

UNAVCO

BROWN BAG DISCUSSION:
INFORMATIONAL
INTERVIEWS



Aisha R. Morris

BROWN BAG DISCUSSIONS

- Designed to be a “safe space” to talk about different aspects of careers, academic pursuits, and other “future plan”-type conversations
- Will require you to think a bit about your plans moving forward, and to be open to talking about the many different pathways available!

SOME QUESTIONS...

- Do you know everything you want to know about careers you might want to pursue?
- What about the necessary preparation you might need to undertake to pursue a particular job or career?
- How do you get that information? To whom do you speak?



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

- **What is an informational interview?**

- Meeting in which a potential job seeker seeks advice from a professional on their career, the industry, and the corporate culture of a potential future workplace

- **What are the goals of informational interviewing?**

- Learning information regarding an industry, a career path or an employer
- Building relationships and expanding your network

- **Who should you interview?**

- People who are successful in the area in which you are interested

PREPARING FOR AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

- Identify the information you want
- Make a list of people you know
- Make the appointment
 - 15-30 minute interview
- Plan an agenda for the session
 - This is **your** meeting
 - Select appropriate questions
 - Be efficient; do not overstay your welcome



CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

- Conduct yourself as a professional
 - Dress and act the role of the position you are seeking
 - Be on time for the interview
 - Do your research ahead of time
- Show interest
- Be prepared to answer questions about what you're looking for
 - Use your personal elevator speech!
- Get names of potential contacts



POST-INTERVIEW

- Send thank-you and follow-up letters
 - Thank interviewee at the conclusion of the interview
 - Send a letter stating your gratitude for the time given
- Take advantage of any referrals you receive
 - Report back to your interviewee if you have followed up any of their suggestions

