There are two different types of informational interviews. This handout will focus on the more common type, the information gathering or networking interview. The prospecting interview, associated more with true job interviews, also exists and is covered more thoroughly in the Career Center's interview packet. The information gathering or networking interview should be treated as a professional job search interview with one exception - you are not there to ask for a job! Granted, this type of interview may eventually lead to a job, but its main purpose is to provide you with information on a particular position, occupation, career field, company, and/or work environment.

For example, let’s say you were interested in learning more about the field of hotel and restaurant management. Upon consulting the Career Center's Alumni Networking Program, you learn that an alumnus of CBU is a manager in a local Holiday Inn. You decide it would be worthwhile to contact the alumni in order to learn more about the dynamics of being a hotel manager, and therefore obtain his work number from the Alumni Networking Program and arrange to meet with him. Considering you initiated the meeting, you need to prepare by noting questions that will assist you in obtaining your desired information. Such interviews are never a waste of time. Even if the information you learn discourages you from pursuing a position as hotel manager or seeking employment in that particular career field, your meeting has been a valuable tool in assisting you in your career decision making process, which is the whole purpose for such an interview. If the meeting reinforces your interest in that particular position or career field, you may find that the person with whom you spoke would be a good networking source in your future job search. As with other types of interviews, you will need to arrive early, dress appropriately, prepare well-constructed questions, and follow-up with a thank you letter.

Although you will want to tailor your questions to fit your particular interview and interests, thinking of appropriate questions may be challenging. The following questions, which focus more on gaining information on a specific job position, are designed to assist you with this process. Naturally, if you are hoping to gather information on an occupation, career field, company, or work environment, you will want to alter these sample questions to better suit your intentions.

- Please give me a general description of your position and responsibilities.
- Could you describe a typical work day?
- What things do you find most rewarding about your position? Most challenging?
- If you could change your job in some way, what would you change?
- What educational degrees, licenses, or other credentials are required for entry and advancement in this type of position? Are there any which are preferred or helpful, but not required?
- What are the trade or professional groups to which you belong? Which groups do you find most beneficial in your line of work? Do any of these groups assist college seniors interested in such entry-level positions?
- What abilities, interests, values, and personality characteristics are important for effectiveness and satisfaction in this type of position?
- What types of employers, other than your own, hire people to perform the type of work you do? Do you know of any that offer entry-level training programs or opportunities?
- If you were hiring someone for a position such as yours, what would you consider to be the most critical factors influencing your choice of one candidate over another?
- How do people usually learn about such position openings?
- What type of salary range is offered for your type of position?
- Is there anything else you think I would benefit knowing about your particular position?
- Who else would you suggest I speak with to obtain information on this type of position?

The Career Center is only one source for locating people with whom you could conduct informational interviews. Your family, friends, professors, co-workers, community service groups, and editors of trade/professional publications may also be able to direct you to people in positions, occupations, career fields, companies, and work environments of interest to you. Or, you could take a more direct approach and turn to your local yellow pages.