Mock Informational Interviews

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About Me

BACKGROUND
• BA: UChicago
• PhD: Northwestern
• Postdoc: UIC
• Current: UChicagoGRAD

GRADUATE STUDENT AFFAIRS
• Advise students and postdocs
• Develop career based programs
• Liaison to BSD & IME

MYCHOICE CAREER NAVIGATOR

50+ Info Interviews

grad.uchicago.edu
We Promise not to do this...

Hi, CAN I HELP YOU?

WELL, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE! WELCOME TO THE CAREER SERVICES CENTER!

WE HAVE HUNDREDS OF JOB OPPORTUNITES AVAILABLE. PEOPLE ARE LITERALLY THROWING THEMSELVES TO HIRE GRADUATES OF THIS UNIVERSITY...

...UNLESS YOU'RE A PH.D.

Uh...

COMPUTER SCIENCE?

ACTUALLY, SORRY, WE'RE CLOSED.

SLAM!
Career Resources

UCAN: UCHICAGO COMMUNICATIONS AND NETWORKING

ONE-ON-ONE CONSULTATIONS
Meet with a career development professional to discuss a variety of topics: email aj@uchicago.edu to set up an appointment

• academic job search advising
• career planning and exploration
• resume and cover letter review
• practice interviewing
• networking and connections with alumni
• negotiation strategy

EMPLOYER RELATIONS
UChicagoGRAD has recently dedicated significant resources to establish new partnerships and leverage existing relationships with employers who hire graduate students and postdocs.
Business Cards for You!

chicagograd.biz.vistaprint.com

$6.79 for 50 cards

grad.uchicago.edu
Session Overview

1. Defining the genre
2. Locating the right people
3. Requesting an interview
4. Conducting the conversation

PRACTICE TIME

5. Managing the relationship
Informational Interviews

- Informal conversations arranged at your request
- NOT A JOB INTERVIEW
- Unwritten code (until now): You will not ask the other person for a job. Seriously.
- Common practice among job seekers, particularly those making a change of fields
- Essential tool for building your network
Info Interviews: Why?

- Make contacts in an organization
- Learn more about the field and the organization
- Learn examples of personal success stories
- Discover Job openings before they are listed
- Demonstrate sincere interest in the company/job
Info Interviews: Who?

- Compile a list of organizations that interest you
- Find contacts in those organizations
  - Ideally people who currently have the job you want
  - Entry level or slightly higher
- Ask people you know for introductions: colleagues, friends, family
- Organization’s website
- LinkedIn (or other social media)
- Alumni Databases (uchicagoalumni.org)
Using uchicagocalumni.org

- All students and postdocs have access to this database
- All alumni who graduated from university in system, most with contact info
- Search by program, graduation year, title, location, industry, company
- Research person more before contacting them
- Remember: You are not bothering them!
Info Interviews: How?

- Email most common, calling also works
- Keep it brief - one paragraph maximum
- Professional, polite, interested
- Do not ask for recommendation
- Ask for ~20 minutes of their time
- Suggest times to meet/speak on phone
- If you prefer another region, consider scheduling meetings before a trip
- Follow up after 1 week if no response
Dear Dr. Scientist,

I am a current PhD student at The University of Chicago and I noticed in the alumni directory that you work for Big Industry, Inc. and also did a PhD in the Department of Research at UChicago. I would like to learn more about the company and about your personal career path. Would you be willing to speak with me on the phone for 20 minutes sometime in the next two weeks? Thank you in advance for your time; I look forward to speaking with you soon!

Sincerely,

Grad U. Student

www.linkedin.com/in/gradustudent
Preparing for the Interview

- Research person and the company thoroughly
- Prepare specific (and open ended) questions beforehand and have them written down
- Be prepared to organize flow of conversation but be flexible
- Practice elevator speech
- Dress professionally
- Respect their time (start & end on schedule)
Outline of Conversation

1. Introduction
   • Thank them for agreeing to meet/speak
   • Small talk about how you found them
   • Elevator speech

2. Questions about job/company/industry
   • Follow up questions demonstrate interest/attentiveness

3. Questions about person
   • Opportunity to find out about possible career path
   • Allows person to open up and relate as human

4. Make request
   • Introductions to additional people
   • Advice for someone in your position
   • Resume help
   • Opportunities
Typical Questions

- Could you tell me what a “typical” day is like for you?
- What do you like about your work? What are the most challenging parts?
- What skills did you gain from your PhD/postdoc that have helped you in your career?
- Would you mind telling me about your career path and how you got to your current position?
- What advice do you have for someone with my background who wants to enter this field/company?
- Is there someone here or elsewhere that you’d recommend I speak with? (Goal: Gain 2 contacts from every interview)
Mockery time...
Send Thank You Notes

- Always follow up with Thank You notes
- Immediately afterwards via email
- At least once, a few weeks later with a status update
- Send an email that evening so it’s in their mailbox first thing in the morning
- Consider sending a hand-written Thank You note a few days after your email
Dear Dr. Scientist,

Thank you so much for speaking with me yesterday! It was fascinating to hear about your personal career path in addition to learning about the internal structure Big Industry, Inc. It sounds like I am in a situation that similar to what you experienced when you were exploring careers, so it was both informative and encouraging to learn about your success. Given the company's breakthrough research in funny-bone ailments that you outlined yesterday, I am truly excited about the possibility of lending my ulnar nerve expertise to the B.I. team. If you do think of anyone else that I could potentially benefit from speaking with, please let me know. I truly appreciate your willingness to speak with me and offer advice and I look forward to staying in touch.

Sincerely,
Grad U. Student
Staying in Touch

- Add contact on LinkedIn with personalized message
- Report back after following up with suggested contacts
- Send them articles of interest
- Keep them updated on your job search
- Seek to develop mentoring relationship
- Look out for ways you can help them!
Questions?

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