INTERVIEWING FOR ON-CAMPUS JOBS

What to expect.
Interviewing for on-campus jobs is the same as any other job interview only different. It’s the same because employers seek students with skills and a good work ethic. It’s different because employers on campus know that you are smart, you are capable of taking on leadership roles beyond what you would typically find in a minimum wage job, and you might not keep the job a long time depending on your class schedule.

Types of interviews.
Most campus office jobs require an individual interview. Many leadership jobs require both a group and individual interview.

Individual Interviews are done by nearly all on-campus employers. Usually there is a one-on-one interview, but it might include two or three office staff. In this circumstance you are alone with the interviewer(s). They usually have a list of pre-determined questions they are asking all applicants. If there is more than one person interviewing you they usually take turns asking questions.

They have evaluation/scoring sheets that they often write on while you talk, then complete the form once the interview is over and you leave. There is usually some sort of Likert scale (1 – 5) on items such as communication, problem-solving, attention to details, organization, past experience, etc. There are also open-ended comment sections for the interviewers to express anything they really liked about you based on the interview. Don’t worry about what they are taking notes on. Just answer their questions, relax and “be who you are” as much as possible. It will help if you rehearse questions and answers ahead of time, so keep reading and you will see some ways to prepare.

A group interview is typically used for positions such as RA, TAB leader, etc. A group interview could mean that you are in a small group with other student applicants and they run a simulation, like deciding on how to plan an event. The key to these is to be sure you a) say enough, b) don’t say too much, c) listen intently, d) recognize others, e) and enable the process.

a) Say enough: in group simulations/role-plays you need to participate. If you are shy, you need to be sure you provide at least 3 – 5 solid contributions to the discussion.

b) Don’t say too much. If you are talkative, be sure you don’t dominate the discussion. That can be as bad as saying too little. If you provided 5 or more responses in a 15 minute discussion with 5 other people, then it’s probably about right.

c) Listen intently. Instead of planning on what you are going to say next, listen to what others are saying. Make eye contact. Lean forward. Then when you make a response mention that you liked what Mary said and you want to add or piggy-back on their comment.
d) Recognize others. You can also use the active listening technique of summarizing. For example, “Mary, do I understand correctly that you said _____x_____?” I like that idea, and I’d like to add something to it.”

e) Enable the process. If the discussion is going in circles you might want to ask if you can summarize and see if you all can go to the next step in interest of time. Or, you might say, “I noticed that Mary did not say much, Mary is there something you would like to contribute?” You might interject in the discussion that time is ticking and wonder if we can decide on how we want to finish up.

In group interview sessions, the interviewers usually care more about your interactions than task completion. They often don’t care what conclusion is reached. They want to see how you talk, listen, contribute and interact with others. They want to see that you are assertive and independent, but are inclusive, respectful and connect with others. Don’t get carried away with the task so much that you lose sight of interpersonal communication.

The two critical factors in success are a) preparation and b) quality answers during the Q-A session.

Preparation: If this job is important to you, then treat it like a final exam and spend time studying and preparing for it. You need to know the job description, the organization, challenges faced, and how you fit in with the organization – your unique contributions. We recommend that you speak with a student who held the position or worked in that department before. Ask them about the organization, what they need students to do more than anything else, what are the management challenges, and what kinds of students succeed or fail in that job. See our Informational Interviewing handout for a more complete description on how to prepare by talking to others:
http://www.willamette.edu/dept/careers/pdf/informational_interview.pdf

The Q-A Session in many ways is the heart of the interview. If you do well at this, it will count more than almost anything else. After reading the remainder of this document, go to the links below and practice interviews using the STAR method.

Watch this video! A top-ranked short video on key elements of interviewing
http://careertv.com/video.php?mediaid=0m5z326md5PSswHhnTlnMw

Optimal Resume has the best online interview practice system available.
http://www.willamette.edu/dept/careers/vcc/resume/index.html

Behavioral/Competency Interviews is the most popular format used in interviews. The employer makes assumptions about your future performance based on past behaviors and attitudes. They will ask you for details about your past activities. These interviews require you to offer concrete, specific examples to reveal skills. We recommend that you use the "STAR" framework to structure your responses in a specific, concise way:
• What was the SITUATION? Situation – details: what, where, when, etc.
• What was your TASK? Task – the job you got done: goal/objective
• What ACTION you took Action – SKILLS you used
• What was the RESULT? Result – how it worked out

Behavioral Question Example:

Interviewer: What is your greatest strength?

