

## ***Interviewing a Professional for Career and Job Search Information***

An information interview is a structured meeting through which a student or alumnus gathers career information from a mentor (or other professional) about a career field, an occupation or an organization. This information can be used to help make a decision about a major or career or to help find out about job openings and qualifications required in particular fields.

### **→How to Begin**

- **Interview a friend, relative, faculty member, coworker (current or former) or member of an organization to which you belong.** Some persons in your circle 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 agreed to share information about their career fields, positions and organizations. In addition, some might offer opportunities for students to shadow them at work to experience their career fields more fully.

### **→Arranging Interviews**

Most students prefer to send an introductory email introducing themselves, thanking the mentor for their commitment, and requesting a convenient time to call. *RhodyNet* mentors indicate the ways they prefer to be contacted.

### **→Preparing for the Interview and Choosing Questions**

Determine which of the **THREE PURPOSES** below relate to your needs and note the preparation tips and sample questions:

#### **1. Purpose One: Questions about the Career Field/Positions**

Persons interviewing for information about career fields and positions in those fields could be freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors,

graduate students or alumni changing careers. Taking a resume is optional (you are seeking resume advice NOT seeking a job).

### **Preparation Tips:**

- Learn a little about the person's field and organization through resources in the Career Resource Center or on the Internet.
- Develop a list of questions or "points to remember" 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 (classes, activities, experience)?
- What academic major would you recommend as preparation for your field? Are there specific courses you would recommend? What types of experience, paid or unpaid, would you recommend as preparation for this type of 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 (number of hours and flexibility of schedule; formality of dress; vacation)?
- 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 other persons who might further expand my knowledge of this career field?

## 2. Purpose Two: Questions on Issues in the Field and on Improving your Resume and Qualifications

Persons interviewing for Purpose Two 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, or other sources) 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 this field? Is there any critical education or experience 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 persons in this career field with whom I might talk?

## 3. Purpose Three: 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 jobs (internships, co-op jobs, full-time permanent positions, etc.) in your field?
- Can you suggest particular sources (published listings, employment agencies, executive recruiters, etc.)?
- What advice do you have for the person 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 persons 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 professional 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 a (indicate your year in school) and your career field is one that I am researching to help me make a decision about what career to pursue (or I am graduating this year from URI with a degree in...). 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 20 minutes in the next two weeks?) **Note:** If an in-person interview is not possible, consider an extended phone conversation or correspondence by email.

##### **Setting up the interview:**

Arrange a mutually convenient time. Obtain directions and information on parking/transportation. Thank the person for agreeing to meet with you.