

MALONE CENTER FOR CAREER ENGAGEMENT

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING GUIDE

An informational interview is a purposeful conversation with a professional in a field of interest. It is an effective way to research careers, gain insight into specific industries, and gather advice from individuals already in the working world.

The purpose of an informational interview is not to find job openings, although sometimes it may lead to additional opportunities or network connections. At first, it may feel awkward reaching out to people you don't know; however, with practice and guidance, informational interviewing can become your best resource for relevant information (no matter where you are in your career development process).

STEPS OF AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW:

1. RESEARCH CAREER FIELDS

Conduct some initial research on the industries of interest. Visit our Career Pathways pages, discuss with a Career Advisor, or use some of our exploration platforms (i.e. Vault, O*NET, What Can I Do with This Major?) to help generate a list of careers and industries of interest.

2. IDENTIFY CONTACTS

First, start by reviewing your own personal contacts. Who do you know? Friends, teachers, mentors, family members, former employers, etc. Then, start by identifying Furman alumni. You can use LinkedIn or the Alumni List provided by the Alumni Relations Office. If you're still stuck, visit the Malone Center for Career Engagement and discuss your strategy with a Career Advisor.

3. INITIATE CONTACT

Contact the individual by email, phone, or LinkedIn (see below for sample template). Mention how you found them, and ask about a possible time to talk. Emphasize that you are looking for information and advice, not a job. Be ready to ask questions on the spot if they are available at that moment!

4. PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

Develop your "pitch" or a brief introduction of yourself and your experiences, skills, interests. Write down 5-10 open-ended questions you would like to ask.

5. CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

If in person, treat it as you would a real interview. Dress nicely, arrive a few minutes early, and bring your list of questions with a notepad to take notes. Give a brief overview of yourself and your interests, be prepared to direct the conversation, but also let it flow naturally. Respect their time, and ask if you can contact them again in the future with additional questions. Ask for additional resources and contacts that can offer further perspectives.

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What are your responsibilities as a . . . ?
What do you like most about your work?
What kinds of challenges do you face?
How does your job affect your general lifestyle?
How do most people get into this field? What are common entry level jobs?
What advice do you have for someone considering this type of job/industry?
Can you suggest anyone else I should talk to?
How did you become interested in this field?

6. FOLLOW UP

Make sure to send a thank you note! Keep your notes and records and contact additional people, if applicable. Stay in touch, especially to inform them of your progress.

SAMPLE EMAIL:

Subject: James Paladin: Current Furman Student

Dear Ms. Anderson:

I hope this email finds you well. My name is James Paladin and I am currently a first-year student at Furman University. I was given your name and contact information by my professor, Dr. Smith. I'm writing to you today because I'm looking for information and advice on pursuing a career in your industry. At this point, I believe I would enjoy a career in _____ and I'm hoping to gain your perspective on the practical aspects of working in this area.

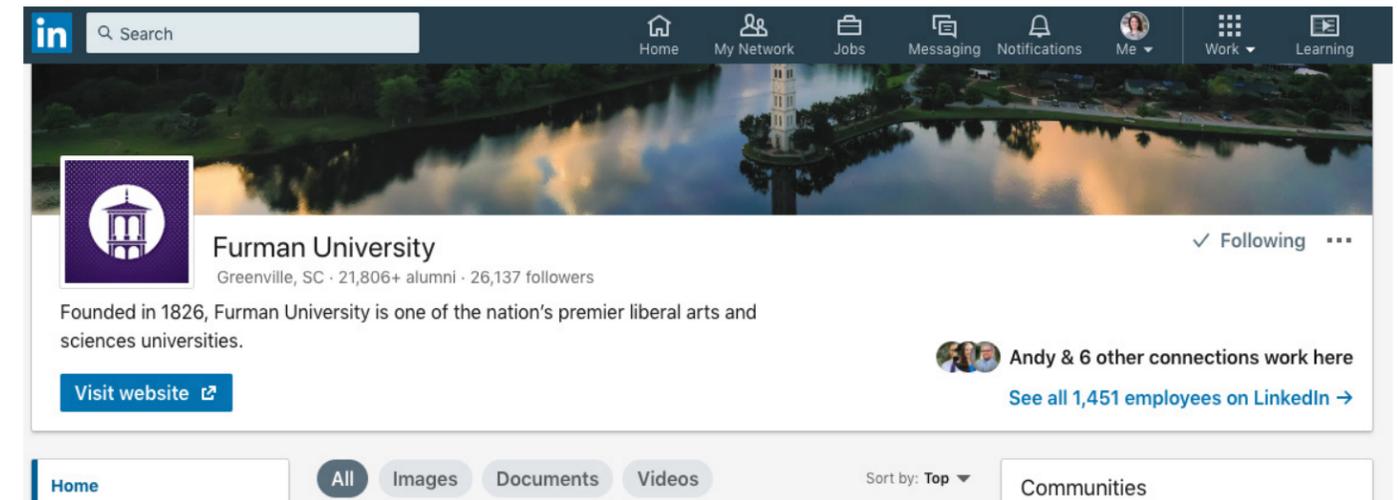
If you are willing, I would appreciate the opportunity to chat with you about your position, career journey and advice you may have for a student interested in this path. I would also appreciate any suggestions you may have to offer as I consider my options for the summer.