Bad example: “My best strength is communicating with others.”
(there is not enough specifics, no story to show how the person communicates).

Good example:
Interviewee: STEP 1. Situation “One of my greatest strengths is talking one-on-one with others.” (state the point up front). “For example, last year in the residence hall I had a roommate that was very shy and she became pretty lonely. She needed friends so I set out to help her.

STEP 2. Task “I wanted to see if I could get her to join a club to meet new people”

STEP 3. Action. “I discovered that she was very interested ecology issues. So I initiated one-on-one conversations with about 5 people who were involved in projects such as Zena Farm, the Compost Club, ECOS, etc. in order to see if there were projects my roommate could contribute to. I made a list of 5 projects she might consider, and I set up a couple meetings at the Bistro with a club officer. I told my roommate that I wanted to join a club, and would she go with me and maybe join the club together. I introduced the officers to my roommate, and started the conversation. After 2 meetings we decided to do a project on Zena Farm.

STEP 4 Result. “We attended a few meetings and went to Zena a couple Saturdays. I began to back off from the projects in order to allow my roommate to have friends without me being there. After 2 months she had a group of several project friends who were hanging out together at Zena and would meet for dinner in Goudy. I was very pleased to see my roommate do well with new friends.”

This is a good example because the interviewee told a short story about what she did – the actions she took to resolve the situation. She mentioned a strategy: asking questions and talking to others. She told about the successful result. It took only a minute to tell the story.

Typical Questions Asked during On-Campus Interviews

1. What goals have you set for yourself and how are you planning to achieve them?
2. Why do you want this job?
3. What can you contribute to our team?
4. Describe a situation in which you had to persuade someone to see things your way.

5. How do you organize yourself to get things done?

6. Tell me about a class in which you were part of a study group. What role did you play in the group?

7. What was the toughest academic decision you have had to make? How did you make that decision?

8. What kind of work experience has been the most valuable to you and why?

9. Describe a time when a team member came to you for help. How did you respond?

10. Tell me about an example of how you dealt with someone whose personality was difficult.

11. Have you ever been in a situation where someone regarded you as a threat? Describe the situation and tell how you handled this.

12. Give me an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.

13. Give me an example of a time where you had to carry out a directive you did not agree with.

Questions for the employer
Virtually every interview will include a time for you to ask questions. Have some ready. Write them down and look at them if needed.

- What would I have to do for you to nominate me for “Student Employee of the Year?”
- What about this department keeps you awake at night?”
- What would you consider to be the most important aspects of this job?
- What are the skills and attributes you value most for someone in this position?
- Could you describe a typical day or week in this position? The typical client or customer I would be dealing with?
- What are the most immediate challenges of the position that need to be addressed in the first three months?
- What are the most challenging aspects of the position?
- What are the performance expectations of this position?
- What do you like about working in this department?
- What kind of behaviors do their star performers demonstrate, and why are these important?
- The next steps. At the end of the interview, don't forget to ask: What are the next steps in the interview process?

What not to ask:
Don’t ask questions that you can find the answer to ahead of time. You should already know the pay, hours, location, job description, etc.
Follow-up?
The rule of thumb. Do it. Sometimes it makes all the difference. Do you want to stand out? Write an email immediately - that day. Then send a very brief handwritten note to the interviewers – something like… “Thank you for your time and energy interviewing me. After our talk together I am even more excited about being a member of your team. I look forward to talking with you soon.”

Dress.
Different jobs have different dress codes. Obviously, in athletics you might be wearing workout clothes or sweats. But for an office job dress nice. The rule of thumb for interviewing is always look nice. It leaves a good impression and tells the employer that you are serious about the job and that you respect them. Office personnel will always like it better when you dress sharp vs. t-shirts and holey jeans. Professionals take pride in their work and want you to do the same.

Men should wear long pants. Cotton Dockers styles are fine but they should be clean and unwrinkled. We discourage wearing jeans - they can look pretty ratty when faded or torn. We recommend a collar shirt - either a cotton/poly blend (wrinkle free) button-up. Shirts must be clean and not wrinkled. We discourage T-shirts because they tend to have distracting logos and words, wrinkle easily, and are less professional. Shave before the interview and groom cleanly.

