

## OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

### INTERVIEWS – PREPARATION GUIDELINES

Interviews for jobs or internships are your opportunity to present yourself and your qualifications for the position you desire. To prepare for an interview you need to 1) know yourself, your motivations, your strong points, your weaknesses; 2) know about the position, the organization and the industry for which you are interviewing; 3) know general interviewing guidelines; 4) know your resume and be able to speak about every piece of information listed; and 5) prepare for typical interview questions and plan how you will answer them.

#### **KNOW YOURSELF**

Be sure you are easily conversant on all aspects of your education and work experience, especially the ways in which they are of value to the prospective employer. Be sure to have your two minute pitch describing your interest in the organization and field. Be able to "talk" your resume. Identify your areas of interest, your skills/abilities/strengths, and your values/priorities. Be sure you know what personal qualities to highlight.

#### **KNOW THE JOB AND THE ORGANIZATION**

Understand as much as you can about the nature of the position and the qualifications needed. You can find this information from the description of the job or internship as well as from any supplementary materials on the organization. It is also helpful to talk to other people who have held the position or a similar one in that organization or another organization. You can even seek out SIPA alums in particular fields through the SIPA LinkedIn Group, *SIPA Alumni and Student Network*, for career advice. If you are unclear about what a particular type of job entails, you may also want to consult general career guides that describe the nature of the work and typical salaries for different careers. Know as much about the organization itself as you can reasonably be expected to know from viewing their website and/or knowledgeable contacts. At the very least know enough about the organization to be able to convey why you have an interest in working for them.

#### **KNOW GENERAL INTERVIEWING GUIDELINES**

Remember that an interview is basically a conversation between two human beings. The interviewer's main goal is to get to know you, not to test or trick you. If you feel comfortable in discussing your background and know something about the position and the organization, you are well prepared. Always emphasize the positive. If it is necessary to discuss any negative aspects of your background (e.g. jobs or bosses you didn't like), try not to sound bitter or angry, do not make personal attacks, and don't make excuses.

Don't hesitate to be the initiator in the interview. You know yourself and your background better than the interviewer does, so it is your responsibility to be sure that all-important topics are discussed. Be sure to answer the questions. Pay attention to what the interviewer is asking. If a question isn't clear, ask for clarification. Take time to think of your answer. Elaborate on your responses. Give examples whenever possible. Remember that this is no time to be modest, but rather you need to confidently assert your skill set.

#### **PREPARE FOR TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

No two interviews are exactly alike, but you can prepare to answer certain questions that are often asked. You should practice your answers out loud to hear how they sound, but don't try to memorize them word-for-word or you will end up sounding too rehearsed or might forget them if you are nervous.

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