

# College Admissions Interview Preparation

By Susanna de Chenonceau, M.Ed., College Counselor

In your interview, you will be talking to someone who graduated from College A. This will be a real, live person who took the classes, experienced the weekend scene, and knows exactly how College A benefited him/her in the long run--someone who can tell you the honest truth about the school, which is much more than you can find on the school website, the blogs, or even from your friend who is 6 months into her first year. This being said, you have no need to be nervous. You are interviewing the school just as much as they are interviewing you.

The interview typically has three parts:

1. Your high school experience
2. The college
3. Your questions

All of the sample questions provided here are designed to help you prepare and feel more confident for the interview. Practice elaborating on each of the questions, especially on the whys of your reactions. It is key that you do not memorize your responses. The purpose of these questions is to clarify your thoughts so that you are a bit ready, not to write a script.

## YOUR HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

The interviewer will typically begin the interview with one or two of these questions to get things rolling, ease any nerves, and lead into questions about college and your future.

One or two questions about your life thus far may seem like nothing, but your interviewer already has a copy of your transcript. He/she knows your stunning GPA, the rigor of your course load, and what awards you've won. The interview is your time to show your personality, beyond what you say in your essays and resume.

- Tell me something about your courses.

- What courses have you enjoyed the most?
- What courses have been most difficult for you?
- What satisfactions have you had from your studies?
- What do you do in your spare time?
- How do you spend your summers?
- What do you do with any money you've earned?
- If there was one thing you would change about your high school, what would it be and why?
- Explain five words your best friend would use to describe you.
- If you could be any part of a car except the steering wheel or the engine, what part would you choose to be and why?
- "What do you think of the (college) Creed?" You could probably use "mission statement" or "the school's educational philosophy," etc.
- What's your favorite book and why?
- What articles have you read in the last six months that moved you?
- Questions like "what's your theme song?" or "if you had to do a Ted Talk what would it be on?"
- What is the greatest challenge facing your generation? Give me an example of how you would go about remedying this.
- If you could be any historical figure, who would you be and why?
- What person from any year would you choose to teach you a lecture class?
- If you could be a horse, chicken or pig, what would you be and why?
- If you could meet anyone who ever lived, who would it be and why?
- If you could travel to any event in history, what would it be?

## YOU AND THE WORLD AROUND YOU

These questions are the most difficult; they are designed to be introspective and to catch you a little off guard. Like the unusual "If you were a shoe, what type would you be?" interview question (no really, it's been asked), you'll need to be thinking on your toes. Come prepared to the interview with a list of adjectives you would use to describe

yourself (a list to get you started is at the back of this packet).

- What has been a controversial issue in your community? What is your position on it?
- How has living in your community affected your outlook?
- What are you reading now that is of interest?
- Are there any books you've read recently that significantly affected you? How?
- What literary characters do you admire or connect with?
- What play, concert, museum exhibit, or dance recital have you recently attended?
- Do you have any historical or contemporary heroes? What do they mean to you?
- What person has had the most impact on your life? How?
- What historical event has had the most impact? Why?
- What are your talents or hobbies?

## THE COLLEGE

It's true that it goes both ways: not only do you want a school that will benefit you, the school will want people who will eventually make them look good. This is your opportunity to shine, and let the interviewer see that you fit both of those criteria. Try and steer away from simply "they have my major" or "there are good professors". Prepare with a little research about the school; find the name of a specific professor who you want to learn from (and why), think of a new club you would create and how it would impact the school, or find a club you would like to join and think of how your expertise or interests would help them.

Try to incorporate tidbits from your research into the college questions your interviewer asks you. These are most commonly,

- Why do you want to go to college (particularly College A)?

- What are you looking forward to in college?
- What do you hope to accomplish in the next four years?
- What do you expect to get out of college?
- What activities do you want to be involved in?
- What majors/minors do you wish to pursue? Why?
- How would College A benefit you? Why is it a better fit for you than College B?
- How would you impact College A?
- Is there anything new you would like to try in college?

## YOUR QUESTIONS

Typically at the end of the interview, the interviewer will ask you if you have any questions for him/her. It is best to have 3 or 4 questions prepared, and bring a pen and paper to your interview (along with your resume, of course) to record the responses. These questions are just a jumping off point, but do try to steer away from questions with answers posted on College A's website.

This is a great time to show the interviewer what you are passionate about, expose any hidden talents, and show him that you really are serious about becoming a member of the community.

- What do students like most about College A?
- How important is student government to the college? What contributions does the student government make to the school? How accessible is it?
- I see that College A has a \_\_\_\_\_ club, and I am interested in joining; how active are they on campus?
- How accessible is the administration?
- What is the academic climate on campus?
- Is the school active politically? If so, what were the most popular issues last year, and where did most students stand?
- Do different social groups on campus mix?

- What is the social life like on campus? What activities are most popular?
- What do students do on the weekends? Do many students commute to school?
- What does the surrounding city have to offer?
- How popular are school sporting events?
- What does College A provide for housing throughout the 4 years? How close is the housing to the classrooms?
- How safe is the campus?
- Is collaborative and/or group work encouraged?
- Are there research or internship opportunities for undergraduates?
- What cultural events are integrated on campus?
- Is community service encouraged or accessible? What percent of students are involved?
- How many clubs are available, and what percent of students are involved?
- Are merit scholarships awarded? Who can apply?
- What services does the career center offer? Does it help to find internships and jobs?

Again, remember to stay calm and don't be nervous; you're interviewing the school as well.

## ADJECTIVES TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF

Reliable	Sociable	Enthusiastic	Bookish
Relaxed	Understanding	Calm	Hardworking
Confident	Outgoing	Eager	Determined
Cooperative	Curious	Lively	Idealistic
Motivated	Supportive	Thoughtful	Considerate
Trustworthy	Independent	Generous	Good-natured
Frank	Organized	Entrepreneurial	Friendly

Fun loving	Analytical	Loyal	Spontaneous
Original	Modest	Practical	Tenacious
Helpful	Strong minded	Cheerful	Ambitious
Sincere	Conscientious	Persevering	Stable
Reflective	Daring	Articulate	Optimistic
Alert	Assertive	Broadminded	Thorough
Logical	Imaginative	Forceful	Rational
Fair minded	Realistic	Sensible	Consistent
Inventive	Intellectual	Tactful	Mature
Successful	Capable	Clever	Quick
Honest	Polite	Poised	Empathetic
Conservative	Warm	Resourceful	Supportive
Bold	Sensitive	Creative	Patient
Adaptable	Adventurous	Strong	Careful
Natural	Introspective	Courageous	Deliberate
Deliberate	Formal	Easygoing	Active
Sharp	Versatile	Happy	Tolerant
Attentive	Individualistic	Academic	Energetic
Flexible	Funny	Persuasive	Responsible
Purposeful	Competitive	Firm	Clear-headed