

## **INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING**

### **Tips on Surveying an Occupation**

Skillfully used, the personal interview is one of the most valuable of all sources of occupational information. While it may cover some of the same ground as printed materials, it presents opportunities for an intimate and flexible inspection of the job field or major unmatched by written sources. The great majority of faculty and business people are very willing to help students learn about their career; it is important to them and they usually like to talk about it.

When you call for an appointment, make clear your status as a college student and the explicit purpose of your interview. When calling business people, state that you are not looking for a job, but are interested in finding out more about the occupational area. Remember the appointment time and appear promptly for your interview. When you arrive, tell the person in the reception area what your name is and the name of the person with whom you have an appointment. Be sure you know the name of the person, the correct pronunciation of his/her name, and the title of that person's position.

Since knowledge gained from an interview can be quickly forgotten or distorted, students often decide to take notes during the meeting. Afterward, fill in other details that you may not have had time to make note of, as this will help you remember what was said in the various, different interviews you may schedule.

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING AN INTERVIEW**

Listed below are questions that you may wish to ask during an interview. From the suggested interview questions, mark those that you want to ask. Add any additional questions that you may have. Take the list of questions to your interview, and use it openly during the conversation.

#### **Questions to Ask About a College Major**

1. What courses are required in this major?
2. What special abilities are necessary in order to do well in these courses?
3. What other courses are students encouraged to take along with the required courses?
4. What personal qualities seem most important to successful completion of this major'?
5. What kinds of jobs can a graduate with an A.A. or a certificate get in this field? With a bachelor's degree? With a master's degree? With a doctorate?
6. What additional course work or work experience might make a graduate more likely to find an appropriate job. in a related field?

#### **Question to Ask About an Occupation**

1. What does a person do in this occupation on a typical day? Is there a set routine?
2. What educational program is recommended as preparation for the job? Distinguish between what is desirable and what is necessary.
3. What degree or certificate do employers look for? In what fields?
4. What skills are particularly important?
5. What kind of work experience would employers look for in a job applicant? How might a student obtain this work experience?
6. What other steps (if any) are necessary to enter this occupation (e.g., test, join a union)?
7. What are the opportunities for advancement? Is an advanced degree needed? If so, in what area?

8. What are the different work settings in which people in this occupation may be employed (e.g., educational institutions, businesses)?
9. What are some related occupations? Are there occupations doing similar work, but at different levels, e.g., assistant, para-professional, or in different areas? What are the advantages and disadvantages of these positions?

### **Prospects of the Career**

1. How does a person go about finding a job in this area?
2. What are current employment prospects in this city? Elsewhere?
3. Do you see any future trends and changes in the direction of the problems and topics considered in your area?
4. How will these changes affect the plans and training of persons interested in a career in your area?
5. What difficulties do you think a person entering this field now can expect to encounter?

### **Personal Aspects of the Career**

1. What are the satisfactions you find in your work? What are the rewards, both tangible and intangible?
2. What are some of the dissatisfactions you find in your work? What are some of the stresses and frustrations? Did your training prepare you for these?
3. What are some of your joys and challenges about the setting you work in, its structure, its facilities, the people you work with?
4. Does your career permit you to lead the kind of life you would like to live? How does your career affect your style of life – the amount of work required, the amount of time required, your time for leisure, your material needs?

### **Information About Your Career**

1. Are there recent publications, either reprints or references, characteristic of your work?
2. Can you suggest others who might be willing to talk with students about their career?

### **Questions to Ask Yourself After the Interview**

1. What aspects of the job would you like?
2. What aspects of the job would you dislike? How long could you put up with them?
3. What is your reaction to the conditions (e.g., stress/anxieties) of this occupation? Could you handle them?
4. What is your reaction to the amount of freedom or leeway the worker has in determining what he/she does on the job?
5. How do you feel about working with the kind of people that you have met in this field?
6. Do you have (or could you acquire) the skills and personal characteristics necessary for this job?
7. How do you feel about the duties described in relation to the kinds of activities you presently enjoy?
8. Can you meet the educational and other requirements?