

# U.S. Job Interview Skills for International Trainees

NIH Office of Intramural Training and Education

May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009

# Today's Focus

Learning more about U.S. culture so that you can show your best self in meetings and at meals.

# To Get Specifics about Interviews

- Check the OITE Web site for archives of the Career Advancement Toolkit. There will also be another live training in the fall.
- Make an appointment with an OITE career counselor by contacting Kathryn Foisie: foisiek@mail.nih.gov

# Your Strengths

As an international student you have:

- A demonstrated ability to adapt to new and challenging situations
- Knowledge of another culture(s)
- Additional language skills/fluency
- Additional expertise/experience

# Today's Agenda

- First impressions
- Interview tips
- Self-advocacy
- Finishing a meeting
- Interview DON'Ts
- Dining at interviews and U.S. table manners
- Sharing information about yourself
- Gender roles
- Learn from your post-bacs

# First Impressions

- Be on time!
- Clothing
- Hygiene
- Introduction and polite greeting
- Firm handshake
- Small talk
- Volume & personal space
- Spoken English

# Interview Tips

- Pay attention to eye contact and body language.
- Be sure to learn about and each person you'll meet.
- Know the area.
- What you present is what the interviewer gets.
- Listen carefully and answer the question .
- Tough question? Think before responding.
- Remember that at a first interview, you'll likely speak more than the interviewer.

# Self-Advocacy

How to “sell” your strengths:

- Say “I.”
- Be proud.
- Highlight key points.
- Find your “truth.” Why do you do this work?
- Describe your successes.

# Finishing the Meeting

- Ask questions
- Business cards
- To shake hands or not?
- Thanks and final greeting

# Interview DON'Ts

- Arrive late!
- Ask about an exact salary during the initial interview. Don't ask about vacation days.
- Ask about a position for your partner.
- Argue with the interviewer.
- Volunteer negative information.
- Curse.

# Dining with Interviewers

- Host typically pays
- Be aware of the cost of the food
- Keep alcohol to a minimum
- Be gracious to the server/waiter
- Order easy food
- Figure out who to thank

# U.S. Table Manners

- If your fork falls on the floor, pick it up, clean it with your napkin, and continue using it. (F)
- You should excuse yourself if you must leave the table during a meal. (T)
- Don't burp because it is considered rude. (T)
- When you finish your meal, put your fork and knife back on the table where they were before. (F)
- Make slurping sounds when you are eating noodles to show how good they are. (F)

# U.S. Table Manners (Cont.)

- Ask your host for a doggy bag to take home the food you cannot finish. (F)
- It's OK to smoke. (F)
- Sit up straight at the table. (T)
- Go to the bathroom to remove food caught in your teeth. (T)
- Spoon the soup away from you and sip it from the side of the spoon. (T)

# Openness

- Americans often like to find a connection with you
- Extraverted culture
- Physicality

# Approaches to Gender in the U.S.

- Treat men and women equally

# Learn from the Source

- Check with people you mentor about teaching
- Ask people familiar with U.S. culture

# Additional Suggestions

- Practice (out loud).
- It's OK to ask.
- Hold the door.
- Realize interviews may be long.
- Be nice to the staff.
- Remember to breathe.

# Conclusion

- People who grew up in the U.S. have many of the same struggles.
- Come to “ISE” and “Brown Bag” cultural lunches
- E-mail me (Julie Gold) with questions: [goldje@mail.nih.gov](mailto:goldje@mail.nih.gov)
- E-mail Kathryn Foisie to make an appointment with a career counselor: foisiek@mail.nih.gov