Interviewing Skills

Engineering Career Services
Prepare for Each Interview

Most students look at the interview as something that happens to them.

– They do minimal preparation
– They rely on the magic list of 50 most-asked questions.
– They prepare the morning of the interview
Prepare for Each Interview

- Know the employer’s needs
- Anticipate the topics & questions
- Develop 3-5 themes about which you will NOT leave the interview without discussing
- Practice – yes, out-loud!
Know the Employer’s Needs

✦ Know why you are interviewing
  – Be passionate, or at least interested!
  – Know what’s “on-the line”
    • **The average cost of hiring a new employee is between $6,000 - $9,000**

✦ Know about the job and the employer
  – Job posting &/or co-op reports @ webECS
  – Employer website – read their mission statement
  – Use Hoover’s
    • Locations, competitors, products/services
    • Current news information
Prepare a Portfolio

- Resumes
  - Updated for this interview?
- References/Evaluations
- Transcripts
- Lists of Publications/Patents/Conferences
- Visuals: Photos, abstracts, graphs, computer projects, writing samples, design projects
Practice for the Interview

- It’s not...the best prepared student who gets the job
- But the...student who is best prepared at getting the job.
Practice makes perfect
- Roommates/friends/family
- Mirror
- Tape or video recorder
- Don’t over-rehearse
- Don’t use ECS interviews for practice
- ECS Mock Interviews
Practice for the Interview

- ECS Handbook Examples
- Books in ECS
  - Case interviews
  - Technical
  - Problem Solving
Structure Your Responses

- **STAR**  
  (Behavior Based)

- Be prepared to provide **specific examples** of occasions
  - When things went well
  - When results were different than expected

- Be prepared for questions asking **for more detail** than you've already given

- Be prepared to give your *next* greatest strength, or a *second* leadership example
Structure Your Responses

- Become adept at telling 'stories' specifically illustrating what you can do for the employer.
- **No** yes/no answers
  - EX: Have you ever been fired?
- Understand why specifics are important to the employer
- Past behavior is the best indicator of future behavior
  - How you behaved or reacted or picked yourself up in the past indicates how you will do likewise in future.
Successfully Close the Interview

🌟 Questions for the recruiter
  – Prepare ahead of time
  – Write down – refer to – do not read!

🌟 Summary of themes or closing statement
  – Based on anticipation of topics tied to employer needs

🌟 Appreciation for recruiter’s time

🌟 Get a business card
Communication studies consistently report that over 90% of communication takes place through nonverbal channels*

Body language in waiting area, grooming, clothing, eye contact, handshake, facial expressions, energy, etc.

Only a small percentage of communication involves actual words: 7%, to be exact. In fact, 55% of communication is visual (body language, eye contact) and 38% is vocal (pitch, speed, volume, tone of voice).  

*Journal of Career Planning & Employment, Summer 1999
Professional Attire

- **Suit**
  - Professional cut & color

- **Jacket & Pants**
  - Coordinated colors

**NO WHITE SOCKS**
**Professional Attire**

- **Suit**
  - Professional jacket with skirt, pants, dress in a conservative cut
Business Casual

- No tie
- Jacket not necessary
- Sports jacket ok
Business Casual

- Lighter colors ok
- Jacket of different color ok
Feedback to ECS

-feed back from recruiters:
  - Improve handshake and learn to use eye contact when answering questions
  - Candidate appeared to be quite arrogant
  - Know about my product/service!
- The candidate was very driven and results oriented, but too mechanical in responses
- Be genuine; show me your personality
- Relax
**Final Thoughts**

- After each interview
  - Self-Review
    - Good/Not so good
  - Send a Thank You
    - Indicate no longer interested
    - Indicate sincere interest
    - Attach resume
  - Follow-up with email or phone number
    - Every two weeks