

## **SECTION III**

### ***Interviewing Tips***

## **QUICK INTERVIEWING TIPS**

### **Do's:**

- Prepare a focused response to “so tell me about yourself.”
- Research the organization and the interviewer before the interview.
- Anticipate possible questions and formulate your best answers.
- Prepare novel, relevant questions to ask the interviewer.
- Make sure the questions you ask the interviewer cannot be answered through research.
- Be friendly to everyone, including support staff and attorneys with whom you are not interviewing.
- Convey enthusiasm for the position.
- *Send a thank-you email to each interviewer within 48 hours of the interview.*
- If time has elapsed since the anticipated response, follow-up with a note or a phone call to reaffirm your interest.

## **INTERVIEWING**

If you are reading this, chances are you have been invited to an interview - congratulations! You now have an invaluable opportunity to convince the firm or organization that you are the best candidate for the job. This can be exhilarating, but for many it is also a bit nerve-wracking. By doing a few simple things, however, you can help ensure that you will be less stressed, more confident, and better able to convince employers that you would be a perfect fit for their organizations.

### **PREPARATION**

1) **Research.** Researching is a vital component of the interview preparation process. The more you know about the employer, the more likely you are to impress the interviewer. Basic, yet important information to gather includes:

- the number of attorneys working for the employer;
- if the employer is a judge, the area of law in which the judge specialized before joining the bench;
- the number of alumni from your law school who work for the employer;
- the employer's chief areas of practice;
- if the employer represents the public interest/public sector, the organization's mission and issues facing the clients it serves.

All of this information will help you decide which questions to ask the interviewer, and how you should tailor responses to their questions.

## **RESOURCES**

There are many directories and resources in the Career Development Office that can assist you with your employer research. Many of the online resources can be found in the *Websites* section of this manual. In addition, our CDO library contains state and local attorney directories, practice specific resources, and information on hiring trends, professional development and internship opportunities.

A few on-line resources are worthy of specific mention. These include:

### **NALP DIRECTORY**

[www.nalpdirectory.com](http://www.nalpdirectory.com)

The National Association for Law Placement (NALP) publishes significant information about large law firms. Using the NALP Directory, you can find information about a firm's billable hours, starting salaries, demographic composition and the number of positions the firm expects to fill.

### **MARTINDALE-HUBBELL**

[www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com)

Martindale Hubbell is a popular national legal directory listing lawyers in most, but not all, firms in the United States. Martindale.com, the online version of the legal directory, contains a search engine that will allow you to target searches based on location and practice area. You can even filter search results by law school to find Widener Delaware Law School alumni.

### **SYMPPLICITY**

<https://law-widener-csm.symplicity.com/students/>

Symplicity is the Career Development Office's on-line job bank and recruitment software. If you are an enrolled student, your Symplicity User Name is your Campus Cruiser e-mail address. The job bank, updated daily, includes a variety of legal and law-related jobs for law students and graduates submitted by employers who have contacted the Career Development Office.

## **BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS**

Many of you have experienced an interview that includes the usual questions: “Tell me about yourself. What is your greatest strength? What is your greatest weakness?” Today, a different form of questioning is popular--Behavioral Interviewing. The goal of the behavioral interview is to predict future performance, often using hypothetical questions to determine how you might behave under certain circumstances.

Often, these questions encourage you to tell a detailed story about a specific incident that will give the interviewer a chance to assess your experience, skills and professionalism. Typical behavioral interview questions include: “Tell me about a time when you had a problem with a fellow co-worker, and how you resolved it,” or “What did you do upon determining you would be unable to complete a project on time?” and “Describe a recent challenge you have overcome?”

Through these questions, the interviewer will better understand how you work, your values and skills. He will also be able to determine whether you would be happy with the firm/organization. To prepare for the behavioral interview, re-read your resume and review past positions, giving special attention to accomplishments and challenges. It is also wise to think about the times where you have taken initiative and held leadership roles.

## **ANTICIPATE QUESTIONS, FORMULATE ANSWERS.**

In an interview, remember that each question asked has an underlying agenda.

“Why did you apply for this position?” The interviewer is trying to determine whether you researched the firm and performed due diligence in learning about its background and areas of practice. Applicants who come prepared and have taken the initiative to learn about the organization are more likely to do the same when hired.

“Do you have any questions for me?” Applicants should prepare for this question, and it is a red flag if the applicant has not done so. The absence of questions may lead the interviewer to believe that you are ambivalent about or only generally interested in his firm.

As with a moot court argument, an essential part of preparing for your interview includes anticipating questions and formulating your best possible answers. Be careful, though, not to appear “rehearsed.” The following are some common questions you should anticipate, and suggestions for formulating your answers:

**Tell me about yourself.** The response to this classic opening interview line should be a persuasive, focused “infomercial” about yourself, which should be no

longer than 60 seconds. **KEEP YOUR RESPONSE RELEVANT TO THE EMPLOYER!** As you decide how to answer this question in an interview, remember that this is one of the best opportunities you will encounter to sell yourself.

