The BSN Job Search: Interview Preparation

Telling Your Story
What Do Interviewers Look For In Candidates?

• Verify candidates have needed skills
• See if candidate would fit with organizational culture
• Enthusiasm and interest in position
• Honesty and integrity
• Confidence (not arrogance!)
Types of Interviews

- Screening Interview
  - May be in person or over the phone
  - Often relatively short: 30 minutes or 1 hour
- Second or On-Site Interview
  - Usually meet with multiple people at different organizational levels
  - Can be entire day - maintain energy!
- Career Fairs/Open Houses
  - Brief opportunity to make positive first impression
  - Could possibly lead to longer interview at the event, so be prepared.
Before the Interview

• Know what information you want to convey about your interest and qualifications in advance
• Review and practice commonly asked questions
• Check relevant websites for any interesting developments at the hospital/facility and in your field
• Formulate questions to ask
• Know ballpark salary to expect in case the interviewer brings it up
• Do a mock interview (in-person or via InterviewStream)
Before the Interview (cont’d)

- Make sure you are clear on the location of the interview and how to get there
- Aim to arrive to interview site about 15 minutes early
- Dress professionally
- Bring portfolio with extra resumes, pen, paper, etc.
- If possible, request a schedule and list of people you will meet during day
Interview Questions

- **Fit**
  - “Tell me about yourself.”
  - “Why are you interested in this hospital/facility?”

- **Behavioral**
  - “Give me an example of ____.”
  - “What strengths do you bring to this position?”

- **Case**
  - “Suppose ____ occurred with one of your patients...how would you respond?”

- **Issues**
  - “What concerns you about health care today?”
Tell me about yourself: Tips

• Your answer should typically last from 30 to 60 seconds.

• Your answer should trace relevant themes in your background.

• Your answer should touch on the most relevant highlights from your experience.

• When you are finished, the interviewer should know why you are sitting there.
Tell me about yourself:  
So-So Answer

“I am a senior here in the School of Nursing interested in pediatric nursing. During my time at Penn, I have gained key clinical and teamwork skills during my summer externship and my rotations. I have also been active in various community service activities.”
Tell me about yourself: Better answer.

“As you can see from my resume, I will be graduating from the School of Nursing in May (or December). My interest in nursing was sparked when I served as a camp counselor and realized that I was drawn to issues related to the health of the campers. While at Penn, I have especially enjoyed my pediatric rotations and was able to obtain a summer externship where I focused on applying my clinical skills to younger patients. I have also continued working with children in other contexts where I serve as a tutor and mentor. In all of these roles, I’ve enjoyed building relationships with families as well. In fact, it is Hospital A’s emphasis on family-centered care that makes me excited about the possibility of working here. Pediatric nursing would be a wonderful way to combine my passion for young people and health with my clinical skills.”
Tell me about yourself: Practice!

- Read over your resume
- Write out your answer
- Pair up with someone else to practice with
- Exchange resumes with your interview partner
- Look over your partner’s resume
- Take turns answering the question.
- Offer feedback
Why this hospital?

- Search the website for:
  - Mission / Core values / Philosophy of Care
  - Interesting research, projects, and initiatives

- Recall highlights from:
  - Previous experience at the hospital
  - Previous conversations with those who work at the hospital.

- For example, suppose you were preparing for an interview with the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia...
Learn more about the philosophy of care of the hospital.
Learn more about specific projects or research that may interest you.
Behavioral Questions: Telling the Story

• Situation: What was the context/issue?

• Action: What did you do?

• Results: What was the impact made?
Behavioral Questions: Example

• Question: What is a strength that you would bring to this position?

• Answer: “During the course of my clinical experiences, I have found that I have a special ability to establish rapport with families of patients. For example….”
Behavioral Questions: Example

**Situation:** “During my externship, a family brought in a toddler who was visibly agitated and seemed to have a fever. There was quite a wait and one of the parents who brought in the child was getting anxious.”
Behavioral Questions: Example

**Action:** “I brought over some toys that I thought would cheer up the child and assured the parent that he would be seen as soon as possible. I then proceeded to make conversation with the parent and ask questions about the child including his age, what he enjoyed, etc…”
Result: “The parent started to become a bit more relaxed, especially as I picked up on the fact that the toddler was her first child. I think that this helped the toddler to feel a bit better as well. As a result, when the parent returned with the toddler for a follow-up visit, she asked for me by name.”
Behavioral Questions: Important Skill Sets

- Clinical
- Critical Thinking
- Interpersonal
- Teamwork
- Leadership
Behavioral Questions: Practice

- Pick one of the following questions and practice answering it with a friend, advisor or mentor using the Situation-Action-Result approach:
  - Name a strength that you would bring to this position.
  - Tell me about a challenging situation that you had with a patient.
  - Tell me about one clinical experience that you have had that confirmed that nursing is the career for you.
During the Interview

• Stay positive – don’t volunteer negative information or criticize former employers, coworkers, or faculty
• Clearly express enthusiasm for position
• Use concrete examples in your answers
  – Example: State strength, provide example, show how organization would benefit from strength
• Don’t ask about salary and benefits
• Avoid distracting non-verbals such as fidgeting, hand wringing, foot tapping, poor eye contact, etc.
• Inquire about next steps and time-line
• Request a business card (for future follow-up)
After the Interview

- Send thank you letter within 24 hours (e-mail is fine)
  - Thank interviewer for taking the time to interview you
  - Reiterate your interest in the position (assuming you’re still interested).
  - Touch on any particularly notable highlights of your conversation with the interviewer.
  - Touch on any qualifications that you may have neglected (or not had the opportunity) to mention.
Career Fair Tips

• Plan ahead and prioritize the employers you seek to visit
• Do your research on your targeted employers and prepare thoughtful questions to ask.
• Prepare one-minute summary of relevant parts of your background as it relates to your interest in the employer.
• Dress professionally. Always err on the conservative side if unsure of required attire.
• Bring plenty of resumes to give to employers.
• Arrive earlier in the day if possible.
• Offer a firm handshake, smile and good eye contact when introducing yourself to employers.
• Be gracious if lines behind you (or in front of you) are long.
• Request a business card for follow up and make notes about highlights of the conversation on the card when time allows.
Online Resources

http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/interviewingadvice/
Questions?

Please contact us!

University of Pennsylvania
Career Services
Suite 20, McNeil Bldg., 3718 Locust Walk

Schedule an appointment: (215) 898-4381
Come to Walk-ins: Mondays, 12-1pm

www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices