

Alumni as Resources

Alumni can be great resources when researching career options. The Alumni Directory is an excellent resource to aid you in your search.



What to Say

You may call, write, or email an alum and say something like this:

"Hi, my name is _____. I am a (*class year*) at St. Olaf College exploring career options and am interested in your career field. I found your name using the alumni directory (or was passed on to me by _____) and I was hoping you might be someone I could talk with about exploring career opportunities in _____. Is now a good time to discuss this, or should I get back to you another time? " ... " I will be free the week of _____ and was hoping to spend about 20-30 minutes discussing (*your company, your position, how to job search in this area, etc.*). Is that something that might work with your schedule?"

How to Prepare

Research your field of interest by reviewing resources available at the CEL or on our website. Be prepared to answer questions about yourself that relate to your experiences, skills, interests, and goals. Think through several areas you'd like to know more about and generate specific questions you may want to ask during the day's downtime. Some questions to get you started:

- What do you do in a typical day?
- How did you first enter this job/career?
- What are the career prospects of this field? How would you recommend someone break into this field?
- What kind of background is required for this type of position? What kind of background do you (the contact person) have, and did it help you in this field?
- What kind of experience (internships, job shadowing, etc.) would be advantageous in this field?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of this field?
- What motivated you to pursue this work, and what motivates you to stay in it?
- What values do you find in this job environment? Are there any general characteristics that are typical of someone in this field?
- What are the typical working conditions of this job? (Probe for specifics about workload, expectations, dress codes, degree of independence, amount of supervision, closeness of relationships, pressures, degree of cooperation or competition)
- What kind of compensation can one expect when deciding to pursue this career (salary & benefits)?
- How does the company function in terms of time share, flex time, sick leave, personal days, daycare, etc.?
- Is there much travel involved? What are the mobility possibilities in this career? From one level to another? Between organizations? Between states? Outside of the country?
- What technologies are integrated into this career?
- What is the management style of this organization?
- How can I find out whether this type of job is a fit for me? Is there any other information you can give me to help me understand what it might be like to work in this sort of job?
- Whom else would you recommend I contact for more information about this career track/organization?
- Could you recommend a person or organization that might provide a shadowing/internship experience for a day?

How to Follow Up

Send a thank-you note! You should always thank your contact person for their valuable time and for any referrals with which they may have provided you. Personalize your note by commenting on information that was especially helpful to you.