**What do you enjoy doing outside work/school?** The answer to this question will shed light on how well-rounded you are. Often, an *Interests* section provides the interviewer with important clues, so be prepared to discuss these items or use them as ice-breakers.

**What is your greatest strength?** There are many variations of this question that could arise in an interview. As with "Tell me about yourself," the employer is paving the way for you to sell yourself. Ask yourself which of your best attributes would be most valuable to this particular employer. People skills? Team work? Tenaciousness? Research and writing?

**What is your greatest weakness?** This is a tough question, no doubt, and experts disagree on how you should field it. In her book *Guerilla Tactics for Getting the Legal Job of Your Dreams*, Kimm Walton, J.D., says you should **not** respond with something that is really a strength (e.g., I tend to work too hard), because employers may see that as a dishonest answer. She recommends, rather, that you admit a minor weakness--one that you have overcome.

**Why do you want to work for us/why do you want this job?** One important point to remember is that an employer is not as interested in what they can do for you. They are much more interested in what you can do for them. Employers would prefer to hire an employee who is genuinely enthusiastic about the position, rather than someone who just wants a job.

**Why did you go to law school?** Focus on the contributions you intend to make and the skills you enjoy using that resonate with the legal profession. Then, follow-up with activities you have participated in, or classes you have taken that helped pave your way (i.e. debate team, mock trial, volunteer work, externships, etc.). Do not say, "I have always wanted to be a lawyer" without explaining why.

Here are common questions you should anticipate:

**In which areas of law would you like to practice?**

**Current events questions** (make sure to keep up with news around the world, in the legal community, and in the particular area of practice at issue).

**Explain xxx on your resume** (this could be anything, so make certain you are familiar with your entire resume).

**Substantive legal/ethical questions** (especially with public defender and prosecutor positions).

No matter what, avoid negativity in your responses. Do not speak badly about your law school, professors, curriculum, etc. Ultimately, this just undermines the value of your own degree. By the same token, do not "trash" a former or current employer. Regardless of the experience, you can always find something positive to say to propel you back to your ultimate interview objective: selling yourself.

One of the biggest mistakes you can make in an interview is to not have questions ready to ask the interviewer. It is considered a serious mistake to say that all your questions have been answered during the interview. Ideally, you should interject questions a few times during the interview, as well as at the end when interviewers usually ask if you have any questions. The ability to ask intelligent questions directly relates to the quality of the research you performed before the interview. Accordingly, employers can tell a lot from a candidate by the questions he asks.

As a student, your best bet is to prepare with as much research as possible, seek advice beforehand and gauge the interviewer as the interview progresses.

Among the kinds of questions you can ask are the following:

- 1) Personal ones about the interviewer: Why did the interviewer choose the firm? Does the interviewer find practice here different from \_\_\_\_\_ (previous experience)?
  
- 2) Questions about the position for which you are interviewing: What does the firm/organization look for in a successful candidate? How will a person in the position for which you are applying be evaluated? How will they be supervised? To whom would you report? What types of training would you receive? When is the decision being made (and may you call if you have not heard by then)?

Be careful not to ask questions that could have been answered through reasonably diligent research.

## **MOCK INTERVIEWS**

You can do as many Mock Interviews as you like on [Simplicity](#). Your interview will be recorded so that you can review your performance to improve.

Your Career Development Office counselors, attorney friends, and many professors, will be happy to conduct mock interviews with you. Just as you would like to practice fielding moot

court questions before the competition, you want to rehearse your interviewing technique and obtain constructive feedback on your strengths and areas for growth.

## **SHOW TIME**

### **WHAT TO WEAR:**

Quick tips for women:

- Keep your hair away from your face.
- No short skirts or low-cut or sheer blouses; wear low to medium pumps.

Quick tips for men:

- Conservative typically means no earrings, piercings, or flashy jewelry.
- Men should wear a conservative striped or subdued pattern necktie.

For both men and women:

- Darker colors, such as grey or navy-blue suits are always safe; depending on the season, women have more leeway to wear different colors than men.
- Shoes should be in good repair and nicely polished.
- Due to smell sensitivities and/or potential allergies, avoid wearing perfume or aftershave.
- Dress in a way that hides tattoos.
- No visible body/face piercings.

## **STRESS INTERVIEWS**

Two other things are worth mentioning here. First, sometimes the interviewer(s) will be adversarial or obnoxious. This could be for several reasons, from the interviewer's unfortunate personality to testing how you react under stressful situations. Whatever the cause, REMAIN CALM. The "stress interview" is a tactic used by employers who expect their employees to experience a lot of pressure, such as in the courtroom. They want to *make sure that you can remain level-headed under fire*. You may confront this situation in district attorney or public defender interviews, and it is not uncommon to receive hypothetical questions. As long as you remain calm, and do not take the line of questioning personally, you can focus on answering their questions. If you think you might encounter this dynamic, it is a good idea to schedule a mock interview with your career counselor to practice responding under similar pressure.

