

Footsteps Program:

In support of the Academic Exploration Program's Footsteps, the Smith Career Center provides advice on how to contact professionals in a given field to ask for a job shadowing opportunity or informational interview. Please see below for some helpful tips. A job shadowing opportunity or informational interview is a meeting with a networking contact, preferably face-to-face. Prepare as if it were an actual job interview: background research, careful question formulation, and business etiquette are critical. This contact might be able to provide helpful information, such as:

- Learn about the day-to-day responsibilities of those employed in your field of interest.
- Determine potential career paths with a specific employer or within an industry.
- Gain knowledge about recruiting practices of a specific employer or industry.
- Identify other contacts who may be helpful to you in your career exploration search.

Steps to Follow:

1. Identify an appropriate contact. Research potential leads and collect email addresses and phone numbers. Meet with Dr. Susan Rapp, Academic Success Center or Dawn Koeltzow, Smith Career Center for some contact ideas.
2. Prepare an Inquiry Email (see sample below). Please keep in mind, some professions do not allow job shadowing experiences, so a short informational interview would be the best approach.
3. Telephone or email to request a short job shadowing experience or informational interview.
4. Research the contact's organization (try Bradley netWORK, WetFeet.com, RileyGuide.com, and Vault.com).
5. Develop a list of questions (see sample questions below). Be creative and target the questions for the professional. Avoid asking basic questions that could be answered by visiting the an organization's website.
6. Dress professionally and arrive 10-15 minutes before the scheduled time. It is appropriate to take notes but be careful not to let it interfere with your conversation.
7. Send a thank-you note or email immediately following the experience.
8. Debrief with Dr. Susan Rapp in the Academic Success Center.

Sample Inquiry Email:

Dear (insert name, e.g., Ms. Benjamin):

I am a freshman at Bradley University taking part in the Academic Exploration Program. I am very interested in learning more about careers in (insert field or profession). We have a program here at Bradley called Footsteps, where we are coached to pursue job shadowing opportunities or informational interviews with professionals in the field.

During my research and exploration of jobs in the field, I came across your contact information. I wondered if you would be willing to meet with me to share information about your career path. I am also interested in learning more about (organization name). As I make my decision regarding my major, it would be really helpful to hear from a professional working in the field.

The Footsteps program recommends a 3-hour job shadowing experience or a 30-minute informational interview. Please let me know if one of these options works for you and if there is a time and day that is preferred. I would be working around my class schedule, so I am hoping for a time that fits my availability:

My Available Times:

Monday, Wednesday: 2:00 – 5:00 pm

Tuesday, Thursday: 1:00 – 5:00 pm

Friday: 10:00 – 5:00 pm

Thank you so much for your time and consideration of my Footsteps request. I can be reached via email at (insert email address) or by phone (insert cell phone number). I look forward to meeting you in person and learning more about the profession.

Sincerely,

(Student Name)

(Major)

Bradley University

Sample Questions to Ask During Visit:

- How did you become interested in and/or started in your field?
- What career path did you take to reach your current position? Is this typical?
- Could you describe your workday? What do you like and dislike about your job/field?
- What kind of skills do you use as part of your day-to-day job? What skills would you suggest a current student work on while at Bradley?
- What college course have helped you most during your career? Why? What courses would you suggest to someone interested in your field? What do you think is the best educational preparation for a career in _____?
- Which part of your job is most challenging?
- What personal attributes do you think are essential to success in your field?
- What are the qualifications that you look for in a (position title)?
- What experiences have you had that have been invaluable to your learning the business?
- What do you think I need to know to make an intelligent decision about ___ as my career?
- If you could do it over again, would you choose the same path? Why?
- Are there other (job titles/career paths) that are comparable to ___?

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