

## **Prepare for Your Pre-Health Professions School Interview by Setting Up a Mock Interview**

### **What Is A Mock Interview?**

A mock interview is a 30-minute individual session with an adviser to help you prepare and strategize for future interviews. Traditional and behavioral interviewing questions will be presented and you will be asked to respond, as in a real interview. After the interview, you will be given constructive feedback regarding your interviewing style and how you responded to the questions.

### **Procedures For A Mock Interview**

Call 516.877.3214 to set up an appointment in the Office of Pre-Professional Advising and Fellowships (OPPAF) located in Levermore Hall 304. If you need to cancel, please do so at least 24 hours in advance of the interview.

If you have questions that you would like to practice please tell your interviewer at the time of your mock interview.

Bring what you feel is necessary for the interview. No significant others, please. Unlike a real interview, portfolios will not be necessary.

### **How Can I Prepare For A Mock Interview?**

Keep up with current events in your field by reading books, newspapers, magazines, etc.

Think about controversial issues (euthanasia, abortion, medical economics) and develop reasoned opinions.

Organize discussion groups about these issues via Alpha Epsilon Delta (the Pre-Med Honorary Society) or informally amongst your peers and/or professors.

Attend workshops on interview skills through the Center for Career Development.

Speak with Dr. Charles Shopsis at [shopsisc@adelphi.edu](mailto:shopsisc@adelphi.edu) or 516.877.4140 and Robert Schwartz at [rschwartz@adelphi.edu](mailto:rschwartz@adelphi.edu) or 516.877.3140

## **Interviewing**

### **How to Prepare for an Interview**

Preparing for your first interview can be a little nerve-racking. You'll either have no idea what to expect, or you allow your imagination to get the best of you. Although you can never predict the exact questions that an interviewer will ask you, you can prepare yourself by practicing your response to possible questions you'll be asked.

### **What Happens During the Interview?**

The interviewing process can be scary if you don't know what to expect. To make it easier on you, keep in mind that all interviews fit a general pattern. The typical interview will last 30 minutes, although some may be longer. A typical structure is as follows:

Five minutes: greeting and small talk  
Fifteen minutes: a mutual discussion of your background and credentials  
Five minutes: you have an opportunity to ask questions  
Five minutes: wrap-up/ discuss next steps in the process

As you can see, there is not a lot of time to state your case. The interviewer may try to do most of the talking. When you do respond to questions or ask your own, your statements should be concise and organized. But don't be too brief. This could be your last chance to market yourself to the interviewer!

## **The Greeting and Small Talk**

It's a good idea to arrive at least 15 minutes early. You can use the time to relax, organize your thoughts, and even wipe your sweaty palms with a handkerchief, if necessary.

## **First Impressions**

Here are some tips to ensure your first impression is a positive one:

Appearance counts. When you look good, you feel good. Make sure you look groomed and neat. If you were a book, would someone want to read more? Your clothes and accessories should be conservative and neutral, rather than wild and loud. Your clothes are your packaging and should not take attention away from the product.

Nonverbal communication sometimes conveys a stronger message than verbal communication. According to one UCLA study, 93 percent of a person's communication effectiveness is determined by nonverbal communication. When you slouch, whether sitting or standing, you're saying volumes about you and your confidence level. Sit up straight -- like your mother always told you to. When you stand, make yourself as tall as possible: shoulders back and head held high. Eye contact and smiles can indicate a confident and upbeat attitude. This is a good opportunity to demonstrate your social and interpersonal skills as well as your excitement about the opportunity for which you're interviewing.

Once again, the handshake sends a strong tactile message. Whether your hands are hot and sweaty or cold and clammy, you can try some tricks to control the temperature. To cool your hands, try running cold water on the insides of your wrists. Use hot water if your hands are cool. If you have particularly sweaty hands, try using a deodorant gel (antiperspirant) as a lotion. Your voice and the volume of your speech convey a strong impression.

