

What is a Career Circle?

Career Circles are an opportunity for students to meet professionals from different sectors of geoscience (or other STEM-related fields). The guest speakers are asked to participate in an informal discussion about their career and discuss the steps they took to get there. The end of the hour is dedicated to Q&A, although many parts of the discussion involve Q&A.

With our internship programs at UNAVCO, we facilitate the Career Circle during the lunch hour once a week during the summer. The sessions generally last about an hour.

Professionals ideally will come from different sectors of the workforce, for example: government, non-profit, industry, research, consulting, and academia. Ask them to bring business cards and any other material to share. Reach out to those within your own network and provide lunch as an incentive. Have students send thank you cards to each guest and discuss the importance of building and maintaining a professional network.

Career Circle Format

Have the students introduce themselves and provide their academic information (school, year, possible major, etc.). Then, introduce the speaker briefly with their name, titles, and place of employment. Begin to ask a few questions to guide the conversation and help the students to start thinking about career pathways.

Example questions:

- In your current position, what do you do now?
- How did you get interested in your career?
- What do you like most about what you do?
- What are the biggest challenges in your position?
- How did you find and get into your current job?
- What piece of advice would you like to share with a freshman or sophomore considering getting into your field?

Additional Questions (to ask if needed)

- Tell me about the career path that led you to your job.
- Tell me about your job. What are the core components?
- What did you do yesterday?
- What experiences best prepared you for your job?
- Tell me what happens in various divisions of your agency, like the client side, the finance side, the media buying side, the creative side.
- Who depends on you?
- Whom do you depend on?
- What do the people who work for you do?
- What do you like most about your job?

- What's the most challenging part of your job?
- What kind of problems do you face on a day-to-day basis?
- What's it like to work for this particular company?
- What makes it distinct from the rest of the [sector] world?
- How does the future look in your field?
- What are some of the long-term trends in your business?
- What's a typical career path in this business?
- What city should I live in if I want to pursue this profession?
- What's a typical entry-level title?
- In your organization when you're getting ready to hire, in what position do people usually enter?
- What's your hiring process like?
- Where do you see your career going from here?
- Where do you see this industry going?
- Do you hire interns?
- Whom would I talk to about the internship program?
- Who is the best person you've had in the internship program?
- What skill set is your business looking for?
- What would you recommend I study in college to best prepare me for this field?
- What would be good internship experiences I should consider? Should I try to work in a small or large agency?
- What type of work samples or portfolio should I be trying to develop as I try to move into this career?
- Who else would you recommend I talk to (mention who else you've talked to in the field)?