## **CONCLUSION OF THE INTERVIEW**

At the conclusion of the interview be sure to deliver a firm handshake, a sincere thank you, and a clear and enthusiastic reiteration of your interest in the job. While you should not seek an evaluation of your performance ("How did I do?") or an estimate of your chances of success, it is appropriate to ask when you might expect to hear from them again.

## **THANK YOU EMAILS**

You should send a short thank-you letter to an interviewer(s) with whom you have met. The letter should be sent within 24- 48 hours of your meeting. Your thank you email gives you the opportunity to reiterate your interest in the organization. It also brings your application to the top of the pile in terms of refreshing their recollection of you and your candidacy.

## **SAMPLE THANK YOU EMAILS**

Dear [Mr./Ms./Mx. Last Name],

Thank you for meeting with me on [date] to discuss the [Summer Associate/Intern] position at [Firm/Organization]. I appreciated learning more about [specific topic discussed].

Our conversation reinforced my interest in [practice area or organization], and I would welcome the opportunity to contribute this summer.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Aaliyah Smith  
Widener University Delaware Law School  
302-555-1212

astudent@widener.edu

Dear [Mr./Ms./Mx. Last Name],

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on [date] to discuss the [Summer Associate/Summer Intern] position at [Firm/Organization Name]. I truly appreciated the opportunity to learn more about your practice and [specific topic discussed—e.g., the firm’s work in the Delaware Court of Chancery, your litigation strategy, the collaborative culture, etc.].

I particularly enjoyed our conversation about [insert a specific detail—case type, mentorship, pro bono work, team structure, NJ/Philly/DE market insights]. It reinforced my interest in pursuing [practice area or type of work] and my enthusiasm for contributing to your team this summer.

I am very excited about the possibility of joining [Firm/Organization Name] and contributing meaningfully while continuing to develop my legal skills. Please let me know if I can provide any additional information.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Full Name]  
[Law School Name]  
[Phone Number]  
[Email Address]

## **SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **General Interview Questions**

Tell me about yourself.  
What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses?  
Why should we hire you?  
Why do you want to work for us?  
Where do you see yourself five years from now?  
Why aren't you on Law Review/Moot Court?  
Why did you choose to attend Delaware Law School?  
Why did you go to school in Wilmington if you want to work in (geographic location)?  
Why do you want to work in (geographic location)?  
What other firms are you interviewing with/applying to?  
How do you like law school?  
What is the biggest mistake you ever made?  
What was your greatest achievement/disappointment?  
What would you do if you won the lottery?  
What is the last book you read/movie you saw?  
What qualities do you have that will make you a successful lawyer?  
What two or three things are most important to you in a job?  
Do you know what type of law you want to practice?  
What courses have you enjoyed the most/least?  
What skills have you developed as a result of your past experiences?  
Have you received offers from any other firms?  
What distinguishes you from other candidates?  
Tell me what in particular about our firm interests you.  
Tell me about a recent work assignment? How did you begin, develop and complete it?  
Tell me about an occasion when you achieved a goal as a member of a team? What was your role?  
Tell me about a time when you had to work under time constraints? How did you get the job done?  
What person do you most admire? (Philosophical questions)  
Explain (grades, time gaps, etc.) on your resume?

### **Judicial Clerkship Questions**

Why are you interested in a clerkship?  
Have you any particular reason for seeking a job with me?  
Why do you want to clerk on this (level and type of) court?  
What have you done to develop your research and writing skills?  
What are your career plans after the clerkship?  
How does this clerkship fit into your goals in life?  
Tell me about your ties to the geographical area where the court is located.  
If I ask you to write up a decision in a particular way and you disagree with the outcome,

what will you do?

### **Government, Legal Services & Public Interest Groups**

What interest do you have in service to the public generally?

What do you see as the basic rewards for working for legal services, government, or public interest law?

How does your resume or background demonstrate your commitment to public service?

### **Corporations/Organizations**

What do you know about our company?

Unlike private law firms, partnership is not an opportunity here. How do you feel about that?

Why do you want to work for a corporation as opposed to a law firm?

What advantages do you see working with a corporation as opposed to a law firm?

### **Questions for YOU to Ask**

#### **For a firm.**

Did you participate in the summer program before joining the firm?

(If the interviewer says “yes.”) How is your practice similar to/different from your summer experience?

What do you like most about working for the firm?

Tell me about the feedback that I will get on the work I do for the firm over the summer.

Does the firm rotate summer clerks among different practice areas?

#### **For a judicial clerkship.**

What are a law clerk’s main responsibilities?

What is a typical day like for a law clerk?

#### **For a public interest or government position.**

Do clerks/attorneys have the opportunity to work in a variety of practice areas, or are they assigned to a single section?

What does the interviewer regard as the most rewarding aspects of public service?

What are the biggest challenges of public service work?