# Informational Interviewing for Pre-Health Career Students

## Why Conduct an Informational Interview?
- Explore careers in the health professions and clarify your career goals.
- Discover employment, shadowing, and volunteer opportunities that are not advertised.
- Expand your professional network.
- Build confidence in your interviewing skills.
- Access the most up-to-date career information.
- Identify your professional strengths and weaknesses.

## Potential Results:
- Obtain information about your career field and the skills needed to perform tasks effectively.
- Learn how you will fit into potential work settings.
- Make personal contacts throughout the health field.
- Become aware of the needs throughout the healthcare field and the realities of employment.
- Gain confidence talking with professionals in a low-stress environment.
- Learn about various field specialties.

## 7 Steps of Informational Interviewing:

### Step 1: Select an occupation or specialty of interest.
Research information about the field to decide on appropriate questions to ask a professional working in that field.

### Step 2: Identify professionals to contact for an informational interview in an occupation of interest. Consider referrals from networking, Cal Poly alumni, Pre-Health Career Advisors, or cold call based on your research.

### Step 3: Contact and schedule an appointment for an informational interview with a professional who is currently employed in a field of interest.

### Step 4: Upon meeting the individual, ask him/her the questions you have prepared (see sample interview questions below).

### Step 5: Write a recount of the questions asked and responses given during the informational interview.

### Step 6: Send a thank you note to the individual interviewed.

### Step 7: File your gathered information for future reference and possible use as a contact.

## Informational Interviewing Tips:
- Ask for 20-30 minutes of the person’s time to conduct the informational interview.
- Do at least three informational interviews so that you have a broad information base.
- **Never ask for a job.** Set up an informational interview before there is an advertised opening in your area of interest.
- Dress as you would for a job interview.
- Research the field and position before doing the informational interview. If you are informed, you will be able to ask more intelligent and relevant questions.
- Carry a small notebook and pen.
- Refer to your list of prepared questions; stay on track, but allow for spontaneous discussion.
- Ask the individual for his/her business card.
- Before leaving, ask for suggestions of other professionals who may be helpful to you and ask permission to use his/her name when contacting these professionals.

## Sample Questions for the Informational Interview:

- On a typical day in this position, what do you do?
- How well did your college experience prepare you for this job?
- What courses have proved to be the most valuable to you in your work?
- What training or education is required for this type of work?
- What personal qualities and abilities are important to being successful at this job?
- What part of this job do you find most satisfying? Most challenging?
- How did you get your job?
- How would you describe the working atmosphere and the people with whom you work?
- How is the economy affecting this industry?
- How much demand is there for people in this occupation?
- What are the major qualifications for success in this occupation?
- What entry level jobs or volunteer/shadowing options are best for learning if this is the right field for me?
- What are the salary ranges for various levels in the field?
- How do you see jobs in this field changing in the future?
- What special advice would you give a person entering this field?
- What kind of experience, paid or unpaid, would you recommend to anybody pursuing a career in this field?
- From your perspective, what are the problems you see working in this field?
- If you could do things all over again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why or why not?
- With the information you have about my education, skills, and experience, what other fields or jobs would you suggest I research further before I make a final decision?
- Would you mind taking a look at my resume? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?