Purpose:

The purpose of this exercise is to help you set-up and conduct an informational interview to learn more about a specific career field. This guide will then assist you in applying what you learn to help clarify your academic and career path.

Description:

An informational interview is a great way to talk directly with an experienced professional and gather information about an occupation of interest. These meetings are more beneficial than simply reading about an occupational area and provide the following benefits:

- Gather career information tailored to your specific career questions and concerns
- Gain insider tips about getting jobs or internships in the field
- Observe the work environment and see the different settings available for an occupation.
- Practice your communication and interviewing skills
- Meet people in your field, which may develop into future job leads or networking opportunities

Directions:

1. Begin by identifying two or three careers or career areas you are interested in learning more about. If you have completed the Strong Interest Inventory, you may have a few specific occupation titles listed on your results that you may want to explore. You can also utilize career exploration websites to help you identify career fields that interest you. For guidance on using these sites, check out the “Explore Career Websites” Action Guide.

2. How can you learn more about how to ask informational questions? One way is by watching this video of students interviewing leaders at Big Ideas Fest 2012. Take note of the types of preliminary and follow-up questions asked.

3. How can you find people to interview? Start by thinking of people you already know, including family members, friends, neighbors, classmates, faculty and staff. Your college’s career center can be a great resource in finding a professional from a field of interest. GoldPASS, the University of Minnesota’s job, volunteer, and internship site, has a “Professional Networking” area where you can find profiles and contact information for professionals from specific companies or career industries. For more help in using GoldPASS, see the “GoldPASS Resources and How-To Documents”.

4. Now that you are ready to set up an interview, consult the Informational Interviews handout for specific scheduling suggestions and sample questions.
5. Conduct the interview(s).

6. Document what you learn for review and further reflection.

**Reflection Prompts:**
Use the following questions to reflect on the experience of the informational interview(s):

- What, if any, surprises did you learn about the occupation/industry?
- What would you like to explore further?
- How has this informational interview affected your interest in this career path?
- How has the informational interview experience affected your particular major/career interests?