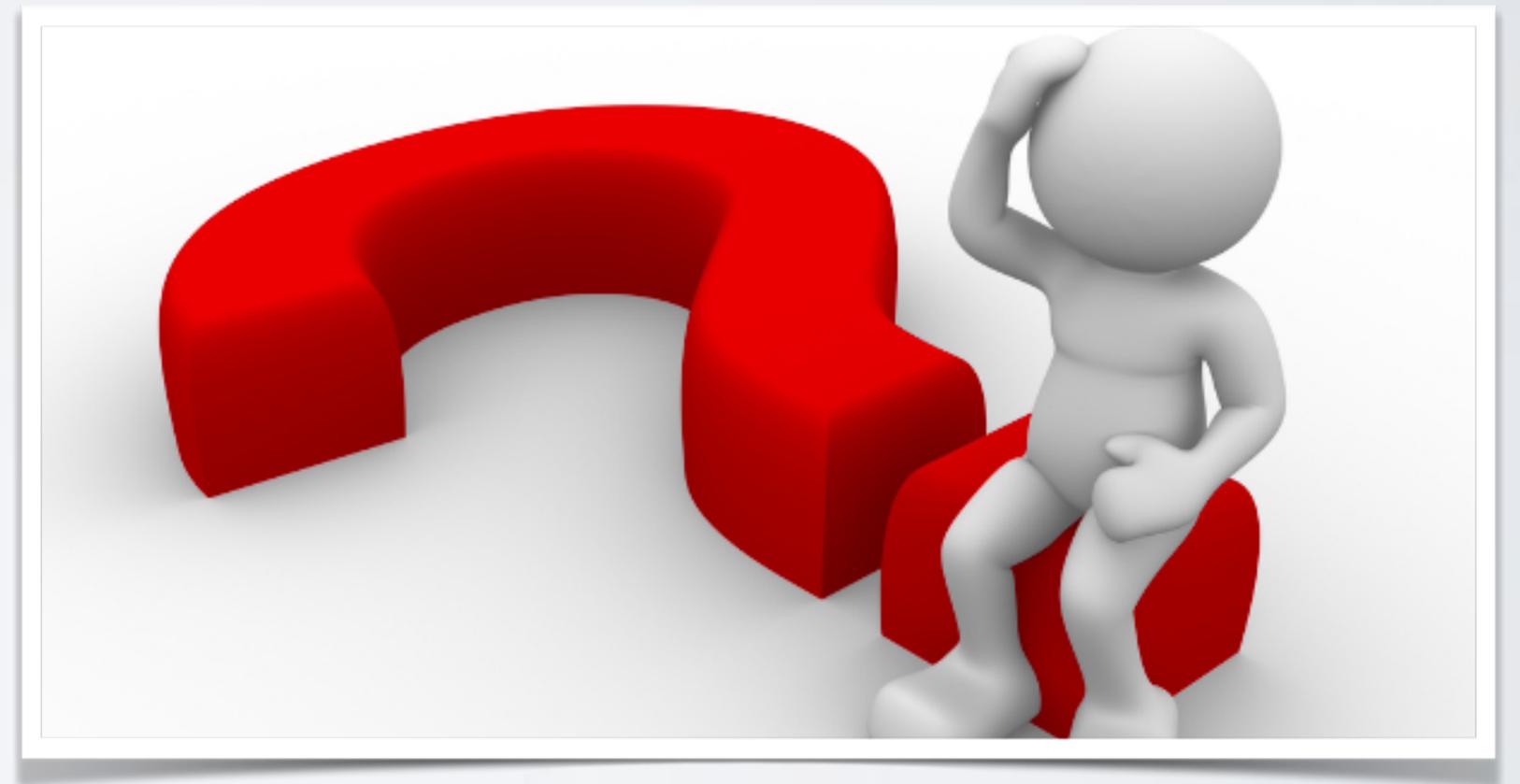


INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW CANDIDATES

- Write out list of careers you have interest in
- Write out list of your contacts (remember, your cousin may have a contact with someone, so don't rule out anyone!)
- Identify some people you would like to interview - *how might you identify candidates??*
- Review handout
- Now think about some people who may be in the Boulder area with whom you can speak this summer - write out that list
- How do you request an informational interview?

REQUESTING AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

- How might you go about contacting people to request an interview?
 - Telephone calls
 - Alumni networks
 - Email
 - Other ideas?



INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW REQUEST

- **DON'T SKIP THE SUBJECT LINE:** To ensure an email is not questioned or deleted as spam, make use of the subject line. Use this to address your specific need or intention, such as “Geo-Launchpad Intern Requests Informational Interview.” An empty or awkward subject line from an unknown email address will be deleted.
- **INTRODUCE YOURSELF:** Take a sentence or two to explain who you are and how you came about getting your contact's email address. This is especially important for referrals or online directories.
- **STATE YOUR REQUEST:** Ambiguous emails leave little room for response. Explain why you are reaching out for help and describe what you hope to gain from the connection. Include one or two specific questions that can be answered in a response.
- **KEEP IT SIMPLE:** Write a concise email without attachments. Consider your first email to be an invitation to connect. Once accepted, you can reply with the specifics and offer to send attachments as needed. Do not attach your resume to this introductory email, but have it available if it's requested.
- **CLOSE THE SALE:** Include your contact information and ask for an opportunity to connect again for a more in-depth conversation.

CONSIDERATIONS

- **SPELLING AND GRAMMAR STILL COUNT:** Many of us have become accustomed to the shorthand used in texting and instant messages. However, emails, particularly in the business setting, still demand a higher level of professionalism. “Plz send info 2moro” is simply **not** appropriate. Ever. **Spell words correctly and use appropriate grammar, punctuation, and tone.**
- **OTHER TIPS TO CONSIDER:** To maximize the effectiveness of your introduction, heed the following final tips:
 - Use an appropriate email address. If you wouldn’t use it for a job application, don’t use it here.
 - Think office memo. Save the smiley faces and jargon for Facebook.
 - Err on the side of formality. Use capitalization and abbreviations only as necessary.
 - Spell check. Spell check. Spell check.
 - Mind your manners. Remember that someone is setting aside time for you; don’t forget to say please and thank you.

EXAMPLE INTERVIEW REQUEST

From: Morris, Aisha
Sent: Wednesday, March 28, 2012 5:26 PM
To: 'matthew.borgia@noaa.gov'
Subject: NOAA Congressional Affairs

Good evening Mr. Borgia,

My name is Aisha Morris, and I am a 2011-2012 Congressional Science Fellow in the office of Rep. Rush Holt. I received your name and contact information from Kathleen Gohn at USGS. Thank you very much for agreeing to chat with me about your experiences in congressional affairs, and at NOAA in particular.

Although I am sure you are quite busy, if you have some time I would like to schedule a brief phone chat, coffee chat or whatever is most convenient for you. The House is in recess next week, so my schedule is fairly flexible, and I am pretty open all of next week and the following week. I appreciate your time, and I hope to have a brief conversation with you sometime in the next few weeks. I can be reached at my House email account (this one), at aisharenee17@gmail.com, or at (808)224-9564.

Many thanks,
Aisha

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To sign up for Rep. Holt's weekly electronic newsletter, please click [here](#) or sign up through Rep. Holt's website at www.holt.house.gov.

- **What are your thoughts on this letter?**
- **What could be added or deleted to strengthen this request?**

Final thoughts?