Women should wear long pants, (the same quality as recommended for men), and we discourage wearing Levis. A button blouse is nice, but there are many options for tops as long as it is not highly informal. Avoid tight clothes or wardrobe showing midriff, low cut neckline, short skirts, etc. Stay on the neat side. You represent the office, and employers like it conservative. Keep jewelry and makeup simple and groom nicely.

What to bring to the interview:
Have a leather or vinyl folder with you. Have paper, pen, a couple resumes, schedule of classes (or times available to work if it’s in an office) business cards (you can get some free from the Career Center), a copy of the job description, a list of questions you want to ask. The idea is to walk in prepared. If you show up with nothing, the employer wonders about your seriousness. Sometimes a huge backpack or skateboard is distracting. Minimal is better.

Have Fun
Interviews can actually be enjoyable. You get to know some new people, talk about yourself, and have some interesting discussions. If you are indeed prepared, practiced answering questions, and have confidence in yourself then interviews can actually be very enjoyable and successful. If you have additional questions, contact us.

The Willamette University Career Center.
X6413
http://willamette.edu/dept/careers/career-services@willamette.edu
Sample Employer Interview Form

Employers have a question and evaluation sheet. Usually there is some agreed upon definition of a characteristic, skill or experience they are looking for in the candidate. Below is an example of how employers might ask and evaluate questions.

INTIATIVE
An underlying curiosity and desire to know more about things, people or issues. It implies going beyond the questions that are routine or required to perform the job. It may include digging or pressing for exact information; resolving discrepancies by asking a series of questions; or broad environmental scanning for potential opportunities or miscellaneous information that may be of future use.

Starting Questions:
1) Tell me about a problem that came to your attention in the workplace. What did you do?
2) Describe a time when you took it upon yourself to fix a problem or make a recommendation to your boss.

Listen for:
- Candidate asks direct questions.
- Candidate takes appropriate effort to get reliable sources of information to uncover facts.

Signals that this competency is lacking or underdeveloped:
- Candidate takes action without sufficient information

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ORGANIZATION
The ability to understand the formal organizational structure and the ways of doing things such as following policies and procedures. This competency includes keeping track of details, money, lists, people important to the department, getting assignments done efficiently.

Starting Question:
1) Tell me about a time when you found it a challenge to get something done. How did you complete the task?
2) Tell me about a time when you were instrumental in achieving an organizational goal that required managing a lot of details.

Listen for:
- Candidate knows how to prioritize tasks, ask for help, create efficient systems.
- Candidate has organized tasks, group projects, deadlines, etc.

Signals that this competency is lacking or underdeveloped:
- Too much reliance on formal structures and systems to get things done.
- Failing to learn or ignoring organizational politics.

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INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Interpersonal Understanding: The desire and ability to accurately hear and understand the unspoken or partly expressed thoughts, feelings, and concerns of others. This skill at understanding "where people are coming from" is important in building work relationships, influencing or persuading others, and working effectively in groups. It includes cultural sensitivity.

Starting Question:
1) Tell me about a time when you found yourself having to "read between the lines."
2) Tell me about a time when you dealt with someone who was upset, but not saying so.

Listen for:
- Candidate uses non-verbal cues, i.e., body language, pitch and tone of voice, etc. to help understand other person. (Ask, "How did you know that?")
- Candidate attempts to uncover emotional rationale for other person’s action.

Signals that this competency is lacking or underdeveloped:
- Candidate misunderstands or surprised by other’s feelings or actions
- Candidate shows no explicit awareness of others thoughts or feelings

Little evidence 1 some evidence 2 strong evidence 3 Very strong evidence 4

GOAL SETTING

The ability to mobilize an organization to achieve results by conveying goals and objectives clearly and in a compelling manner. At the basic level, this competency is about sharing information effectively. More sophisticated goal setting involves supporting a strategy in the face of resistance or obstacles.

Starting Questions:
1) Tell me about a time when you had an idea that you thought would help your organization.
2) Tell me about a time when you developed or helped develop a plan for your organization. Describe what you did to get commitment to the plan and see that it was carried out.

Listen for:
- Candidate freely shares appropriate information, and seems to value doing so.
- Candidate presents information clearly and assertively.
- Candidate is tactfully directive when the situation requires it.

Signal that this competency is lacking or underdeveloped:
- Working only on an individual level and unable to make effective connections with others.

Little evidence 1 some evidence 2 strong evidence 3 Very strong evidence 4