Fellowship Interviews

Prepare for the Interview

Begin your interview preparation process by spending some time with student reports on websites that recount fellowship interview experiences of other students, such as http://people.reed.edu/~brashiek/Rhodes-Marshall/interview.html and http://people.reed.edu/~brashiek/Rhodes-Marshall/past.html.

The student feedback is often detailed with the names and interests of past committee members and the questions they asked. These accounts describe the general tone of the interview, which often varies by state, region, or district.

Reread and study your application essay(s). You will likely be asked questions that probe the reasoning and development behind you writing. What are the main points of your essay development? What ten questions would you ask to determine if someone understood your essay?

Be prepared to defend your proposed course of study or research as well as your choice of school and location. This requires specific and detailed knowledge of the school, the programs, the faculty, and the country where you are proposing to study or conduct research. Be prepared to clearly express why you propose the study at a particular institution with a particular faculty and program. Don’t cite references, programs, or names with which you are not completely familiar.

Follow and be familiar with current events —local and national and international. Interviewers will likely ask you to express summaries and opinions on recent international events and politics. Stress your ability to perform an ambassadorial role. Also be ready to talk about your leisure and recreational activities; be ready to discuss your interests in the arts and literature.

Make a Good Impression

Semi-formal or business formal attire is appropriate— suits and ties for men and the equivalent for women.

Maintain eye contact with the entire panel. Focus on the person asking you a question, then address the entire panel when answering.

Practice speaking to groups until you feel at ease. Your posture should be upright but not rigid. During the interview you want to appear comfortable, confident, and composed; don’t fidget and look down at the floor or into the distance. Avoid nervous habits, such as adjusting or stroking your hair, fixed and extreme smiling, fumbling with fingers or jewelry, mumbling or raising your voice.

Greet each person on entering and thank each person on leaving. Handshakes are customary before and after most interviews.


**Respond to Questions**

Listen carefully to each question and consider what it invites you to say. Always answer the question asked, instead of shifting to answering what you hoped the question would be. A brief pause to consider your answer is acceptable; indeed, beware of a hasty, glib, and ill-considered response.

It is better to pause to frame an answer before you respond rather than launching into a rambling response hoping to get to a clear answer. Don’t over-extend a pause to the point where you seem stymied and confused. Don’t praise the question or comment “That’s a good question” as a way to gain time to think.

If you would like to have a question rephrased or if you would like a clarification, ask. Beware of seeming to stall to avoid responding. If you don’t know the answer to a particular question, immediately and diplomatically admit that you do not know. Don’t apologize profusely.

Well-thought out answers are essential. Let the interviewers see how you think, how you connect ideas and reach conclusions; how you arrive at an answer is just as important as the answer itself.

Provide specific and concise examples or short anecdotes to illustrate your points. Interviewers may want to shift topics, especially when you feel you are doing particularly well, which will bring them to interrupt you. Watch some Supreme Court presentations is understand how a panel can cut-off and shift topics.

Be clear, concise, and confident in your answers. When challenged, don’t allow yourself to become confused or rattled.

In your answers, connect to the goals and ideas you expressed in your essay and to the goals of the fellowship.

Prepare a response for an open-ended closing question such as, "Is there anything else you would like to tell the panel?” This may be as simple as a thank you, but avoid talking about how much the scholarship means to you. Say something substantive, brief, and honest.

**Practice**

Talk—in class, outside of class, with strangers, with professors, with peers. Particularly, try to engage faculty members and other experienced adults in conversations where you discuss issues and present your ideas for solutions. Take every available opportunity to present and support your plans, your academic interests, and your ideas. Ask for comments on your presentations.

Notice particularly how you make conversations comfortable for yourself and others; particularly where there is disagreement, determine how you and others can polarize or reach agreement.

Make an appointment with the Career Services Office for interview training and practice. Participate in practice interviews and workshops that are offered by departments. The Honors program will offer occasional workshops and practice interviews.

For more information, contact:
Honors College Fellowship and Scholarship Advisor

407 Lampasas | [honors@txstate.edu](mailto:honors@txstate.edu) | 512-245-2266
4/12/2012