Engineering Interviews

Engineering Career Services

Engineering Career Services

3200 Marston Hall ● 515-294-2540 ● ecs@iastate.edu ● www.engineering.iastate.edu/ecs
We Are Here to Help YOU!

Our Goal:
Provide resources and opportunities to help engineering students develop professional skills and obtain full-time employment upon graduation.

Brian Larson
Director

Joely Swenson
Experiential Education

Roger Bentley
Student Professional Development

Shari Dubois
Administrative Assistant

Mayra Ramirez
Program Assistant

Kellie Mullaney
Student Professional Development
Student Guide to Employment

Step 1: Understand Employers and the College Recruiting Process
Step 2: Determine Career Goals and Skillset
Step 3: Identify Preliminary Target Employers and Industries
Step 4: Develop Effective Marketing Materials
Step 5: Search for Specific Employment Opportunities and Research

Step 6: Network (at Career Fairs and Otherwise)

**Step 7: Interview and Follow-up**

Step 8: Evaluate Offers
Step 9: Sign Employment Contract and Celebrate
Step 10: Inform Engineering Career Services and Discontinue Your Job Search

See the ECS website for information on all ten steps.
What will we discuss?

• Preparing for the Interview
• Day of the Interview
  – What to Wear
  – Nonverbal/Verbal Cues
• Types of Interviews/Questions
• STAR Method
• Difficult Questions
• More Interview Tips
• Thank you letters

Feel free to ask questions at any time!
Goals of an Interview

**Interviewer**

- Can the candidate do the work?
- Will the candidate fit in?
- Do interests match?
- How much does the candidate want the position?
- Does the candidate have leadership potential?
- If hired, will the candidate be a good reflection of the organization?

**Interviewee**

- Present qualifications effectively and accurately
- Make a good impression
- Show high level of interest
- Learn more about the position and the company
Preparing for the Interview

• Doing your research on the company:
  • CyHire/Company/LinkedIn website
  • Attend a Company Information Session
  • Review Job Description
  • Talk with people you know who work there
• Review your resume and bring copies!
• Review behavioral-based interview questions
• Prepare a references sheet and alert references that they may be contacted
Sample Reference Sheet (Separate from Resume)

Your Name
Your address, Your e-mail, Your cell number
(ex. Use same header as Resume)

REFERENCES (same style as section headers in your resume – should have 3-5 professional references)

First Professional Reference’s Name (ex. Ms. Sue Smith, Mr. Anston Marston)
Title (ex. Assistant Professor, Owner)
Company (ex. XYZ Grocery Store)
E-mail (ex. Anston.marston@gmail.com)
Business Phone Number (do not use cell number unless you have permission from your reference)

Second Professional Reference’s Name (repeat #1’s format above)
What to Wear?

MEN
• Solid color, conservative suit
• Conservative tie
• Dark socks, professional shoes (NO WHITE SOCKS!)
• Neat, professional hairstyle
• Easy on the aftershave!
• Neatly trimmed nails
• Portfolio or briefcase
• Conservative watch (optional)

WOMEN
• Solid color, conservative suit
• Skirt okay, if knee-length
• Coordinated blouse
• Closed-toe and closed heel shoes
• Limited jewelry
• Neat, professional hairstyle
• Tan or light hosiery/Dark trouser socks
• Sparse make-up & perfume
• Manicured nails
• Portfolio or briefcase
Day of the Interview

• Be on time! Even better, arrive 10 minutes early
• Turn your cell phone off completely
• **DO NOT** chew gum or put your belongings on the interview desk
• **RELAX & BE CONFIDENT**
  – Leave your troubles at the door
  – You are one of only a few finalists
Non-Verbal/Verbal Cues

- Smile! 😊
- Firm handshake – sign of confidence
- Eye Contact – maintain with interviewer
- Posture and physical distance – upright/3 feet
  - Don’t cross your arms or fidget
- Stay calm – taking 4-5 seconds to think before answering is okay (better than saying “uhhhh”)
  - Asking employer for a minute is also acceptable
Types of Interview Questions

• **Technical/Case** – Questions related to concepts from your coursework, industry knowledge, or specific skills.

• **Abstract** – Questions to see how well you can think on your feet (ex. If you could be any color, what would it be? How do you make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich? How many tennis balls fit in this room?)

• **Qualification/Traditional** – Straight-forward questions about your experience, background, personality traits.

• **Behavioral** – Popular questions based on the premise that past behavior best predicts future behavior.
Interviewing

STAR Method

• **Situation** – Describe the situation you were in.
• **Task** – What goal were you working towards?
• **Action** – Describe the actions you took to address the situation.
• **Result** – Describe the outcome of your actions.

Most Important!!!!
STAR Method Example #1

Can you describe a time when you showed initiative?

