

Networking & Informational Interviews

connect with professionals to gain career information and advice

Quick Question Hours

Mon	1:30PM – 3:30 PM
Tue	10AM – 12PM
Wed	10AM – 12PM
Wed	5PM – 7PM
Thu	1:30PM – 3:30PM
Fri	10AM – 12PM (Internships)

Providence College Office of Career Services

In this packet you will learn:

- How to identify contacts to network with
- How to conduct an informational interview
- How to have a shadowing day
- The best practices for networking
- Sample questions to ask a professional

Networking is about making connections and building relationships. It is a great way to talk with professionals in order to learn what skills are needed in a particular career field, what career paths are possible, what steps you should take to develop your career plan, navigate your internship or job search or plan for post-graduate education.

Identify Contacts

As you begin to build your network, there are two primary sources you can use to locate people to network with: alumni and your personal contacts.

- ***FriarLink***

The Alumni-Student Career database is a resource of over 800 PC alumni willing to share their career expertise with students. To begin using **FriarLink**, schedule an appointment with an advisor in Career Services or stop by the office during Quick Question Hours. After a brief meeting about FriarLink and the best practices of networking, your username and password will become activated and you will be able to search the Alumni-Student database.

- ***Events***

Throughout the year Career Services hosts events that are great opportunities to network with faculty, students, alumni, employers and other professionals. Check out the **Events** calendar for a list of events.

- ***Personal or Professional Contacts***

Networking contacts can also be developed from your personal network or contacts developed through research. Consider the following as you brainstorm for people who can REFER you to professional for you to network with:

- Family, friends, neighbors, former neighbors, parents of classmates
- Faculty, high school teachers, departmental alumni
- Past employers, supervisors, clients, or customers
- Professionals: lawyers, doctors, insurance agents, etc.
- Community: Chamber of Commerce, clubs, professional associations, librarians, etc.
- Networking Groups

Conduct an Informational Interview

An informational interview is a meeting, typically 20-30 minutes, which you schedule with an individual in a career field of interest, for the purpose of gaining career information from an "insider" point of view. In addition to being helpful for exploring careers, informational interviews can be valuable as you launch your internship or job search.

Although an informational interview typically takes place in person, you can also correspond with professionals via phone. Regardless of the format, an informational interview is your chance to learn more about an area of interest and gain valuable networking contacts.

Have a Shadowing Day

Shadowing opportunities are short-term observational experiences that pair a professional and a student in an effort to assist the student with his/her career planning process. They are designed to help you to identify and explore career options and observe the real working environment.

Depending on your field of interest, activities could include: attending meetings, going on sales calls, observing surgery or courtroom trials, listening in on conference calls, participating in some hands-on projects with the alum, etc. Shadowing visits may be arranged between the student and interested alums at various times of the year, including the school year and summer.

If you are interested arranging a shadowing day, call Career Services at 401.865.1290 to schedule an appointment with an advisor and we will help you get started and give you tips so that you can make the most out of your shadowing day.



Career Services' Winter Break Shadowing Day Program

Each year, during winter break, The Office of Career Services offers a formal shadowing program. In past years, up to 100 alumni from a wide variety of career fields and geographic locations have participated in the program. To participate in this program, students:

- Attend a brief Information Session in late October to learn about the Shadowing Day Program
- Stop by Career Services review shadowing opportunities
- Choose 1-2 shadowing opportunities to apply for
- Complete an application and submit a resume

After the deadline date:

- Career Services will match students with an alumnus to shadow based on alumni requirements and the student's application
- Students that are matched will attend a mandatory orientation session in order to receive important details and tips for the shadowing day
- Students contact the alumnus directly to set up the date and time of their shadowing day

BE SURE TO LOOK FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT CAREER SERVICES' WINTER BREAK SHADOWING DAY PROGRAM IN OCTOBER! WE'LL SEND EMAILS AND UPDATE OUR WEBSITE!

Best Practices for Networking

- **Research the Professional You Want to Contact**

When you identify a professional you plan to contact, prior research will help you formulate questions that you will want to ask. Being prepared for your informational interview will also ensure that you present yourself as a career oriented and motivated student. Be sure to research their career field, job title and visit their company website.

