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## Informational Interviewing:

One way to receive more detailed information about an occupation or career is to conduct an informational interview. *The dinner you are attending is like an informational interview.* Informational interviewing is the process of talking to professionals who are employed in a career field/industry that is of interest to you.

The following guidelines will help you have a successful dinner experience.

### 1. Know What You Want to Accomplish

The primary objectives are to:

- Investigate a specific career field.
- Narrow career options.
- Obtain advice on where you might fit in an organization.
- Learn the language and important issues in the field.
- Broaden your network for future reference.
- Create a strategy for entering your field.

### 2. Conducting the Informational Interview

Before the Dinner:

- Research the host's employer or organization.
- Write down questions you wish to ask.
- Learn something about the person you will be interviewing.
- Dress professionally.
- Bring copies of your resume to distribute only upon request.

During the Dinner:

- Share what information you expect to learn.
  - Initiate the conversation, since you are the interviewer.
  - Request referrals to other individuals in the field or in related organizations.
- \*Remember that this is an information-gathering event, not an employment interview.

After the Dinner:

- Send a thank-you note.
- Evaluate your style of interviewing. What could you have done better?
- Evaluate the information you received. How does it relate to your plans?
- Map out your next step.

### 3. What to Ask Your Host

Make a list of questions you would like answered by the host about a career field or organization. To gain the most information, use open-ended questions to engage your host. Listed below are sample questions to help you prepare for your dinner.

#### Questions about the Field:

- What types of positions are available in this career field?
- What general skills do people need to perform their responsibilities (e.g., organizing, supervising, writing)?
- What background is required?
- What kind of training or education do you recommend?
- What characterizes a typical entry level position in the field?
- What is the outlook for entry-level professionals?
- What are some alternative methods of entry into the field?
- What is the future of this field in terms of new and expanding opportunities?

In addition, ask about other information that may be helpful (e.g., critique of resume, job-seeking tactics, names of other professionals in the field).

#### Questions about the Organization

- What are some short and long-term goals of the organization in the areas of growth, new products or services and expansion of facilities?
- What is the philosophy of the organization and what types of training programs are available?
- Can you describe an entry-level and a mid-level job?
- Can you describe your job?
- What is a typical career path from entry-level to top management?

## **Dress Guidelines:**

**Business casual is proper attire for this dinner.** Not sure what this means? Business casual clothing is crisp, neat, and should look appropriate. Just remember that you want to represent yourself positively in front of the host and the other dinner guests. Use common sense; avoid tight or baggy clothing, sneakers or jeans; business casual is classic rather than trendy. Khaki pants, neatly pressed, and a pressed long-sleeved, buttoned solid shirt are safe for both men and women. Women can wear casual pants or skirts. In addition to tailored shirts or blouses, tailored knit sweaters and sweater sets are also appropriate business casual choices. Wear a leather belt and leather shoes. Athletic shoes are inappropriate.

## **Thanking Your Host:**

**The host is paying for your meal, not AU.** Sending a thank you card is both an expected courtesy and an important part of successful networking. Know that follow-up letters keep your name current should opportunities arise in an organization and/or field.

Please send the card to your host to specially acknowledge and thank them for dinner.

*Don't forget to exchange contact information with the host before leaving!*

## **Cancellation Policy:**

Cancellations need to be submitted to [insert contact information] or 202-885-5962 at least 24 hours before your dinner. Please include your name, contact information, date of dinner, and name of the dinner host.

**You must let us know if you can no longer attend; no-shows will not be allowed to participate in future dinners.**

## DINNER WITH ALUMNI CONSENT FORM

Event Information:            Date & Time:

Location:

Participants:

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I am voluntarily choosing to participate in American University's "Dinner with Alumni" Event ("Event"). I understand that American University ("University") is only acting as a facilitator, to identify alumni who have interest in sharing networking opportunities and/or offering general advice based on his/her past experiences, and to identify students interested in learning from these experiences, and to facilitate introductions between the interested parties. I understand that the University does not investigate, screen, or verify the background of the Event participants, the safety of the Event location, or any other aspect of the Event. I understand and agree that it is my sole responsibility to investigate the Event, and assume all risks related thereto.

I agree that participating in any activity is an acceptance of some risk of injury and I fully accept those risks. These risks may include, but are not limited to, such things as traffic accidents and any resulting personal injury (including death) or property damage suffered by myself or a third party, other incidents related to transportation, adverse weather conditions, criminal activity, illness, loss, damage or theft of personal property, and other mental, physical or emotional injury, including the risk of catastrophic injury or death. I also understand that there may be other risks not known or reasonably foreseeable. I agree that my safety is primarily dependent upon me taking proper care of myself.

I authorize the University to share my directory information with the Event participants prior to the Event. This information may include my name, email address, phone, class standing, and/or other type of directory information as defined by law. I also give the University permission to publish or reproduce any written comments that I have made about the Event, including emails, feedback, or comments from evaluation forms that may highlight positive aspects of the Event.

I give the University permission to take photographs and make other recordings of me before, after, or during the Event. I consent to the use of my name and these photographs and recordings, without compensation, in any promotional materials and publications related to the educational activities of American University.

I also acknowledge reading and understanding the contents of the information packet about the Event that I received. I agree to follow all University policies and regulations at the Event. I will conduct myself in a safe and prudent manner while participating in this Event. In addition, I agree to not order or consume alcoholic beverages before or during the Event, even if I am 21-years of age.

In consideration of American University allowing me to participate in the Event, for myself and my legal guardian or other representatives, I agree indemnify and hold harmless American University, its trustees, officers, employees, faculty, and agents from and against any blame and liability for any inconvenience, injury, death, loss to person or property, or any other damage of any kind whatsoever, which may result from or be connected in any way to my participation in the Event or in transit to or from the Event.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions and receive explanation for any statements and policies that I do not understand.

**I have read and fully understand the above provisions and agree to be bound by them, as indicated by my signature below.**

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Class year: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return the signed form to the front desk staff of the Office of Alumni Relations at 4401 Connecticut Avenue, NW, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor Suite no later than 24 hours prior to the event. You may also print, sign and scan the form and return it to [kwright@american.edu](mailto:kwright@american.edu)**