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CAREER SERVICES RESOURCE CENTER:
SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING

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INTERVIEWING

What is an interview? An interview is a structured conversation between you and an employer where you ask each other questions to determine if you would be a good fit for the job.

What do they want to know about me?

- There are two main pieces of information an employer wants to get during an interview:
 1. Why you want the job
 2. Why they should hire you
- All the questions the employer asks during the interview are designed to get more detailed information about these two things.
- So, to have a successful interview, you must convince the employer of these two things.

INTERVIEWING BASICS

1. Be professional.

- **Dress the part.** *A suit (for both men and women) is usually preferable. Make sure hair, makeup, jewelry, and accessories are conservative and professional.*
- **Be on-time.** *Allow extra time for travel, and check in with the receptionist 5-10 minutes before the interview.*
- **Be courteous and respectful** to everyone, including the receptionist, custodian, landscaper, etc. *You never know who will be giving an opinion on whether or not you should be hired.*
- **Turn off your cell phone!** *Having to interrupt the interview to silence your phone is NOT a good thing!*
- **Use a firm handshake** to greet people, and always stand to greet someone.

2. Be prepared.

- **Know the interview location.** *Find it ahead of time, even if you think you'll be able to find it easily.*
- **Know the job description.** *Know what the job will entail, and what qualifications they're looking for.*
- **Know the company.** *Do as much research as you can before the interview. More on this later!*
- **Know what questions to expect** (at least the standard ones), and what the employer is looking for.
- **Know what information you want to share** about yourself.
- **Know what questions you want to ask the employer.**
- **Bring your materials!** *This usually means a copy of your resume for everyone you'll meet (plus some extras), a pen and paper to write if you need to, a folder or binder to keep everything in, and anything else they ask you to bring.*

3. Be friendly.

- **Don't be so serious** that you forget to be yourself. They want to hire a person, not just a set of qualifications.
- **Smile!** (And smile often!) This will make you seem more friendly and likeable.
- **Be comfortable and confident.** This will make the employer more comfortable, and increase your likeability.

4. Be Engaged.

- **Being engaged helps convince the employer of your interest in the job.**
- **Make frequent eye contact** with everyone in the room.
- **Pay careful attention** to everything that is being said.
- **Ask questions!** If you don't, it will seem like you're not really interested.
- **Sit up straight** and lean slightly forward towards the interviewer.

5. Be Gracious.

- **Thank the interviewers** (several times) for their time and for this opportunity. Be sincere!
- **Send a thank you note afterward** (or thank you email) to leave a good impression. Send it as soon after the interview as possible, and no later than the next morning.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

There are several types of interviews you could encounter, depending on the particular employer's hiring procedures.

One-on-One Interview: This is the traditional, one-on-one, face-to-face interview. You may have only one of these, or you may have several one-on-one interviews with different people on the same day.

Panel/Committee Interview: This is very similar to the one-on-one interview, except that you will be interviewed by several people at the same time. When answering questions, make sure to make eye contact with everyone equally!

Group Interview: This consists of you and other applicants all being interviewed at the same time. There are several things that could happen in a group interview:

- The "interview" may really be a presentation by the employer, followed by a question and answer session. There will likely be other interviewers in the room who are watching the behaviors of the applicants. In this setting, the best thing you can do to make sure you are noticed is to show you are paying close attention to the presentation, and ask intelligent questions about the company and the position.
- You may take turns answering standard interview questions. Sometimes you may all answer the same questions, or sometimes you may answer different questions.
- You may have to do an activity or perform a task, often with the whole group or with a smaller group. Generally, the employer is looking to see how you work with a team and what role you take on, such as whether you emerge as the group leader, or whether you barely contribute.

Telephone Interview: This is an interview done over the phone, with one or more interviewers, and usually, standard interview questions. This is sometimes done as a first interview, to narrow down the applicants before the in-person interviews. It also may be used for out-of-state applicants. (But, we do recommend that you go in person, whenever it is even remotely possible to do so. In-person interviews leave a much stronger impression, and if you go, it will show your commitment to the job.) A phone interview will probably never be your final interview. Here are some tips:

- Smile, even though they can't see you- they will hear it in your voice.
- Find a quiet, isolated place to do the interview where you will have NO INTERRUPTIONS.
- Be prepared and waiting for the call- if you miss the call, you may not get another chance.

Lunch/Dinner Interview: This is when the employer takes you out to a meal as part of your interview. Sometimes, this is the "informal" interview, where the employer is trying to see more of your personality, and will have more casual conversation with you. Sometimes, this is the main event, and you will be asked the standard interview questions. Here are some tips:

- Don't get TOO relaxed- remember, it is still an interview.
- Use your best table manners, and in the case of a fancy meal, make sure you know your formal dining etiquette.
- Don't order anything messy or that you have to eat with your hands.
- Don't order the most expensive thing on the menu. To get an idea of your price range, see what other people are ordering first.
- Drinking alcohol is usually not recommended, even if the interviewer is. You want to be at the top of your game.

Performance Interview: This is where you're asked to actually DO something besides just answer questions, such as give a presentation, read an article and then take a test, etc. They do this to assess your ability to do a certain part of the job, or your ability to learn the job. Hopefully, you will be told ahead of time about any of these things, and can prepare accordingly, but sometimes they will be a surprise. In that case, retain your composure and do the best that you can.

Often, for a professional job, your interview will be a half day or full day, and may include a variety of the interview types listed above. You will probably interview with many different people, and may also be given a tour.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEW

1. **Assess yourself.** Spend time thinking about who you are, why you want this job, and why they should hire you. Figure out what your strengths and weaknesses are. Figure out why you decided to pursue this career field in the first place, why this particular job is right for you, and why this company is right for you. Clarify what your goals are. Figure out what makes you special and unique- what you bring to the table that other candidates may not. Figure out why you are the BEST person for this job. (You'll have to answer questions about all of these things during the interview.)
2. **Research the company.** At the very least, you should be familiar with the information on the job description, and the information on the company's website. Also, talk to current employees if you can, search for articles written about the company, etc. Once you've done your research, prepare the questions you want to ask the employer.
 - *Some examples of things to know:* What all they do, who their customers are, their size, what the company culture is like, what kind of training they provide, how many locations they have and where they are, how well the company has been performing,

what the organizational structure is, who their competitors are, the typical career path for someone in your field

3. **Know the standard questions** and be prepared to answer them. You may still get an off-the-wall question that you weren't prepared for, but if you seem surprised by a standard question, you'll give away the fact that you didn't prepare well. Some of the most common questions and how to answer them are discussed in the next section.
4. **Practice, practice, practice!** Visit Career Services if you would like to schedule a mock practice interview. You'll be given helpful suggestions for how to improve your answers and your overall performance. Also, print out lists of sample questions and have your friends and family ask them to you. The more practice you get, the better you'll do at the actual interview.