

## OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

### INTERVIEWS – QUESTIONS TO ASK AND ANSWER

The job interview is a conversation between you and the interviewer. You will be asked questions about your motivations, interests and skills, but you will also want to gain valuable information about the organization and position for which you are applying. Consequently, you should be prepared to ask relevant and targeted questions. A good interviewer will ask if you have any questions, usually at the conclusion of the interview. If you are not invited to do so, you should take the initiative to ask questions anyway. Below please find some general pointers for creating your questions:

- Do your research! Investigate organizational literature, websites and magazines. Also, speak with people who have knowledge of the organization and/or industry. Your research on the organization and career field will help you formulate suitable questions.
- Be sure your questions are meaningful and job related; **try not to ask for very general information already available on the organization's website or in other public materials**. In other words, put some thought into your questions.

The following list provides a selection of questions you may want to ask the interviewer, or you may create some of your own. **Your questions will vary depending on whether the job is in the public or private sector, so you should choose only those that are relevant for you and the position for which you are applying.** It is wise to have at least five questions prepared, realizing that several may be answered during the interview. Keep in mind that there may only be time for a few questions, therefore be strategic in prioritizing your questions.

#### **QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD PREPARE TO ASK**

##### **ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION:**

- What makes your organization unique or different from others in its industry?
- What are your organization's strengths and weaknesses?
- What is the single biggest challenge facing your organization now?
- What are your organization's plans for future growth?
- How would you describe your organization's culture and management style?

##### **ABOUT THE JOB ITSELF AND ITS POSITION WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION:**

- Please describe the overall structure of the organization.
- Where does this position fit in the overall organization?
- What is the overall structure of the department in which the position is located? What are the future plans for that department?
- How much contact is there between departments and between individuals in the organization?
- What are the typical first year assignments? What percentage of my time would be spent in different tasks/functions?
- Tell me about your initial and future training and/or professional development opportunities.

- Is it organizational policy to promote from within? What percentage of supervisory positions is filled from within the organization? What is the work history of your top management?
- *If you are interviewing for an internship:* Do you typically hire your interns for permanent, full-time positions once they graduate?

#### **ABOUT PEOPLE IN THE ORGANIZATION:**

- What characteristics does a successful person have at your organization?
- May I talk to someone who currently holds or recently held this job?
- How is an employee evaluated and promoted? How often would my performance be reviewed?
- Why do you enjoy working for this organization?
- What qualities are you looking for in new hires?
- From what schools were recent graduates hired during the last two years? Do any SIPA graduates work here?

The part of the interview in which you ask questions is both a chance for you to demonstrate your motivation and interest in the job as well as a chance for you to get the information you may need later when evaluating job offers. In addition, you must practice and be prepared to answer the following questions typically asked by interviewers.

### **QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED TO ANSWER**

#### **GENERAL QUESTIONS:**

- How would you describe yourself? Tell me about yourself.
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
- How do you work under pressure?
- How would you describe the ideal job for you following graduation?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- Do you have a geographical preference? Will you relocate? Are you willing to travel?
- What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- How would you handle this situation.....?
- Tell me about a project that you worked on where something went wrong. What did you do?

#### **ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE:**

- How has your SIPA experience prepared you for a career?
- Describe your most rewarding university experience.
- Why did you select SIPA? What led you to choose your major?
- What academic subjects did you like best/least? Why?
- If you could do so, how would you plan your academic study differently? Why?
- What changes would you make at SIPA? Why?
- Tell me about one of your papers or your thesis.
- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

**QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE:**

- Why should I hire you?
- What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful in this field?
- Which jobs or internships have you most enjoyed? Why?
- Walk me through your career from undergraduate school onward. Why did you make the choices that you made?
- Which skills and functions are you most comfortable with? If I were to assign you a project based on your expertise, what would I give you?
- What are your weakest skills, and how are you addressing these?

**QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND MOTIVATION:**

- What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
- Why do you want to work here?
- What do you think about the future of this field?
- What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives? When and why did you establish these goals, and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
- What do you hope to gain out of [the position, the company]?

**QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE POSITION/THE CAREER FIELD/THE ORGANIZATION:**

- What do you know about our organization?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in our organization?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- What questions do you have for the interviewer?
- What do you think about \_\_\_\_\_ ?

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