Director’s Corner

Rachel Loock, Director of Undergraduate Programming, Office of Career Services

Integrating the Informational Interview Into a Successful Career Strategy

Adapted from a recent issue of The New York Times – Jobs Section

Informational interviews can be a useful tool throughout your career, starting with preparing for that first internship or full time position. Informational interviews can help when you want to learn more about a certain career field or industry or even what it would be like to get involved in a new project like starting a blog, or running your own company. Holiday parties and social gatherings can provide the chance to meet new people who are willing to share their insights with you about their career path or field. Be sure to follow up with them after the holidays to request an interview.

To get the most out of informational interviews, keep the following in mind:

1. The other person is doing you a favor, so it should be about what’s convenient for the interviewer, not you. Follow his or her lead as to whether meetings will be in person or by phone.
2. These meetings are not about asking for job leads; the point is to learn something.
3. Think about informational interviews as a way to build a relationship and expand your network, not as a way to get a job.
4. Wait for the right time. So often we get a number and feel as if we should call immediately. But if you’re not ready, you may bungle a meeting. Why wouldn’t you be ready? When you’re overextended (e.g., with exams or class projects, etc.) or if you haven’t done enough research about the industry or the company where the person works.
5. Don’t overstay your welcome. It’s always better to signal the meeting is ending and let the other person say he or she is open to continuing the discussion. Remember that people who are successful at something are often pressed for time. So be respectful of their time. It’s safe to assume that a 20-minute phone call or a 30-minute meeting is a reasonable request. Before the meeting, do your homework. Try to find out about the person you’re meeting through a Google search. What’s going on in his or her company or industry? Be prepared with questions ahead of time. Don’t expect the other person to set the agenda. Finally, here are some questions you may want to consider:

1. How did you get to this position? 2. What do you like most/least about what you do? 3. How do people break into this field? 4. What does a typical career path look like in your industry? 5. What are some of the biggest challenges facing your company and your industry today? 6. Are there any professional or trade associations I should connect with? 7. What do you read to keep up with developments in your field? 8. If you were just getting involved now, where would you put yourself? 9. What’s a typical day/week like for you? 10. How has your career differed from your expectations? What have been the greatest moments and biggest challenges? After the meeting, make sure to thank them (either by e-mail or a handwritten note) and follow up. If you said you’d send an article, or contact someone make sure to do what you said you would. If you want to continue the relationship, figure out how to stay in touch. If there was no chemistry, move on.
Giving Thanks to Those Who Have Helped You Along the Way

Those who are successful in landing an internship or full time job rarely do it on their own. Frequently there are many people who help along the way—a teacher who inspired you to major in a field you hadn’t considered before, a mentor who provided sage advice, a friend or relative who connected you with an opportunity in your preferred career field, someone who encouraged you to join a club or take on a leadership position, or a recruiter who provided valuable feedback that you were able to integrate into your job search.

With Thanksgiving just a few days away and the holiday season soon approaching, take this time to reflect upon those special people who have helped you to achieve academic and/or career success. This is an excellent time of year to re-connect with them, let them know what you’re up to and to thank them for contributing to your success.

OCS Spotlight
The OCS Customer Account Management Team

The Customer Account Management (CAM) serves as liaisons to employers to provide unparalleled service that enables employers to develop long-term, mutually beneficial opportunities to recruit Smith School Students. This issue of Undergraduate Career Connection recognizes these OCS team members who work tirelessly (often behind the scenes) to facilitate the process of filling employers’ talent pipelines with Smith School talent.

Cynthia O’Brien joined the Office of Career Services in the summer of 2008. She works with employers who recruit students from the Smith School of Business. She is responsible for the Customer Account Management Team (CAM). She works to bring Fortune 500 companies, such as Macy’s, Target, and Amazon to recruit at Smith. Prior to joining the Office of Career Services, Cynthia worked in both the retail and hospitality industries, where she was responsible for sales, operations and recruiting top talent. She holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration with a minor in Human Resources Management.

Cynthia O’Brien, Associate Director, Customer Account Management

Lizeth Gonzalez is the Recruiting Coordinator with the Customer Account Management team in the Office of Career Services. She serves internal and external clients, including students, employers and others within the Smith community through the on campus recruiting process. Lizeth works with Accounting, Consulting, Real Estate, BioTech, BioPharm and Professional Services firms.

Since 2007, Lizeth has been part of a team that manages the online tool (HireSmith) that students and employers utilize in the selection and placement of qualified candidates for nationwide and international organizations to ensure that all individuals have a positive recruiting experience at Smith. Prior to joining the Smith School of Business, Lizeth grew in the field of recruiting while working for various organizations in the public accounting and real estate industries. A graduate of the University of Maryland’s Smith School of Business, Lizeth holds
Lizeth Gonzales  
Recruiting Coordinator, Customer Account Management

a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting and has taken graduate level higher education courses at UMCP. Lizeth is passionate about college student leadership development. Since 2009 she has worked with the Alternative Break Program at the University of Maryland to advise and guide students through community service-learning experiences domestically and abroad. She recently became the Advisor to the National Society of Collegiate Scholars at the University of Maryland.

Chalvonna Smith is a Customer Account Coordinator in the Office of Career Services at the Robert H. Smith School of Business where she serves as a liaison for both internal and external clients including employers, students, and faculty/staff in the recruiting process. She is responsible for providing a memorable and customer-centric recruiter experience that creates an affinity amongst employers for Smith School graduates. Prior to joining the Office of Career Services, Chalvonna served as Special Events Coordinator and Event Manager for the Office of Smith Programs and Events where she coordinated and successfully executed 250+ events annually. Prior to joining the Smith School, Chalvonna held positions at the Conferences and Visitor Services at the University of Maryland, host to over 150 annual summer conferences and events. Chalvonna graduated in 2008 with a bachelor’s degree in Philosophy and a minor in Rhetoric from the University of Maryland, College Park. She is currently pursuing a master’s degree in Homeland Security Management from UMUC. As a Pittsburgh native, Smith is also a proud Steelers fan.

Shannon Broughton is currently pursuing a degree in Social Work and a minor in Behavioral Science. A native Washingtonian, she is a diehard Redskins fan. Shannon also has a 13 year-old son who hopes to one day become a Sports Journalist and Reporter for ESPN.
UNDERGRADUATE RECRUITING

Employers will continue to recruit and hire talented Smith School undergraduate students between now and the end of the semester. Check HireSmith regularly if you are seeking an internship or full time position. For more information, resume deadlines, and event location, please visit HireSmith at www.hiresmith.net.

Employers are posting positions now for on-campus recruiting that will be conducted in the Spring 2013 semester.

Check HireSmith regularly (even during Winter Break) so that you do not miss important resume submission deadlines.

Please contact us at (301) 405-2301 for additional information.

UNDERGRADUATE CAREER COACHING

Walk-in Hours 12-2, Monday – Friday, through December 12th. Appointments and mock interviews can be scheduled with an OCS Career Coach between now and the end of the semester and during Winter Term. Walk-in hours will resume on January 23, 2013.

Visit our newly launched Facebook page at https://facebook.com/SmithOCSUndergraduate

Mark Your Calendar Now to Participate in the First Smith School of Business Virtual Career Fair on February 12, 2013. Watch HireSmith for more information.