Preparing for Your HCEC Interview

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Outline

- HCEC Interview: Why, Who, What
- Interview and Letter Logistics
- HCEC Interview
  - Type
  - Process
  - Structure
  - Preparation
  - Resources
- Medical School Interview Preview
HCEC Interview: Why?

• Prepare a letter of evaluation
  – Summarizes your record
  – Provides context
  – Conveys your strengths as an applicant

• Provide practice for your medical school interviews
  – Assessment of intra- and interpersonal skills
HCEC Interview: Who?

- Cornell faculty and senior staff
  - Current faculty from a variety of disciplines
  - Emeritus professors
  - Research associates
  - Student services staff members
  - Gannett clinicians
  - Librarians
HCEC Interview: What?

• **Assessment of your thinking style**
  – Are you a critical thinker?
  – Can you analyze and synthesize information?
  – How do you think?
    • More than what you think or how much you know.

• **Assessment of your preparedness for a career as a physician or physician/scientist**
  – Why are you right for the study of medicine?
Interview Logistics

• “Informed” interview
  – Interviewer has material you’ve submitted to HCEC
    • BIF, personal statement, letters of recommendation, transcripts

• Interviewer matching
  – Look for interviewer assignment in your HCEC Checklist
  – Assignments made in “batches”
  – Follow up with interviewer to schedule (at least three days, not more than ten days)
  – Be persistent but not a pest
  – Notify HCEC (hcec@cornell.edu) if you can’t arrange the interview

• Will last ½ to 1½ hours
Letter Logistics

• Interviewer submits comments and observations from the interview

• HCEC receives report from interviewer and uses the information in the letter writing process

• HCEC Letter of Evaluation
  – Letter of Evaluation plus three letters of recommendation uploaded to Interfolio after you’ve notified HCEC that you’ve “processed” through AMCAS
  – You will authorize distribution through Interfolio
Prepare for the Interview

• Think carefully about the Core Competencies

• Review the materials you have prepared for HCEC

• Consider how you would answer questions about:
  – Your personal interests, characteristics, motivation
  – How your education has prepared you
  – How you demonstrate your interest in becoming a doctor
  – Your knowledge of issues in the health-care field: policy, ethics, current events
  – How you have gained insight or personal growth from different experiences

• PRACTICE!
  – Schedule a mock interview
HCEC Interview Structure: General Guidelines

• Greeting
  – Make a good first impression!
  – Practice handshake
  – Make eye contact

• Icebreaker/Small Talk
  – Casual remarks to relax you

• Information Seeking
  – How did you choose your major?
  – How did you get involved in an activity?
HCEC Interview Structure: General Guidelines

• Professional Discussion
  – Testing your thinking style:
    • How would you solve the problem of binge drinking by college students?
    • Why did you choose _____ activity?
    • What is the most important feature of the Affordable Health Care Act? Are you in favor of it, or against?

  – Probing your commitment to the field of medicine:
    • Why do you want to be a doctor?
    • When did you decide on this career goal?
    • What makes you think you’d be a good doctor?
    • What has been the most important challenge to your resolve to become a doctor?
A Note on Strengths and Weaknesses

- **Strengths**
  - Be direct: this is not the time for excessive modesty
  - If it is true, it’s not bragging to admit it

- **Weaknesses**
  - Interviewer will assume you have some, particularly ones due to inexperience
    - Demonstrate self-insight/self-appraisal
    - Speak about what you are doing to address or compensate for them
HCEC Interview Structure: General Guidelines

• Professional Discussion (continued)
  – Assessing your handling of an ethical or controversial topic:
    • What would you do if you discovered a fellow doctor or resident using drugs?
    • What would you do if a patient asked to be prescribed an advertised drug that you don’t think s/he needs?
    • Do you think all patients should have access to abortion services? end-of-life assistance?

• Closure
  – Interviewer will signal
  – Ask for feedback on specific areas to improve
  – Ask if you may call or send any additional information (if pertinent)
After the Interview

• Self analysis
  – Think about questions that were particularly difficult
  – How can you improve?

• Send interviewer a thank-you note
  – Interviewer has volunteered his or her time

• Pay it forward
  – Send update about a year out, about your outcome
Interview Tips

- Think about your body language
- Maintain eye contact
  - Keep your head up
- Use firm, controlled speech
- Work on not ending sentences with question mark
- Take time to think about your answers
  - A short pause can be better than a poorly considered remark
- Answers should not be less than 20 seconds or more than 2 minutes long
Interview Tips

• Re-state complex or long questions to be sure you have understood them or ask the interviewer to repeat if you’re not sure
  – It’s better to make sure you understand the question than to fumble through a discussion

• It’s OK to say, “I’m not sure”

• Keep your Facebook/Twitter clean
Resources

- **Career Guide**
  - Pages 64-72

- **Guide for Advanced Pre-Medical Students**
  - Chapter 6

- Career Library

- Optimal Interview
  - [https://cornell.optimalresume.com/](https://cornell.optimalresume.com/)

- Current events

- History of medicine
Medical School Interviews: A Preview

• Three popular types of interviews
  – Subjective
    • Usually two interviews, one with a doctor or staff member, one with a student
  – Structured
    • One interviewer per candidate, with same questions asked that other interviewers are asking their applicants (for “holistic review”)
  – Multiple Mini Interview
    • 6-10 questions asked of all candidates, with an interviewer asking all candidates the same question and candidates moving from interviewer to interviewer
Upcoming Programs

• MCAT Information Session
  – Thursday, February 26th, 4:30 p.m., 122 Rockefeller Hall

• How to Create Your List of Schools
  – Wednesday, March 11, 4:30 p.m., 253 Malott Hall

• Health Careers Summer Activities
  – Thursday, April 16th, 4:30 p.m., 142 Goldwin Smith Hall

• Writing Personal Statements for Applications
  – Thursday, April 23rd, 4:30 p.m., 122 Rockefeller

• Interviewing: Traditional and MMI
  – Wednesday, April 30th, 4:30 p.m., 251 Malott Hall

• Completing AMCAS and Other Applications
  – Wednesday, May 6th, 4:30 pm, 115 Rockefeller Hall
Questions?

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