- **Make the Initial Contact**

Email: In general, people feel most comfortable writing to their contact to request an appointment for an informational interview. This gives the contact person a point of reference for your later phone call/meeting and will help you to be perceived as businesslike and professional. If you contact people by email, you must maintain the same high standards of grammar and punctuation as you would in any business correspondence. Your email should tell the person who you are, where you got their name, what you want (Career information and advice – *never* ask for a job or internship) and when you will call.

From: jstudent08@providence.edu (*your providence email address is suggested*)

Sent: February 15, 2007 10:35 AM

To: suealum@xyzemployer.com

Subject: PC Student Seeking Career Assistance

Dear Susan:

As a current Providence College junior majoring in History and Business Studies, I am exploring future career options and would like to speak with you to gain your insight and advice on careers related to Sales and Marketing (*reflect the alum's field here*).

Based on my interest in your field, I was excited to find your name listed in FriarLink (the PC alumni-student career network) as an alumnus willing to provide career advice and networking help. At your convenience, I would be very interested in setting up a brief telephone appointment or a workplace meeting to learn more about your field and strategies to prepare for, and enter the field.

Although I recognize that you are a very busy professional, I am hopeful that we might be able to connect to further discuss this request. Please feel free to respond to this email, or call me at the cell phone number below (*be sure you have an appropriate cell message!*). Should you prefer that I contact you by phone at work or home, please advise me and I will be happy to follow-up.

Thank you in advance for your assistance!

Sincerely,

Joe Student '09

(203) 111-1234

Phone : If you would like to call without sending a letter, you will be making essentially the same request, but will need to ask if they would be willing to speak with you either in person, or at an agreed upon time. (Note: it is best to assume that they are not available to speak at the time of your initial phone call)

When setting up the appointment, bear in mind that you are asking busy people to give up time to talk to you. Be as flexible as you reasonably can be as to time/date/location of the meeting. Also, be prepared for interruptions and last-minute rescheduling.

- ***Meeting with a Professional***

Even though meeting with a networking contact is not the same as an interview, it is best to treat the meeting in a similar manner. Be sure to:

- Confirm your meeting a few days in advance and arrive on time
- Dress and act professionally
- Bring your resume for feedback, if appropriate
- Takes notes, but be sure to ask permission to do so first

- ***Send a Thank You***

- Always send a thank you note via mail or email after receiving assistance.
- Follow-up on any advice that was given and follow-up on any suggestions that were made.
- Keep in touch with your contact(s) to let them know about your progress, and/or seek advice, as appropriate.

Sample Questions for Networking

Questions about the Individual:

- How did you get into this field and decide this was the kind of work you wanted to do?
- What was your educational background and how has it helped or hindered you?
- What are your responsibilities and what do you do during a typical day or week?
- What skills, talents and traits are useful and necessary to do your job?
- What are the satisfactions and challenges of your work?
- What do you like best and/or least about your career field?
- What's the typical career progression in this field/what options might your position and background lead to?

Questions about the Organization/Industry or Profession:

- How would you characterize this organization as an employer?
- What are the goals of your department within the organizational structure?
- What are the requirements/skills sets for entry jobs?
- What's the current demand for people in your field? Geographic considerations?
- How is the market for entry level opportunities?
- What salary range might one expect at an entry vs. experienced level?
- What forces or trends do you see currently affecting your job or industry; future trends?
- What are the best sources for learning more about your career, organization, and/or industry?

Questions Regarding your Match and Action Steps:

- Can I give you a brief summary of my background? Am I taking the right steps to prepare for this career?
- Can you review my resume and see if there are changes I should make to make to improve it?
- Have I developed the qualities, skills, and experiences that are important in this field?
- Where would you see someone with my background and strengths fitting in?
- What should I do to improve my qualifications?
- What suggestions do you have to gain experience?
- Does your organization or others that you know of offer internships or summer positions?
- If so, how would you suggest I follow-up?
- What suggestion do you have for identification and follow-up on entry full time opportunities?
- Are there other professionals or organizations that you suggest I contact?
- In contacting other people, is it okay for me to say that you referred me?