Preparing for the Interview Process

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COPH Career Services

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Welcome to the College of Public Health’s Career Services!

Services available to students and alumni include:

- Resume review
- Mock interviews
- Career panels
- Career counseling
- Career development educational sessions

Services available to employers include:

- Posting and marketing of open positions
- On-campus recruitment opportunities

For more information about any of these opportunities, or to schedule an appointment, please contact Career Services at: brenda.nickol@unmc.edu or 402-552-7226.
The Basics
Job Search Stages

**MPH:** You meet a minimum or preferred qualification

**Resume & Cover Letter:** You possess the skills and qualifications they are looking for

**Interview:**
-- Your experiences demonstrate your skills and abilities to perform the job duties
-- You are motivated to do the job
-- You are a good fit for the organization
Goal of the Interview

Showcase your:

• **Skills**: Your experiences demonstrate your skills and abilities to perform the job duties

• **Motivation**: You are motivated to do the job

• **Fit**: You are a good fit for the organization


Types of Interviews

• Screening Interview
• Phone Interview
• Skype Interview
• In-person Interview

And any of them can be with:

• HR
• Hiring Manager
• Panel
Nature of Interview

- Skills Questions
- Behavioral Questions
- Case Study
- Presentation
“Soft” Skills & “Hard” Skills

Hard Skills include:
• Data analysis
• Survey design
• Program evaluation
• Grant writing
• Budget preparation

Soft Skills include:
• Verbal and written communication skills
• Collaboration and partnering skills
• Ability to work with a team
• Ability to problem solve
Preparation
Preparing: Logistics

• You get the call… Ask:
  – Exact location of interview
  – Contact information
  – If there is anything you should bring
  – With whom will you be interviewing?
Preparing: Research

- Research the organization (mission, values, priorities, etc.) and position as much as possible
- Look up the interviewers on LinkedIn
- Reach out to connections who can provide insight
- Do a test drive to the location
Preparing: Yourself

- Write out all experiences (paid, unpaid and student), identifying examples that align with job description

Interviewers are much more likely to remember examples than generic statements!
Preparing: Yourself

• Write out all experiences (paid, unpaid and student), identifying examples that align with job description
• Prepare questions to ask at the end of the interview
Questions to ask Interviewers

Do ask:
• Something
• Genuine questions
• Questions that help you both illustrate and determine fit
• About timeline and next steps so you know when to follow up

Do not ask:
• About anything you could easily find on their website
• About compensation or any other benefits
• Too many questions—keep an eye on time and their interest
Questions to ask Interviewers

• Prepare 5-10 questions
• Don’t be afraid to respond to their answers in a way that showcases something additional about yourself as a candidate
Preparing: Yourself

• Write out all experiences (paid, unpaid and student), identifying examples that align with job description
• Prepare questions to ask at the end of the interview
• Practice with a mock interview
Preparing: Technology

• If a phone or Skype interview, test out all aspects of technology in advance
• If you need assistance finding a quiet, dedicated place, let Career Services know
• Skype
  – Lighting
  – Camera position
  – Internet connection
  – Background
  – Audio
Preparing: Don’ts

• Rehearse so much that your answers feel unnatural or ‘canned’
• Forget to look into every possible connection that you may have to the organization
• Think you can wing it!
Day of the Interview
Getting Ready

• Dress professionally (suit)
  – Select your outfit and try on every piece well in advance, so you have time to shop for or borrow needed pieces

• Closed-toe shoes

• Excellent personal hygiene

• Minimal to no perfume/cologne

• Minimal jewelry (nothing that jingles)

• No gum—use a breath mint
Arriving to the Interview

Must bring:
- Paper and pen (padfolio)
- Copies of resume
- List of questions
- Directions & contact info in case you get lost

Optional:
- Work samples

- Show up on time (10min early)
- Turn off cellphone
- You are ‘on’ from the moment you enter their property
During Interview

• Make eye contact and smile
• Good body language (posture, no fidgeting)
• Show ‘intelligent enthusiasm’* (you can do the job and are excited about it!)
• Use examples as much as possible
• It is okay to take notes

*Yate, 2013
Nature of Interview

- Case Study
- Presentation

Expect the unexpected!
Nature of Interview

• Skills Questions
  – “What experience do you have with cleaning and analyzing large datasets?” (S)

• Behavioral Questions
  – “Tell us about a time when you dealt with a difficult interpersonal conflict at work.” (F)
  – “Give us an example of how you have implemented an evidence-based program.” (S)
STAR method

- **S** ituation — describe the context of the situation/scenario
- **T** ask — provide a brief overview of what you were supposed to do
- **A** ction — explain what you did to accomplish the task
- **R** esult — state what was accomplished as a result of your actions
Questions to be ready for

Q: Tell us a little bit about yourself (S, F, M)
A: ~90 sec. Very basic background, how you got to where you are and why you are excited about this position

Q: What is your understanding of this position and why are you interested in it? (F, M)
A: Show that you ‘get it.’ Do not simply list the tasks in the job description—capture the overall purpose and nature of the position. Then, illustrate why you are a good fit.
More Questions

Q: Where do you want to be in Xyrs? (F)
A: Even if you don’t know, say something that aligns with this position.

Q: What are your greatest strengths/Value Add? (S, F, M)
A: Pick 3; do not ramble; give an example; good to have both hard and soft skills.

Q: What are your greatest weaknesses? (S, F, M)
A: Say something real and how you have or are addressing it.
Tips for Good Answers

• Remember good paragraph writing structure
  – Start with a ‘thesis’ statement
  – Provide supporting evidence (your examples)
  – Conclude strong, tying everything you just said back to this specific job and organization

• Use the STAR method when possible

• Be genuine

• It is never anyone else’s fault
At Conclusion of Interview

- Thank everyone—shake hands
- Ask for business card if you are able
- Thank administrative personnel on way out
After the Interview
Follow Up

• Send a hand written thank you note
• Follow up at an appropriate time
• Communicate (again) with anyone who can put in a good word for you
Questions?
Details, handouts, recordings, etc.
http://www.unmc.edu/publichealth/events.htm