

# LMU|LA Health Professions Advising

## A Successful Interview



*Congratulations! If you have been invited for an interview you have made it through the preliminary evaluations of your application, personal statement, academic history, letters of recommendation and now it is time for them to really get to know you! Some schools interview up to 4 to 5 times as many applicants as they have spots to fill their class.*

### TIPS

1. Know the basics about interview skills.
2. Know the type of interview format that will be conducted.
  - a. Multi Mini Interview
  - b. Traditional one on one (faculty, medical student, staff or alumni)
  - c. Group Interview
  - d. Panel
  - e. Others might be a combination of the above
3. Become familiar with different interview formats
4. Research the school
  - a. Website

- b. Resource books
  - c. Have a list of questions ready to ask. These questions should not be found on the website and books. It is your time to show your interest in the school.
  - d. Where will your interview take place, location, time, etc.?
5. Create a mental map of how you would answer commonly asked questions
  6. Practice! Practice! Practice!
  7. Dress comfortable but professionally. Suits preferred.

## PERSONAL PRESENTATION



### Professional Appearance

It is very important to dress to impress. You should look as clean-cut, well-groomed, and professionally dressed as possible. Consider how you would want your physician to look upon meeting him/her for the first time. Consider the first impression that appearance makes on people you don't know.

### Strong, Firm Handshake

Shake hands with a firm grip. Assert yourself as being committed to, and invested in, the salutation. Soft, limp handshakes give the impression of being intimidated, uncertain, and unenthusiastic. Try to match the intensity of your partner's grip.

## **Manners and Courteous Language**

You should always show respect and appreciation for the opportunity to be interviewed through your language and gestures. Use *please, thank you, no problem, I understand, etc.* to demonstrate your gratitude for and ability to accommodate the interview circumstances. Treat everyone with respect and courtesy from the front staff, students and faculty you will be interacting with.

## **Eye Contact and Smiling**

In order to make a good personal connection with those who are interviewing you, make eye contact and smile when appropriate. This will demonstrate your sincerity and genuine interest in selling yourself as someone with whom they will want to work. Try to read their interpersonal cues to gauge the extent to which you should be overtly “personable”.

## **RESPONDING TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Types of Questions**

You should prepare for several basic *types* of questions. These include:

- General, large in scope, subjective, personal:
  - “Tell me about yourself”
  - “Why do you want to become a healthcare professional?”
  - “What are some of the greatest influences that have brought you to this point?”
  
- Specific, to-the-point, subjective, personal:
  - “Describe a particular experience you had while volunteering that contributed to your desire to work in this profession.”
  - “What was your greatest learning experience in the lab?”
  - “What is the one thing that would make you change your mind about going into this field?”
  
- General, large in scope, subjective, topical:
  - “What is your opinion of abortion without parental consent?”
  - “What do you believe to be the primary medical crisis in the world today?”
  - “What would you have done if you had been the doctor in the \_\_\_\_ case?”
  
- Specific, to-the-point, objective, topical:
  - “What does stem-cell implantation involve?”
  - “What did the Supreme Court rule in the Terry Schaivo case?”
  - “How can the rise in insurance premiums affect how individual physicians practice medicine?”

### **Answering Personal Questions**

Remember that your goal is to convince your audience that you are the right person to study in their school. Highlight information that will demonstrate your motivation, commitment, knowledge of the field, and critical thinking ability.

- Do not simply repeat what is in your personal statement. Feel free to use certain points as a place to start, but expand and provide specific examples when appropriate.
- Obtain a balance between self-confidence and humility; you should show that you believe in yourself and provide examples of your knowledge and competence, but not to the extent that you try to come across as knowing more than you do. Combine a discussion about the experiences that have educated you, with an expression of your desire to learn all that you have yet to be exposed to.
  - “Working with Alzheimer’s patients has really given me an amazing respect for the power of the brain. To observe the almost instantaneous change in the ability to recognize familiar faces is still hard to believe. Learning how to respond to people experiencing such a thing has been a tremendous learning experience. I am very eager to understand more of the mechanics of why these things occur – I want to learn what is happening at the neurological level that contributes to such horrifying, yet intriguing behavior.”
- Select the top 3 – 5 aspects of yourself that you believe will have the greatest impact on your audience. Prepare a 1 minute – 1:30 “speech” highlighting these points (with examples/experiences/details) for when you are asked to “Tell us about yourself.” If your audience wants to know more than what you initially share, they will ask.
- Have specific examples and experiences ready to use when answering questions. Talking too generally around a point will not demonstrate what you know or why you think about it in the way you do. Make a basic point, then have something specific to illustrate it.
  - “Working in Dr. Smith’s lab has been my most challenging experience. When we had to separate peptide strands and isolate them for testing – and tests that we, the students, had to determine – I felt like it was such a huge responsibility. And that for the first time, I realized that what I did would truly affect the work of others.



## USEFUL WEBSITES

*Aspiring Docs “Ask The Experts”:*

<https://www.aamc.org/students/aspiring/basics/280914/interview.html>

*Check out the AAMC’s “Thirty-Five Questions I Wish I Had Asked” at*

[www.aamc.org/students/applying/310556/selectingamedicalschoolthirtyfivequestionsiwishihadasked](http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/310556/selectingamedicalschoolthirtyfivequestionsiwishihadasked) .

*AAMC Podcast on Interviewing Basics:*

Go to [www.aamc.org/podcasts/aspiringdocs/](http://www.aamc.org/podcasts/aspiringdocs/) for podcasts provided by the AAMC and Aspiring Docs. (No charge at the iTunes store).

*AAMC responses from admissions deans*

<https://www.aamc.org/students/aspiring/basics/280914/interview.html>

*For further reading, references of studies*

[http://www.mcgill.ca/files/caps/MMI\\_FAQ.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/files/caps/MMI_FAQ.pdf)

*(Sample of what information a medical school might publish)*

<http://school.med.nyu.edu/md-admissions/mmi-faqs>

*Great Informational MMI Video*

<http://careercenter.umich.edu/article/med/medical-school-interviews#MMIs>