An informational interview is an opportunity for you to meet with a professional in the field to gain information regarding the career options for that field or occupation. Informational interviews are helpful if you are trying to pick a major or career field and want an insider’s point of view to better understand different options. They are also an opportunity to grow your professional network.

Ways to Find Contacts

- **Handshake:** Search the Employer Directory tab to find professionals in your area of interest
- **LinkedIn:** Reach out to Leeds and CU alumni who are working in your area of interest
- **Professors:** Ask if they know alumni or colleagues who are employed in organizations of interest.
- **Your Personal Network:** Ask friends, family, and acquaintances for contacts in companies or your field of interest.
- **Employer Presentations:** Introduce yourself professionals who speak at your class or club meeting

Career & Internship Fairs: Get information about organizations and business cards of employers.

How to set up an informational interview:

- Be clear in all of your correspondence that you are not looking for a job. Instead of asking for an “informational interview,” explain that you want to gather information regarding the company and industry to help with your future career path.
- Call or email to set up an appointment. Have your list of questions prepared in case the interviewee says they have time right now.
  Ask the interviewee for 20-30 minutes, either in person or on the phone. If you are meeting at the company, make sure you have correct directions and that you arrive a few minutes earlier than your scheduled appointment.

How to prepare for the informational interview:

- Try to find out a bit about the person you’re meeting. What’s going on in his or her company or industry? Do a Google search and if you have some time in advance, set up a Google news alert so that you don’t miss big developments.
- Know what you want to accomplish with the meeting -- don’t expect the other person to set the agenda.
- Have a list of prepared questions and bring a notebook to the interview. Ask open-ended questions (usually start with “what” or “how”).
Questions to consider asking:

1. Can you tell me how you got to this position?
2. What do you like most about what you do, and what would you change if you could?
3. How do people break into this field?
4. What are the types of jobs that exist where you work and in the industry in general?
5. Where would you suggest a person investigate if the person were particularly skilled at (fill in the blank — quantitative thinking, communications, writing, advocacy)?
6. What does a typical career path look like in your industry?
7. What are some of the biggest challenges facing your company and your industry today?
8. Are there any professional or trade associations I should connect with?
9. What do you read — in print and online — to keep up with developments in your field?
10. How do you see your industry changing in the next 10 years?
11. If you were just getting involved now, where would you put yourself?
12. What’s a typical day like for you?
13. What’s unique or differentiating about your company?
14. How has your career (or industry or company) differed from your expectations?
15. What have been the greatest moments and biggest challenges?

Follow up:

- After the meeting, make sure to follow up either by email or with a handwritten note. If you said you’d send an article, contact someone or do something, make sure to do what you said you would.
- Record important information you received, including any referrals, reading suggestions, advice, etc.
- When you contact the referrals, you may want to let the original interviewee know and take that opportunity to again demonstrate your appreciation for his or her time.
- Find creative ways to maintain the new connection. When you read an article or hear a story you think may be of interest, forward the information.