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# INTERVIEWING 101: GRADUATE PROGRAMS

**#1 Rule to Remember . . . Be Authentic . . . Always!**

## TYPES OF INTERVIEWS & TIPS!

- **TIP:** Do your research! No matter what type of interview, do research on the program and even some research on the people you are interviewing with. Maybe you have something in common you've seen on the interviewer's Facebook page. You can throw that common interest into your "Tell me about yourself" interview question. It's all about building rapport in an interview, as that is how they can tell if you'd "fit" with their program.
- **Phone:** Make sure you have a quiet place to call where there will not be any outside noise (i.e. trains/cars, animals, roommates). You can have note cards to prompt you if you get stuck on a question. Fluctuate your voice and show enthusiasm—as phone interviews can often fall flat if you have a monotone or quiet voice.
- **Virtual (i.e. Skype, Zoom):** Double check that your webcam and microphone are working properly in advance. Use a desktop computer, if possible, instead of a laptop for a stronger connection. Look at the webcam, not at yourself; this will ensure you have good eye contact with the interviewer. Dress professionally from head to toe – you may be asked to stand up and demonstrate something!
- **In-Person:** Plan ahead and arrive approximately 10 minutes early. Be courteous and friendly to everyone you engage with. It's okay to take a moment to reflect on the question before you answer, or repeat the question so that you understand it before you begin. Dress professionally and don't fidget! Leave your cell phone in the car!

## INTRODUCTORY STAGE

- Interviewer establishes rapport while determining their "first impressions" of you based on your initial greeting, introduction, handshake, appearance, and demeanor.
- Interviewer may give a brief overview of the interview and the time they have allotted for the interview.

## Q&A STAGE

Many students find this stage to be nerve-wracking, so it is important to keep things in perspective. Remember, the one subject matter that you should be most familiar with is YOU! In this stage, you are simply taking that knowledge of yourself and presenting it to the interviewer(s) based on the knowledge you acquired of the program. The interviewer is primarily looking to evaluate you in relation to the program by asking questions that:

1. Expand upon the information you submitted via your application.
2. Uncover your true strengths and core attributes.
3. Determine how your education, skills, abilities, past performance and experience relate to the program.
4. Use examples! Tell a story and refer back to how that experience fits with the program you applied for. Don't just say you are innovative, but use an example of how you designed, implemented and executed an innovative project!

## COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO PREPARE FOR

*Tell me about yourself:*

- Focus on what would interest the interviewer by giving a summary of your strongest selling points in relation to the program.
- Speak for approximately 2-3 minutes on this opening statement.
- Highlight your most important accomplishments.
- Use a timeline to keep you on track. For a recent college student/graduate example: Where did you grow up? What were you involved in then? What led you to UND and your major? What have you done while at UND (internships, clinical/field experiences, research, notable projects, clubs/organizations, volunteer)? Include something unique about yourself (e.g. "I enjoy rock climbing and recently traveled to Haiti for a mission trip."). End with a thank you ("I'm really excited to be here and thank you for this interviewing opportunity.").
  - o Only touch on these experiences as you may use examples of them in depth later in the interview.

*What is your greatest strength?* Highlight a proven skill related to the program you are interviewing for and give an example of how you demonstrate that skill. It is ok to be proud of yourself...just not full of yourself. There is a difference.

*What is your greatest weakness?* Talk about a skill you are already developing or have already overcome. Remember, a weakness is only a weakness when it isn't recognized. Turn a negative into a positive!

*Why should we choose you over another candidate?* Explain why the program interests you, and what you can bring to this program that would benefit them. Don't compare yourself to other candidates.

*What will you do if you are not accepted into the program this year?* Ask the committee what you can do to improve your application. Then explain how you will use that feedback to improve your application. Then discuss how you will continue to apply until you are admitted. Use specific examples when necessary!

*Tell me about a time when...* Use the STAR approach to provide a well-rounded answer that describes the situation or task you faced, the action you took, and the result of that action. Tie it back into the program you are applying for and how it relates!

## CLOSING

After the interviewer has asked questions of you, you will be given the opportunity to ask questions. These questions should be ones that you cannot find on their website or application. Have 3-5 questions prepared which may include ones like:

- What are the strengths of the program or school?
- What kind of support is offered to ensure student success?
- What are some opportunities for research?
- How are students evaluated academically?
- What do you personally enjoy the most about working here?

## PROMPT FOLLOW-UP

Promptly follow up with any additional material requested of you and within 24 hours express your appreciation with a handwritten or emailed thank you note.