

## **What is a Career Conversation?**

A Career Conversation (aka Informational interview) is an in-person, virtual, or phone meeting with someone in a field or position that you are exploring or considering as a career to gather information, receive advice, and build your network. They are not interviewing you; you are interviewing them to learn more about the field and what next steps you should take. There are plenty of resources online that can tell you about a particular career, but this is an opportunity to hear about an actual day in the life of an expert. This is not an interview for a job, nor should you ask for a job. It is simply time for you to build your network and for them to share their knowledge.

## **What do you cover in a Career Conversation?**

Details about a certain job, company, field, or industry are great topics for a career conversation, as are the educational and professional history of the person with which you are meeting. Feedback or advice for you are also helpful topics to cover; however, remember this conversation is an opportunity for you to learn about them, not vice versa. See the second page for a list of questions.

## **How do you find Professionals?**

There are several ways to find professionals for career conversations depending on your field of interest, your current network, and your comfort level. There are two pieces to consider when finding professionals: how to find the person, and how to find their contact information. When identifying a candidate, it is helpful to identify a common connection. Below are a few options:

1. **Your network:** Who do you already know in an informal way that you could set up a more professional meeting or conversation with? Perhaps it is family member, parent of a friend, teacher, or acquaintance at church. Use the worksheet on the next page to help you brainstorm potential contacts.
2. **LinkedIn:** This professional networking site can help you search for and connect with individuals that share something in common with you. A great way to search is by using the [Creighton University Alumni Tool](#) to filter by your intended industry and/or geographic area of interest. Depending on your network, you will be able to connect with them directly or use their information to search on the internet for their contact information.
3. **CareerShift:** A national database of company and individual contact information, this service is paid for by the Career Center and free to students. After creating an account, search for professionals under the "Contacts" tab. Similar to LinkedIn, a great way to search is by selecting the industry and/or geographic area of interest.
4. **Handshake:** Managed by the Career Center, this site is used to search internships, jobs, career fair information, and interview sign-ups. As a result, it has a database of employers under the "Employers" tab where you can search by company, industry, and/or location. Some of these contacts would be good candidates themselves, while many others are Recruiters who might be able to put you in contact with someone at their organization who would be a good fit for you to talk to. If a contact is not listed for a particular company, ask the Career Center for contact information.
5. **Creighton Career Center:** If you are unable to find a suitable professional through other means, are unable to connect, or don't know how to find the contact information for someone, the Career Center staff is another great resource. Call 402-280-2722 or stop into Harper 1088 and let us know how we can help you.

## **How do you request a Career Conversation?**

Email or phone are appropriate ways to request a meeting. No matter how you connect, be sure to identify who you are, how you found their information, your shared connection, why you are interested in meeting or speaking with them and how to contact you. Below is a sample for an email or phone call script that you may tailor to the specific professional to request a career conversation. Note that it sometimes helps to just ask for 10-15 minutes to respect the professional's busy schedule and increase the likelihood they will accept your request.

Dear Mr. Edwards,

My name is Bailey Jones, and I am a freshman at Creighton University considering a career in marketing. A family friend of mine, Tracy Michaels, suggested I contact you to learn more about the field. Would you be available for a 30-minute career conversation at a time that is convenient for you to discuss your position and the field of marketing? As a Creighton alum, I thought you would have an excellent perspective on what a current Creighton student could do to prepare themselves for the field. If you are open to meeting or speaking with me, I can be reached at baileycjones@creighton.edu or at 402-000-0000 to set up at time that is convenient for you. Thank you for your time.

Bailey Jones

**How do you follow up after a Career Conversation?**

Whether by email or mail, always send a thank you note. This is an opportunity to not only thank the professional for their time, but it also helps you to expand your network. Try to personalize each letter with some details specific to your conversation. Below is a sample for email or letter:

Dear Mr. Edwards,

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me and provide insight into the field of marketing. It was very helpful to hear what an actual day in the field looks like, and I was surprised at the amount of computer technical skills that you use every day. I plan to take an additional class that focuses on these skills thanks to our meeting. Thank you again for your time and advice. I hope our paths will cross again in the future.

Bailey Jones

**My Network:**

Family

Name	Occupation	Company

Friends

Name	Occupation	Company

Extracurricular Activities

Name	Occupation	Company

**Student's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Professional's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title and company:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date and location of meeting:** \_\_\_\_\_

**How did you find this person?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Recommended Question (feel free to customize and/or reduce):**

Tell me a little about your background. How did you get started in this field?

Why did you decide to work for this company?

What is your favorite aspect of your work?

What is your least favorite aspect of the job?

What are the rewards and challenges of this field in general?

What sorts of changes are occurring in your occupation?

How is the outlook for employment in this field?

What degrees, skills and experiences are important for someone entering this career?

What courses and past experiences proved the most valuable for you in this job?

What else can I be doing to develop experience and knowledge in this field?

What are the typical entry-level jobs?

What can you tell me about this company's atmosphere and culture?

What is expected outside of work hours in terms of availability, social events, etc.?

How flexible are dress codes, work hours, work locations, and job schedules?

How has your job affected your lifestyle?

How long do people typically work in their jobs here?

What would be the next step in your career?

What other fields or companies do you think I should research?

Who else would you recommend that I speak with to learn more about the field? May I use your name as the referral?