

## Dr. Woodruff's Tips for Interviewing

### **TIP #1: SAVE MONEY AND NETWORK WITH ALUMNI BY USING THE ALUMNI HOSTING PROGRAM WHEN YOU TRAVEL FOR YOUR INTERVIEWS.**

See the link below to get more information about the program. This takes some planning, but will be worth it. If you are lucky, you will be staying with someone who is a resident in the very program you are interviewing at!

Alumni Hosting form: <http://pritzker.uchicago.edu/content/help-our-students-travel-host>

### **TIP #2: REMEMBER THAT YOUR LUGGAGE CAN GET LOST, SO PURCHASE A CARRY ON GARMENT BAG OR WEAR YOUR INTERVIEW DUDS ON TO THE PLANE. DO NOT FORGET TO BRING YOUR SHOES ALONG.**

I forgot to place my shoes in my garment bag one trip and did my medicine interview at the University of Michigan in a suit and hiking boots. I spent the day apologizing and feeling insecure. Not the best experience.

### **TIP #3: DON'T JUST SUCK IT UP DURING YOUR INTERVIEWS! GET YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS UNDER CONTROL BEFORE YOU START ON THE INTERVIEW TRAIL!**

Attend to your health. Take advantage of access to health and wellness resources. Student Health Service Improvements worth noting:

- Telehealth access to MDs
- Convenience Care Clinics
- Urgent Care Clinics
- Nursing line
- Clinic administrator to troubleshoot all your scheduling difficulties
- Expanded University Wellness Programming

Go to "help.uchicago.edu" and select health services to access all these important health and wellness resources.

#### **Other Quick Links to Explore:**

- [Student Health Service](#)
- [Student Health and Counseling Services](#)
- [Health Promotion and Wellness](#) & [UChicago Facebook Page for Health and Wellness](#)

### **TIP #4: ASK YOURSELF WHY YOU ARE VISITING THIS SPECIFIC PROGRAM AND RESEARCH PROMINENT OR UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM THAT MAY BE OF GENUINE INTEREST TO YOU.**

Having 1) a detailed rationale for your visit and 2) a few areas of the program you would like to explore further will make a stronger impression on your interviewers than simply going through the motions. As you explore these issues during the interview avoid sounding skeptical. Instead, be open minded and interested in learning about alternate strategies for graduate medical education.

### **TIP #5: HEALTH TIPS FOR PLANE TRAVEL – KEEP HYDRATED, PREFERABLY WITH WATER AND NOT WITH ALCOHOL OR CAFFIENATED BEVERAGES; SLEEP WHEN YOU CAN AND AS MUCH AS YOU CAN.**

Planes may have pressurized cabins but they are not pressurized to sea level. Instead they have an atmospheric pressure consistent with 8000 feet. This means less oxygen and as much as a 30% drop in humidity. This also explains why you feel bloated after drinking a carbonated beverage on a plane. Alcohol and caffeine have net diuretic effects.

Travel schedules, jet lag and the cabin environment impair sleep schedules. Pay close attention to the amount of sleep you get so that you do not nod at conferences on your interview day. Program leadership and residents will notice, and you will get less out of your visit.

**TIP #6: AIM TO ARRIVE AT YOUR INTERVIEWS A LITTLE EARLY.**

The reliability of cabs, public transportation and parking can be difficult to predict, especially in unfamiliar cities. Showing up late to your interview is bad form and often increases ones anxiety. Arriving early allows one to explore the medical campus, use the bathroom and converse with other applicants about programs they have visited. If you bide time reading a newspaper, throw it out before walking into the interview. Candidates with newspapers appear disengaged and nonchalant.

**TIP #7: IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO KNOW YOU ARE FRIENDLY, ENTHUSIASTIC, AND CURIOUS. YOU MUST ACT FRIENDLY, ENTHUSIASTIC AND CURIOUS.**

One of the more common pitfalls of interviewing is being “flat” during the interview. What you say is only half of the interview assessment. How you say it (the personality you show in your style of communication) is the other half. Program directors want house officers that are appropriately confident yet humble and engaging. Candidates can get pushed down on the rank list if they come across as non-communicative, cold or awkward, especially in specialties with smaller programs (ex. the surgical subspecialties, medicine/pediatrics). The best way to avoid this pitfall is to get excited about the program and enjoy the interview day.

**TIP #8: GO OUT OF YOUR WAY TO SHOW RESPECT. ACTIVELY SHOWING RESPECT (NOT JUST PASSIVELY) IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL TOOLS FOR ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS AND GAINING RESPECT.**

Whether the challenge is resolving conflict, building a team, or navigating an interview day, there is no more potent tool than going out of your way to show respect. On the interview day, this applies to anyone who has given you their time or assistance: interviewers, tour guides and especially the staff/coordinators. An example of this would be to look for the program's interview schedule coordinator during the interview day, apologize for interrupting them and then express your gratitude for their role in making the day a successful one for you.

**TIP #9: SAVE EVEN MORE MONEY BY USING UCHICAGO DISCOUNT PROGRAMS WHEN YOU RENT CARS, PURCHASE PLANE TICKETS AND STAY AT HOTELS.**

As a University of Chicago Student, you have access to a discount program that is established at specific vendors. The list of hotels, car companies and airline companies is not long, but it's worth peeking at if you are interested in cutting costs this interview season.

Here is the link to the UChicago Discount Programs:

<http://finserv.uchicago.edu/purchasing/travel/uchicagodiscountprograms.shtml>

**TIP #10: PRIOR TO YOUR INTERVIEWS, PREPARE TO DESCRIBE YOUR MOST SIGNIFICANT RESEARCH/SCHOLARLY PROJECT IN A SUCCINCT YET THOUGHTFUL MANNER.**

These comments apply to discussions of your research in conventional/categorical interviews, not dedicated physician scientist interviews. When presenting your research during a

conventional interview, “More” is not better. “Succinct” is better. As you prepare for your interviews, attempt to format the description of your research in the following manner: 2-3 sentences for background (why is this topic important), 2-3 sentences on experimental design (describe the execution of the experiment), 2-3 sentences on findings (what were the key results), and then 2-3 sentences to elaborate on the significance of your findings. The total time for you to present your work should be no more than 2 minutes. If your interviewer has additional questions, then continue discussing relevant details of your work.

**TIP #11: FEW PEOPLE EXPECT YOU TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT TO DO IN THE LONG RUN (EX. BE AN ONCOLOGIST THAT CARES EXCLUSIVELY FOR LEUKEMIA), BUT YOU SHOULD DEMONSTRATE A HIGH LEVEL OF THOUGHTFULNESS REGARDING POTENTIAL CAREER PATHS.**

Knowing exactly what you want to do in 10-15 years is one way to demonstrate a high level of sophistication regarding your chosen career. However, such a stance can present some challenges. You may be “pigeon-holed” and deemed a poor fit for the program’s training opportunities. If your career goals are very specialized, your comments may be interpreted as a lack of investment in the core training curriculum (putting the cart before the horse). In order to present a high level of sophistication while avoiding these problems, present detailed ideas of careers you are considering, but acknowledge that future training experiences and mentors will no doubt be critical in refining your career planning.