Please let me know if there are any days/times that would work best to meet or talk on the phone. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me at 864-555-5555 (cell) or at james.paladin@furman.edu. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

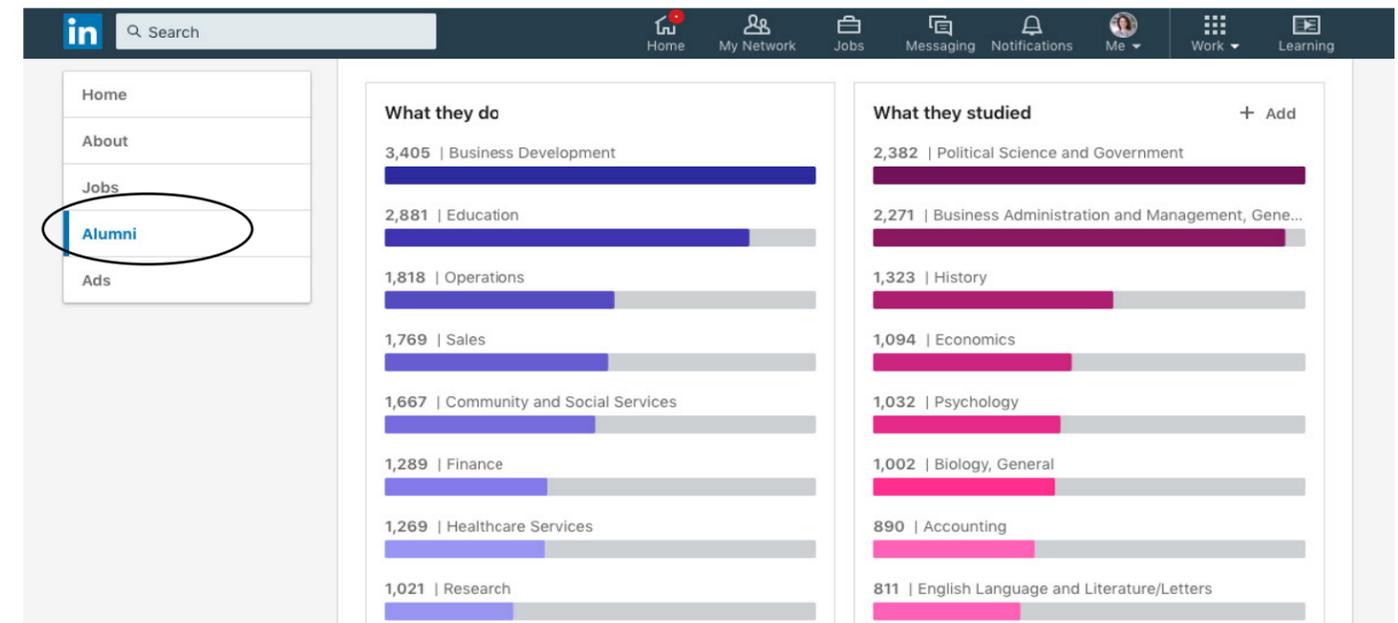
Sincerely,
James Paladin

CONNECTING WITH FURMAN ALUMNI ON LINKEDIN:

Visit www.linkedin.com. Once logged in, use the search bar to look up Furman University. This will take you to the main school page.



Once there, select 'Alumni' on the left hand side of the page. This will show you a snapshot of Furman alumni currently on LinkedIn.



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Click directly on the colored bars to filter your search and explore. Select as many as you'd like or search by a keyword, job title, or company in the search bar.

The screenshot shows the LinkedIn Alumni search interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the LinkedIn logo and a search icon. Below the search bar, there are navigation icons for Home, My Network, Jobs, Messaging, Notifications, Me, Work, and Learning. The main content area displays "21,806 alumni" and a search bar with the placeholder text "Search alumni by title, keyword or company". To the right of the search bar, there are filters for "Start year" (1900) and "End year" (2019). Below the search bar, there are two columns of data: "Where they live" and "Where they work".

Where they live	Where they work
21,261 United States	595 Furman University
4,710 Greenville, South Carolina Area	241 Greenville County Schools
2,565 Greater Atlanta Area	94 Wells Fargo
1,155 Charlotte, North Carolina Area	74 Greenville Health System

SAMPLE LINKEDIN CONNECT MESSAGE:

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. _____

I see that you graduated from my current institution, Furman University—go Paladins! I'm a physics major and would be excited to hear more about your work with NASA. I was hoping to pick your brain and ask a few questions about your career path. Please let me know if this is a possibility.

Thanks so much,

James Paladin