willing to do information interviews or job shadowing with me?**

To find people working in an area that interests you, ask your family, your friends, your co-workers, your professors – anyone you know. Career Services may also be able to help you by searching Cal U Career Network, a database of Cal U graduates who have volunteered to help current students and alumni by providing them with career information about their chosen fields via e-mail or in person.

Cal U Career Network provides the opportunity for you to talk with alumni about their careers and the organizations with which they work, and “job shadow” alumni to see what a day in their job is actually like… which may even develop into an internship or Co-op experience where you can get hands-on experience!
How do I access Cal U Career Network?

First, make sure you are registered on our College Central Network (www.collegecentral.com/cup).
Then, just follow these steps:

1. Go to www.collegecentral.com/cup
2. Click on “Students”, then on “Student Central”
3. Enter your ID and password
4. Click on “Search for Mentors”
5. Enter the password (vulcan) and click “Access Mentoring Network”
6. To see a complete listing of alumni who participate in Cal U Career Network, leave all fields blank, scroll to the bottom of the page and click “Begin Search.” Or, type in your major to see alumni who graduated with that major.
7. To view information about a specific alumnus listed, click on their name
8. To contact an alumnus, click on the “Contact Me’ button, type in your e-mail message introducing yourself, and click the “Send Message” button. The alumnus should respond to you within a week or two, and you can proceed to make arrangements for your informational interview and/or job shadowing experience.

Important preparation steps

Before contacting professionals for information on their career fields, you need to do some homework. Be sure to do at least basic research on the career field of interest. This research will help you to define your areas of interest and help you to develop a list of pertinent questions. Make an appointment with Career Services to assist you in doing this research and preparing for an information interview or job shadowing experience!

Informational interviews should only last 20 – 30 minutes, and can take place wherever you and your interviewee choose to meet (offer to come to his/her place of employment), or via phone or e-mail. Shadowing can last anywhere from a few hours to a few days and usually takes place at the place of employment. Make sure you look professional, are well-prepared, and write a thank-you note afterward. Make sure you take notes, or audiotape the interview (be sure to ask the interviewee first!). Doing informational interviews with or shadowing several people in the same career area is a good idea, as you will be able to obtain a more accurate picture of work in that field.

Sample Questions

- Describe your typical work day (the kinds of tasks you do, how you spend your time).
- What kind of educational background is necessary for working in your field?
- Tell me your career history – how did you get to where you are today?
- What is the current job outlook for careers in your field?
- What is the typical entry-level salary range for jobs in this field?
- What do you like the most/least about your job?
- What is your work schedule like?
- What is the typical amount of job security in this field?
- What skills do you recommend I learn before beginning to work in this field?
- Are computer skills valuable to have for working in this field? What software packages should I know?
- Is there anyone else you would recommend I speak to about working in this field?
- May I have a brief tour of your facilities? (if time permits)