Tips for a Successful Graduate School Interview
Catherine Filene Shouse Career Center - Hood College
401 Rosemont Avenue · Frederick, MD 21701 · 301-696-3583 · careers@hood.edu
http://hood.edu/Hood/career_center.html

Know yourself. Be able to speak comfortably and concisely about yourself.
• Be able to discuss your strengths and weaknesses
• Think about relevant experiences to share during your interview
• What can you bring to the program (experiences, assets, etc.), if admitted?
• What do you hope to accomplish upon your completion of the program?

Know the school and its graduate program(s). Do your research.
• What programs/specialties are offered at the school – what appeals to you about this specific program?
• Are there opportunities to work on research projects? Are their graduate assistantships available?
• Who are the faculty? What are their credentials? What research, grants, etc. have they been involved with?
• Is the university/graduate program accredited?

Understand the needs and benefits of an advanced degree in your chosen career path.
• Be aware of industry trends (government relations, international competition, etc.)
• Be familiar with industry jargon or lingo.
• Become knowledgeable about professional organizations (consider joining as a student member).

Plan ahead.
• Have extra copies of your resume and references.
• Prepare answers to interview questions (some questions may be similar to what you would encounter in a job interview).
• Practice. Practice. Practice. (with yourself, a friend, mock interview with CDC)
• Prepare questions to ask the interviewer. Never say you don’t have any questions.
• Get a good night’s sleep before the interview.

Dress professionally.
• Wear a suit. (Take time to iron the suit, dress shirt, etc.)
• Turn off cellular telephones and electronic devices.
• Remove facial piercings and conceal tattoos.

Show up on time! (10-15 minutes early.) (As soon as you arrive on-campus, assume the interview has started.)

Establish a rapport. Be courteous to everyone with whom you make contact. When the interviewer arrives, stand to greet him/her, and give a firm handshake and confident greeting.

Show interest. Make an effort to look interested and be enthusiastic about what the interviewer is saying. (Watch your body language. Remember nonverbal communication conveys a lot of unspoken information.)

Demonstrate your competence.
• State your skills and back them up with specific examples from previous jobs, undergraduate coursework, etc.
• Use personal stories and experiences to illustrate answers to questions.
• Take time to listen to what is being asked – don’t interrupt the interviewer.

Towards the end of the interview
• Ask questions of yours that have not been answered.
• Find out the next step in the process and when they expect to make final admission decisions.
• Thank the interviewer for his/her time.
• Send a thank you letter to the interviewer. Reiterate your interest in the institution and opportunities that are available through the