

## NOTES ON PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW DAY:

- Planning and timing:
  - Interview at the program you want the most later in your interview schedule (mid/late February; try to avoid March for scheduling interviews). Make sure you have 1-2 “practice” interviews before that (programs lower on your list). It is of the utmost importance to be rested. Practice. Make sure they are rested as well (ie avoid March). Find out who you are going to interview with and attempt to get some background. Most importantly, make it a learning experience.
- Do your homework:
  - Try to determine the organizational structure. Know more about the program than what is in the written information. Talking to alumni is a great way to accomplish this. What’s your relationship to the director of pharmacy? The rest of the hospital? Find out about hospital solvency. Institutional goals and what is it famous for are other useful pieces of information. You may want to do MEDLINE searches on the people who interview you.
- Your expectations
  - What are their needs and responsibilities? What are they going to do for you? Opportunities for growth? How can they help me develop? How much flexibility? Can this schedule change? **HAVE CONFIDENCE!!** What will be the specific responsibilities as a resident? Get them to do some talking. **DON’T EVER BE CRITICAL ABOUT ANYTHING!!**
- Questions you ask: (see additional sheet for more Qs)
  - What specific responsibilities/rotations do I have?
  - What are the most important qualities for a successful candidate to have? **ASK EARLY**
  - What happened to the previous residents? Where are they now
  - How will you measure my performance?
  - Describe some of the institutional and departmental changes that have occurred.
  - What were the 3 most significant accomplishments last year?
  - What are your goals and interests?
  - What steps are being taken to free up pharmacy time? Very important for potential resident or pharmacist.
  - **ASK RELEVANT QUESTIONS. SMART QUESTIONS. BE NICE. ALWAYS HAVE AT LEAST 1 QUESTION TO ASK EACH INTERVIEWER, EVEN IF YOU ALREADY ASKED THE SAME QUESTION TO SOMEBODY ELSE...IT SHOWS INTEREST IN THE PROGRAM WHEN YOU ASK Qs & you’d be surprised—you may not get the same answer if asking different people.**
- Their expectations:
  - Self confidence, communication skills, SINCERITY, humility, motivation, common sense.
  - Matching candidates to needs of the institution.
  - Type of candidates: 1) self starters or 2) “projects” requiring more hand holding. Interviewers screen for the type of candidate you may be.

- Questions they ask: Keep your answers short. (See additional sheet for more Qs to prepare for)
  - Why should I hire you?
  - What are your goals and aspirations?
  - What responsibilities do you enjoy the most? The least? Why? Favorite rotations?
  - Why do you want this job?
  - Why shouldn't I give you this job: Don't lie. Answer it. Don't say 'because I'm a workaholic'.
  - What journals do you routinely read? What was the last great article you read? Who was the author?
  - What are the most significant trends affecting pharmacy?
  - What would you do if you received an order for 0.45% HCl IV?
    - Some will ask you left field questions to see how you act under pressure.
  
- Coming to a closure on the interview:
  - Important.
  - Where do we go from here? When should I get in touch with you or vice versa.
  - Send a thank you note. Sometimes there is not enough time before the match deadline for a personal written letter (preferred) to make it through the mail on time. If this is the case, send a quick thank-you email and follow-up formal written note.
  
- Evaluating Alternatives:
  - Look for match-growth potential.
  - Based on your long-term goals, is this the right place?
  - Institutional health/financial status. Is it shrinking? Occupancy rate?
  
- Differentiating alternatives:
  - Flexibility, etc.
  - What are they going to do for me to make me a better pharmacist?
  - What is the direction of the pharmacy department?
  - Benefits.
  - Travel, experience.
  
- How to say yes:
  - Graciously and quickly.
  - Give them time.
  - Accept verbally, then send letter.
  - Get it in writing.
  - Don't negotiate – not applicable to the residency match.
  
- Following Up Effectively
  - It is important that you evaluate your performance and make a note of important information you have gained as soon as possible after the end of the interview. These notes should be reviewed before all subsequent interviews with the same individual or company. It will also compose your thank-you letter.
  
- The 4-R Thank-You Letter

- Within a short period after the interview (48 hours), you should prepare and mail a thank-you letter to the interviewer. This letter can be a powerful tool if used properly. Think of it as the 4-R letter: Remember, Reinforce, Recoup, Remind.
  - REMEMBER: The rush and speed of modern day business have caused many people to forego the courtesy of writing and sending thank-you letters. The fact that you write one will make you stand out from others and will help the interviewer to remember you. Make sure you collect business cards of key individuals you would like thank-you letters to go to, so you know their correct title & address.
  - REINFORCE: Review your evaluation of the interview and choose the parts of your skill/achievement/experience stories that aroused the most interest. Then recount a story that reinforces your value.
  - RECOUP: There is almost always something we forget to say or wish we had said better. This is the opportunity to recoup our losses. By preparing an earlier response, or creating an answer with clearer perspective, the thank-you letter can strengthen the interviewer's impression of you.
  - REMIND: People make promises with the best of intentions, but sometimes forget. The closing paragraph of the thank-you letter is a gracious way to remind the interviewer of a promise (i.e. "Thank you again for your interest and encouragement. I look forward to hearing from you next Thursday to learn the date of my next interview.")

Example THANK-YOU LETTER:

IMA P. STUDENT

Post Office Box 1111  
Amarillo, TX 79106

15 February 2009

Roger Director, Pharm.D.  
Chief, Pharmacy Department  
University Medical Center  
Building 10—R#119  
Amarillo, TX 79106

Dear Dr. Director:

State the Reason for this Letter: I wish to thank you and your staff for all the courtesies extended to me during my interview last Friday...

Expression of Enthusiasm and Potential Contribution: Actually seeing your innovative hospital pharmacy practice reinforced my strong desire to become an integral member of your team. As my visit

progressed, I realized from my conversations with both preceptors and current residents how well this program meets my career goals.

**Closing Statement:** Once again, thank you for such an informative visit. All my questions and concerns were addressed either by you or your colleagues. Now, I eagerly await the match results to determine if I am selected for your position. If you require any additional information from me, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Ima P. Student, Pharm.D. Candidate