Interviewing in the U.S. for International Students

Anne Scammon, Managing Director
Program Evaluation

• Check email for a link to evaluation or go.gwu.edu/ccsprogrameval
• Should take approximately 2 minutes
  – Professional Development
  – Marketing
  – About You
• Comments & Ideas
Agenda

• Define Purpose of Interviews
• Plan: Set Goals, Research, and Practice
• Cultural Differences in U.S. Interviews
• Successful Interviews
• Types of Interviews
• Questions and Answers
• Professional Pitch
• After the Interview

Common Questions, Do’s and Don’ts

Thank You Note, How Can I Improve?
What is the purpose of the U.S. interview?
What is the purpose of the U.S. interview?

• Offers employer insights about your skills, abilities, personality.
• Allows your to determine if your goals match needs of the position/organization.
• Provides both review of others “fit” organization
What are your goals and challenges?

- Return to my home country
- CPT/OPT, then, return to home country
- Obtain H1-B Visa, stay in country 3-5 years
- Obtain H1B visa, apply for permanent residency

- What are the challenges?
- What are the obstacles?
- What will make it more manageable?
- How will you be supported?
- Do you have a Plan B?
Are U.S. cultural differences reflected in the interview
# High/Low Context Cultures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Higher Context Cultures</th>
<th>Low Context Cultures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
<td>Holland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East, Asia</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa, Japan,</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>West Germany</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>German</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Swiss</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scandinavia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America (U.S.)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Relational, collectivist, intuitive, and contemplative;
- Emphasize interpersonal relationships;
- Development of trust is #1 step;
- Prefer group harmony/consensus vs. individual achievement;
- Prefer intuition/feeling to reason;
- Words less important as context (voice tone, expression, gestures);
- Less language precision/legal documents.

- Logical, linear, individualistic action;
- Value logic, facts, directness;
- Make decisions/solve problems with evaluated facts not intuition;
- Decisions end with actions;
- Straight forward, concise, efficient;
- State expected action; use precise words, literal;
- Explicit negotiations/contracts;
- High-context business people may distrust contracts and be offended.
## Cultural Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Context</th>
<th>Low Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Establish social trust first</td>
<td>• Go to business first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Value group sense</td>
<td>• Value individualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Value personal relations and goodwill</td>
<td>• Value performance/experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Agreement by general trust</td>
<td>• Agreement by specific, legal contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perceive highly verbal persons less favorably</td>
<td>• Perceive highly verbal persons favorably</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Interview Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Context Culture</th>
<th>Low Context Culture (U.S.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal relationships more important than time. Late may be okay.</td>
<td>Arrive 5-10 minutes prior to appointment. Be punctual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact, with persons of higher status, may be disrespectful.</td>
<td>Eye contact is expected and shows confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citing accomplishments/skills may seen as boastful or individualistic.</td>
<td>Discussion of accomplishments is expected and shows confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research of organization in advance may show initiative/independence</td>
<td>Research of company knowledge is expected. Shows initiative/interest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Center for Career Services**

[go.gwu.edu/careerservices](go.gwu.edu/careerservices)
Checklist for Interviews

✓ I know my career interests, skills, values and goals.
✓ I am able to target industry, positions, and employers that interest me.
✓ I am able to state my top five skills and top five accomplishments.
✓ My resume demonstrates my skills, knowledge and abilities effectively.
✓ I am able to analyze job descriptions and research employers to tailor my resume to each employer’s needs.
✓ I am able to network and build connections through informational interviews, the GW Center, alumni links, and social media.
✓ I know about career fairs, websites, job lists and potential employers related to my career interests.
✓ I am able to interview and negotiate salaries effectively.
✓ I have a job search plan and timeline between now and graduation.
Successful Interviews

- **Employer Knowledge**
  - Demonstrate knowledge of employer product, position, industry trends, and culture!
- **Self Knowledge/Match Skills**
  - Explain clearly how your skills match the position
  - Convey your top 3-4 skills/ strengths with stories
- **Interview Behavior**
  - “Non-verbals”: handshake, eye contact, posture, smile
  - Communication skills, poise

A Successful Interview
Employer Research

• Research the employer, industry, and the position
  – Review the *About Us* and *News and Press Release*

• Know employer products, services, programs
  – How do *your* skills fit in?

• What challenges/difficulties face the employer?
  – How can *you* help solve them?