Situation – Task

I am a member of the student organization, XYZ. Last year, during the first three weeks of the fall semester, our president stopped showing up and wasn’t communicating with the officers. Nothing was happening at general meetings, attendance was dropping, and the group was starting to fragment. I remembered how the year before, in helping plan and build our organization’s parade float, I had a lot of fun with the other students. The whole process really made me feel connected to the club, but with the way things were going now, I quickly realized there wasn’t much enthusiasm for such a big project.

Even though I wasn’t an officer, I felt like I needed to do something to help. I thought a group Homecoming project to building a float would be a good way to help the group reconnect with each other.
Can you describe a time when you showed initiative?

**Actions**

I asked the group’s vice president and secretary to a meeting to talk about the float. I mentioned that being a part of Homecoming activities last year was, so far, the highlight of my college experience. I then shared my worry that, we wouldn’t be able to pull everyone together for a float entry. I told them that I would be glad to take the lead in managing the float. At the next general meeting, I spoke to the group about how excited I was to help organize the float and even shared a few fun ideas that went along well with the Homecoming theme.

I also reached out personally to the members who had stopped attending meetings and convinced them to help out on the float. In order to get more people to our building meetings, I convinced the treasurer to give us a little extra money for games and food. I figured that would help everyone who came have a great time with their friends.
STAR Method Example #1

Can you describe a time when you showed initiative?

Results

Getting a little more money for fun activities helped bring more people out to help build the float. That, along with the vice president taking over the general meetings, made everyone feel like we were back on track as a group. Our float did not win any prizes that year, but we had more people work on it than ever before and more people volunteered to ride on the float and represent our group. I enjoyed being a leader on this project, and now I am thinking about running for an officer position next year.
STAR Method Example #2

Can you describe a time when you showed initiative?

**Situation – Task**

About a month ago I was in church and there was an elderly lady who slipped and fell backwards to the ground as everyone was leaving church. Because I have some training as a lifeguard and like to help people, I felt that I could be a good first responder for this person so I rushed over to help.
STAR Method Example #2

Can you describe a time when you showed initiative?

**Actions - Results**

The first thing I did when I reached her was quickly introduce myself, smile to comfort her, and then ask her what her name was. I calmly restrained her natural instinct to get back up and started asking her a series of easy questions to see what she damaged and whether she hit her head and had a possible concussion. I quickly realized that she was fairly woozy and had hurt her hip badly so I asked a nearby person to go call the paramedics while I stayed with the lady. For the next 15 minutes I stayed with her to make sure she didn’t hurt herself further. I engaged her in casual conversation about myself, about her family, and about the church service. Eventually, the paramedics came and thanked me for the thorough job I did in helping to prevent further injury. Next week in church, Evelyn thanked me for helping her and we have become friends.
Interviewing – The Challenging Q’s

• **Tell me about yourself.** (Brief and strengths-based)

• **What are your strengths & weaknesses?** (Weaknesses should be professional skills and continuously improved upon)

• **Tell me about a conflict in a current job or project.** (Be careful to not shuck responsibility or control)

• **Do you have any questions for me?** (Focus on position-related questions to help you understand depth of work)
More Interview Tips

- Express genuine interest and enthusiasm when you answer questions
- Talk about your transferable skills
- Ask what the next step will be/what the timeline looks like
- Always say THANK YOU!
- Salary is usually not discussed until the job offer
Other Types of Interviews

• **Phone Interviews**
  - Still dress up so you feel professional
  - Sit upright at a table
  - Keep a cheat sheet of important points
  - Smile 😊
  - Call ECS if you’d like to use our room.

• **Skype/Google Hangout Interviews**
  - Test internet/camera height/sound connections prior to interview
  - Front lighting, consider sound absorbing surroundings
  - Dress up, smile
  - Show up 1-2 minutes early instead of traditional 10 minute rule

• **On-Site Interviews**
  - Usually meeting with HR, Peers, & Manager; Multiple interviews(ers)
  - Pay attention during the tour and make sure ask ENGR related questions
  - Be respectful to everyone you meet on site
Mistakes to Avoid

- Appearing uninterested (identified by 62% of employers)
- Answering a cell phone or looking at a text (60%)
- Dressing inappropriately (60%)
- Talking negatively about a current or previous employer (58%)
- Failing to make eye contact (72%) or smile (42%), having bad posture (38%) or a limp handshake (28%)
- Not providing specific examples and fuzzy details when answering questions (34%)
- Talking too much about unimportant information (30%)
- Not knowing anything about an employer (30%)

Source: CareerBuilder.com
After - Thank You Letters

• E-mail letters are acceptable and preferred
• Send within 48 hours; 12-24 hours is common
• Personalize to each person who interviewed you
• Content: Thank them for time and opportunity to discuss positions. Tell them 1 thing you learned about them. Remind them of 1-2 strengths or qualifications that you will bring.
• Samples: http://www.engineering.iastate.edu/ecs/students/the-employment-process/step-7-interview-and-follow-up/thank-you-notes/
Questions?
Thank You for Viewing!!!

Full schedule of upcoming career seminars available on ECS website!