TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING WITH ALUMNAE & OTHERS*

• Being prepared before you even contact the person is crucial. Have a good understanding of how you are going to approach the person and how you will position yourself.

• Do internet research on the company before reaching out to an alumna – be well prepared for your discussion.

• Be respectful of people’s time and do what you say you are going to do. Understand they are taking time out of their busy schedules to help you. Thank them in advance as well as after you speak with them. NOTE: A handwritten thank you note makes an impression on people. Email is okay, but a hand-written note stands out.

• Be clear about what you are looking for from the person – a sounding board or a job lead?

• Know what differentiates your skill set and be able to articulate it well.

• Have some examples of outstanding work that you have done, which may be valuable to future employers.

• View informational interviews as an opportunity to understand if the company is a fit for you.
  o Will you enjoy working there?
  o Does the work-style suit you?
  o Do the company values match your own values?
  o Would the experience position you well for the future?

• Although informational interviews are not traditional interviews, there are times when it may shift into an interview. For example, if the alumna hears positive information and they believe you might be a good match for a position or business group, they may start to conduct the conversation more like an interview. Pay attention to shifts in the tone of the conversation. You may find yourself needing to go into “interview mode”.

• Don’t be afraid to keep trying if you don’t get a response right away; people are busy and they may just forget to give you a call back. Don’t ever come across as defensive or annoyed that the person didn’t get back to you.

• You don’t have to meet in person, although face to face meetings offer an opportunity for a stronger connection; a quick informal conversation on the phone can be just as helpful. If you have a choice, always opt for face to face.

• Don’t expect the person you meet with to help you navigate the job search at their company or find you a position – this is just a nice perk.

• Follow up and let the person know how your job search concluded and give them your new contact information. Make sure to catch up with them a few times a year to keep your network alive.

*Adapted from 2006 Network Article, “Alumnae Tell How They Stay Connected and Give Back,” by Mercedes Forcier ’04 and Tricia Spellman ’96.