

## ***Exploratory Interview Guide***

### **Helpful Hints:**

#### ***Before the Interview***

1. Locate a few contacts through the yellow pages, Career Center, or personal contacts. If the first person you call is unable to participate, ask them if they can refer you to a colleague.
2. When you arrange the interview, be sure to restate the date, time and location before hanging up. Write it down!
3. Ask about parking, checking in, and directions to the business as needed.
4. If conducting a telephone interview, be sure to clarify who will initiate the call and be sure to be available a few minutes prior to the arranged time.
5. Prior to the interview, conduct some basic research on the profession and industry setting.
6. Prepare 5-10 questions that expand upon what you have learned through your basic research (see samples below). Your goal is to get a sense of the “journey” into and within that profession.

#### ***During the Interview***

1. Be a few minutes early so the interview can start and end on time!
2. Monitor the time during the interview to ensure you do not exceed the 30 minute timeline. If you are still talking after 30 minutes, politely note the time and thank the professional for sharing their experiences with you.
3. Take brief notes but do not write everything down.
4. Ask the professional for their business card so that you can follow up with a short thank you note or email after the interview.
5. Keep it conversational.
6. Ask open-ended questions to limit yes/no responses.
7. Expect to ask more than you planned. Use prepared questions as a guide, but don't shy away from asking questions that arise spontaneously.
8. Expect to be asked about your interests, goals, or academic experiences.

#### ***After the Interview***

1. Write down your impressions and reactions as soon as possible. Memory erodes quickly, and you will want to preserve as much detail as possible.
2. Send a brief note or email thanking the professional for sharing their experiences with you.

## Sample Questions

### ***Entry Into the Profession***

1. How did you get into the profession? Tell me about your career progression.
2. What degree/academic training is needed for a job in the field?
3. Is any other prior experience recommended?
4. What preparation would you suggest for someone interested in entering this field?
5. What, if anything, would you do differently if you could start over and why?
6. What were the two most important experiences/skills that helped you get started?

### ***The Professional***

1. What do you like most/least about your job?
2. What are your major duties or responsibilities?
3. What is an average week like in your job?
4. Tell me about the business cycle in this profession.
5. What skills and abilities do you find are most important in your work?
6. What are some of the problems you encounter and what does it take to solve them?

### ***The Organization***

1. How does this position fit into the overall organization? Is this typical?
2. With whom in your organization do you have the most contact? What is that contact like?
3. Where do you see windows of opportunity within the profession/organization in the future?
4. How long does it take to move from one step to the next in this field?
5. How does this organization compare with some of the other's in which you've worked?

### ***Advice for You***

1. Do you have any special advice for someone entering this field?
2. Which of your college courses do you use most in your work?
3. What out-of-class experiences (work or other) would you recommend to test an interest in this profession?
4. Tell the professional a little about your goals, personality and future goals. Ask them how well someone like you might fit in the profession/organization. Be sure to ask for elaboration if they give you a simple "well or not well" response.