

THE INTERVIEW REPORT (Commonly Offered at Private Colleges)

The interview is seldom as important as students think it is. No college is going to place more weight on one 30-minute encounter than on the recommendations of teachers or four years of accomplishments. Few colleges require an interview; most recommend one. Some, like Stanford and Amherst, do not provide the opportunity for one. Generally speaking, the smaller the college, the more likely it is that the interview will carry some weight. If a college recommends an interview and it is not within easy traveling distance, the college will arrange for you to be interviewed by a local alumnus or alumna. If you have already interviewed on campus, you should ask if it is necessary to have an alumni interview. Some schools don't mind having two perspectives in the file, while others want to reserve alumni resources for students who have not had a chance to interview on campus.

Some tips on interviews:

- Relax.
- Go alone. Don't take your parents or your friends with you.
- Dress appropriately. A coat and tie aren't necessary, nor is a fancy party dress. Tidiness and taste are. Your personal appearance is extremely important for a good first impression.
- Be prompt. When an alumnus/a calls you to make the appointment, be sure you get his or her phone number so you can call if you are delayed or have to change the time. Also, be sure to get the interviewer's full name and address. Write this information down for future reference.
- Read any college literature you have before you go so that you can ask thoughtful, well-informed questions. Remember that the interview is your opportunity to find out about the college, not just the college's opportunity to find out about you.
- Take cues from the interviewer; she or he will set the tone. She or he may offer to shake hands with you; wait for him/her to make the gesture. Remain standing until the interviewer sits down or offers you a seat.
- Don't worry if the interview doesn't cover every wonderful thing about you. The admissions office will have all the objective information it needs; the point of the interview is to see how you think and how you handle yourself, not to find out your test scores or athletic honors.
- Avoid answering questions by saying just yes or no. On the other hand, don't talk too much. Be aware of time and don't go on talking and talking about one thing.

- Be yourself, not what you think the college expects you to be. Colleges want variety, not clones.
- Don't judge the college on the basis of the interviewer. If you learn things from the interview that make you feel differently about the college, fine. But don't let your positive or negative feelings about an individual (who probably isn't even at the college anymore!) become an important factor in your decision.
- Always thank the interviewer in writing for his or her time. In your brief note you may want to mention one of the topics brought up during your session, so that you are certain he or she will recall just who this polite young man or woman is!

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