

## Tips for a Successful College Admission Interview

### Before the interview

- **Practice.** Ask parents, counselors, or fellow students to interview you and give feedback. This is the very best way to increase your confidence and improve the way you present yourself.
- **Record yourself** giving a mock interview. Watch it to see what impression you give. Look for these pitfalls:
  - Overusing “like,” “you know,” and slang
  - Avoiding eye contact, mumbling, and slouching
  - Giving yes or no answers, or rambling on with no focus
  - Talking too fast or loud, or using way too much (or too little) body language
- **Think about how you would answer some common interview questions.** Don’t memorize a speech, but have some idea of how you would answer questions like these:
  - Why do you want to attend this university?
  - What is your strongest/weakest point?
  - What have you done to prepare for college?
  - What has been your best experience in high school? Your biggest challenge?
  - What are your future plans?
  - Tell me about yourself. (To answer this, students should focus on about three things.)
  - Tell me about your interests.
  - Tell me about your family.
  - What do you think about such and such current event?
  - What is your favorite book or author?
  - What are you the most proud of?

### During the interview

- **Conduct yourself appropriately.** Be clean, neat, and respectful. Don’t use offensive language or make off-color jokes. Use “Mr.” or “Ms.” when you address adults, unless you are invited to use a first name. Make eye contact, smile, stand or sit up straight, and give a firm handshake. And be on time!
- **Try to make it a two-way conversation.** Express an interest in the interviewer and the school. Don’t recite a monologue about yourself. Take pauses to allow the interviewer to respond.

- **Ask questions** about the institution. This really is your chance to get the inside scoop on the school, especially if the interviewer is an alumnus. And ask about the things you most care about, for example: What's the town like? How about dorm life? The academic load? Are the professors accessible and friendly? What is the best thing about the school? Is there a club or activity the interviewer recommends?
- **Focus on a few key points** (interests, achievements, or personal strengths) that you feel comfortable talking about. Avoid speaking in vague generalizations or giving your complete autobiography.
- **Be positive.** Be upbeat about your accomplishments and your future. Don't dwell on insecurities, problems, or complaints. If you do describe a bad time in your life, for example, to help explain a drop in grades, put it in perspective. The interviewer is not your therapist.
- **Be yourself.** Tell the truth and be sincere rather than trying to guess what the interviewer wants to hear. Teenagers aren't expected to have all the answers. For example, if you're asked about your planned major but don't have a specific one in mind, a good response is, "I'm really not sure at this point. But what I've enjoyed most in high school is . . ."

#### After the interview

- **Send a thank-you note** to the interviewer. Say that it was a pleasure to meet him, thank him for his time, and reiterate your interest in his institution.
- **Don't worry.** You're probably your own worst critic. No need to obsessively relive your performance. Remember that interviewers remember your overall impression. They are looking for students with the background and self-possession to do well at their school.