• Reread the job description
Types of Interviews

- Pre-screening
- Telephone/Skype
- Campus Interviews (face-to-face)
- Office Visit
- One-on-One
- Group/Panel/Event
- Other
- Case & Behavior-Based Interviews
- Stress
Interview Approaches

• **Basic (Screening)**
  – Questions per qualifications for job
  – Confirms job interest/understanding
  – All asked same questions: work, GPA

• **Behavior-Based**
  – Past behavior predict future success
  – Employer assess values, self-image
  – New hire mirrors employer’s successful employees

• **Stress**
  – Evaluates composure/ability in stress
  – Group situations are observed/judged
Behavioral-Based Questions

• Critical Thinking
  – Tell me about the most complex problem you’ve had to solve in the last two years.

• Resourcefulness
  – Tell me about a time when you were “stuck” solving a problem….what did you do?

• Oral Communication
  – Describe a situation where you convinced others to adopt your position.

• Handling Stress, Resilience
  – Tell me about a major obstacle that you overcame.
Behavior-Based Interview Answers

“S.T.A.R.” Technique
Tell me about a time you had to create something?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Detail background. Provide context. Where? When?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Describe challenge/expectation. What did you do? How?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Elaborate your specific action(s). What? How?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>Detail specific results, accomplishments, savings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Your Greeting/Professional Introduction-Pitch

- **Smile 😊**
- **Handshake**
- **Eye Contact**
- **Introduction**
  - Hello, my name is ____________.
  - Repeat the other’s name in response
Basic Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in this position?
  - Or Why did you apply for this position?
- Can you tell me about yourself?
  - Or Show me what’s important on your resume.
- What are your goals for in next 3 (5 or 10) years?
- What are your greatest strengths?
- What accomplishment are you most proud of?
- Why did you choose to study at GWU?
Practice Your Answers to Employer Questions

• Why are you interested in ___?
• What do you know about ____?
• Why did you chose _____ as a major?
• Why did you chose _____ as a career option?
• What contributions will you make?
• What are your career goals?
Difficult Questions

• Do you plan to stay in this location?
• What are your three greatest weaknesses?
• Why is your GPA so low?
• Why didn’t you take part in service or extracurricular activities?
• What can you do for us that someone else can’t?
• What do you think your salary should be?
• Your resume suggests that you are over/under qualified for this position. What is your opinion?
Employers May Ask

• Are you authorized to work in the U.S.?
• Do you now or will you in the future require sponsorship to work in the U.S.?
• Do you have a work permit for the U.S.?
• Are you a U.S. citizen? (but only if position requires citizenship)
Answering Difficult Questions

- Stay calm
- Acknowledge the negative but always end on a positive note
- Ask for clarifications if needed
- Show enthusiasm for the position
Ask the Employer Questions

• What is your management style?
• What do you enjoy most/least about working here?
• What are the greatest challenges facing the person in this position?
• What qualifications would you expect the successful candidate to possess?
Professional Attire

• **Suit**
  – Conservative presentation
  – Clean and pressed cloths
  – Dark suit, shoes, socks
  – Tie and button down white shirt

• **Accessories**
  – Shoes: Low heels
  – Jewelry: Conservative, limited

• **Portfolio**
  – Resume copies
  – Store employer information
After the Interview

- Offer a firm handshake
- Ask for a business card
- Thank the interviewer by name
- Take notes afterwards, not during
- Follow up within 24 hours with thank-you
- Check on application status
Interview Don'ts

• Be late
• Disclose age, race, marital status
• Answer questions indirectly
• Avoid talking about your accomplishments
• Treat anyone you meet differently based on education, title, sex, age
Interview Dos

• Plan for questions regarding competency/experience
• Openly discuss strengths, accomplishments and skills
• Prepare for “weaknesses” question
• Demonstrate experience
• Know the organization
• Send thank you note
Interview

• Practice
• Highlight your skills even if you hate it !!
• Learn to answer concisely; > 20 second, < 2 minutes
• Ask interviewer to repeat the question if you don’t understand
• Frame answers (e.g., I see three points related . . . )
• Show your value (e.g., . . . an excellent candidate)
• Develop 5-7 examples to demonstrate skills (STAR)
• Practice relaxation techniques to relieve anxiety
• Understand your work authorization options (ISO)
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Questions?

- Colonial Crossroads, Marvin Center 505
- Careerservices.gwu.edu
- gwcareercenter@gwu.edu
- 202.994.6495

Connect & engage with the GW Center for Career Services
Program Evaluation

• Check email for a link to evaluation or go.gwu.edu/ccsprogrameval
• Should take approximately 2 minutes
  – Professional Development
  – Marketing
  – About You
• Comments & Ideas