Experience Building – Career Conversations

Career conversations are a great opportunity to explore a new career pathway, expand your network and learn more about an organization or academic institution. They are also useful sessions to get more insight of the field. Here are some tips.

**Before your conversation**

- Plan open-ended questions:
  - What is a typical day (or week) like for you?
  - What do you like most about your work?
  - What kinds of accomplishments tend to be valued and rewarded in this field?
  - How do most people get into this field? What are common entry-level jobs?
  - What is the profile of the person most recently hired at my level?
- Prepare a brief introduction. Avoid spending a majority of the conversation introducing yourself and your job search.
- Rehearse your conversation. Use a mirror or record yourself to practice.

**During your conversation**

- Set the tone. Leave people with a positive impression and just enough insightful information about yourself so the employer can recommend you to others.
- Approach the conversation like a journalist. Do not be shy to ask about the downsides of the job and industry. This is your chance to get information, especially to determine if the field of work is suitable for you. Some questions include:
  - What are the worst parts of your job?
  - What didn’t you know before you got into the industry that you wish someone had told you?
- Take notes. Jot down as much information as possible during your meeting and any extra thoughts after your conversation.

**After your conversation**

- Follow up with gratitude, not demands. Thank them with an email or handwritten note. It will help you be remembered!
- Do not immediately ask for a favour. After a few weeks, check if there is a job opening with the employer and then ask for thoughts and feedback.
- Keep in touch. A career conversation is a great way to build relationships and develop future allies and supporters.