

Informational Interview Tips for Dickinsonians from the Alumni Council

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As you consider internships, careers, or other life pursuits, you may want to reach out to someone to learn more about what they do, where they work, or their particular path in life. This is called an “informational interview” and can be very valuable! Alumni of Dickinson can be important and useful resources for you. To get the most out of your interview, you'll need to keep a few things in mind.

1. **Make the connection.** When reaching out to an informational interview subject, be prepared to articulate how you got in contact with that alum, and if you met them in person at an event, be sure to include that in your first email. Make sure that person knows how you are connected to them.
2. **Do your research.** Look them up, and their company up, before speaking with them. Have a clear picture of what they do and avoid asking questions easily answered by a Google search. Know their background.
3. **Have a clear purpose.** Remember: the person you're interviewing has taken time out of their day to speak with you. Make good use of their time. Come with a set of questions to ask, have your resume printed out and ready. Understand why you are talking to this particular person. What about their job, background or skills do you find compelling? Knowing why you're speaking with them and what you hope to gain from the interview is critical to a successful interview.
4. **Be professional.** Understand they are doing you a favor by speaking with you. Be flexible around their schedule; don't be difficult or demanding. Dress appropriately.
5. **Have an ask.** Make the most of your meeting. Make sure the alum knows how they can help you. Be respectful but clear; don't leave them wondering what you're looking for. Even asking “can I contact you in the future if I have any questions?” is appropriate.
6. **The follow-up.** Don't let your interview be the last time you speak to this alum. Keep up the conversation. Make sure to follow-up in some fashion to thank them, and check back in periodically (every few months or so) to let them know how you are doing. The idea here is to build a relationship so you can stay in touch.

Informational interviews can be a very powerful tool in your job-seeking arsenal. Following these few tips will really help you in the future!