Whether the interview's over the phone or face-to-face, you should speak with enthusiasm and energy. Use a firm voice to demonstrate your confidence. Your vocabulary reveals your communication skills and ability to interact with people, especially ones you've not met before. The words you choose will say something about you, as well as your knowledge of the industry. It is important to use "their" words and talk "their" talk.

## **Are You Prepared for Small Talk?**

Many interviewers will begin the interview with some small talk. Topics may range from the current weather outside to favorite vacation spots and will rarely focus on anything that brings out your relevant experience. Nonetheless, you are still being evaluated.

Recruiters are trained to evaluate candidates on many different points. They may be judging how well you communicate on an informal basis. Smile, contribute and show interest in the topic, regardless of whether or not you truly care.

## **Strategy for Discussing Your Credentials**

The main part of the interview starts when the interviewer begins discussing your candidacy for a spot in their health professions school for which you are interviewing.

Many times interviewers will ask why you chose the major you did or why you have chosen to work in the health profession as your career goal. These questions are designed to determine your goal direction. Interviewers seek people who have direction and motivation. This can be demonstrated by your answers to these innocent-sounding questions. It's a good idea to think about what the interviewers is trying to find out about you by asking certain questions. For example, if you are asked to discuss a controversial medical topic such as abortion and what your view is on the topic, keep in mind that the interviewer is looking for someone who is confident about his or her own beliefs, but open to other people's ideas as well. Most of the time, he or she is looking for collaboration and compromise. Give them a specific example and walk them through your thoughts on the topic step by step. A good story telling technique is a huge plus when interviewing because it keeps the interviewer interested. So give only the essential background information and get to the point!

As the interview turns to talk about your qualifications, be prepared to deal with aspects of your background that could be construed as negative, i.e., low grade point average, no participation in outside activities, no related work experience. It is up to you to convince the interviewer that although these points appear negative, positive attributes can be found in them. A low GPA could stem from having to fully support yourself through college; you might have no related work experience, but plenty of experience that shows you to be a loyal and valued candidate.

## **It's Your Turn to Ask Questions**

When the interviewer asks, "Do you have any questions for me?" it's important to have a few ready. Also, the questions should bring out your interest in and knowledge of the school. Show the interviewer that you have done your homework.

By asking intelligent, well-thought-out questions, you show the interviewer you are serious about your application to that school and need more information.

## **Wrap Up**

The interview isn't over until you walk out the door. The conclusion of the interview usually lasts five minutes and is very important. During this time the interviewer is assessing your overall performance.

It is important to remain enthusiastic and courteous. Often the conclusion of the interview is indicated when the interviewer stands up. However, if you feel the interview has reached its conclusion, feel free to stand up first.

Shake the interviewer's hand and thank him or her for considering you. Being forthright is a quality that most interviewers will respect, indicating that you feel you have presented your case and the decision is now up to the interviewer.

## **Overall - Expect the Unexpected**

During the interview, you may be asked some unusual questions. Don't act too surprised. Many times questions are asked simply to see how you react. For example, surprise questions could range from, "Tell me a joke" to "What time period would you like to have lived in?" These are not the kind of questions for which you can prepare in advance so don't spend time

worrying about them in advance. Stay cool, think and give an honest answer. Your reaction time and the response you give will be evaluated by the interviewer, but again, there's no way to anticipate questions like these. While these questions are not always used, they are intended to force you to react under some stress and pressure.

### **Evaluations Made by Interviewers**

The interviewers will be observing and evaluating you during the interview. Erwin S. Stanton, author of *Successful Personnel Recruiting and Selection*, indicates some evaluations made by the interviewer during the interview include:

1. How mentally alert and responsive is the candidate?
2. Is the applicant able to draw proper inferences and conclusions during the course of the interview?
3. Does the applicant demonstrate a degree of intellectual depth when communicating, or is his/her thinking shallow and lacking depth?
4. Has the candidate used good judgment and common sense regarding life planning up to this point?
5. What is applicant's capacity for problem-solving activities?
6. How well does candidate respond to stress and pressure?

Make sure your answers will show you in a positive light when using this evaluation criteria.