SECTION 3: INTERVIEWING

Interviewing can be an intimidating experience, especially for individuals with limited experience. However, there are a couple of things to remember, which should make the interview process a little bit easier.

- **PREPARE!** Preparation is the key to a good interview – you never want to “wing it”. Instead, prepare yourself with the knowledge to succeed in the interview, which includes knowledge about you and about the organization.
- Consider the interview to be a time when you get to sell yourself to the company. Think of the interview as an opportunity to talk about yourself, and explain why you are the best candidate. If there is something that makes you qualified for the job, be sure to mention it in the interview – regardless if the employer asks you a question about that experience. Assume that the interviewer knows nothing about you (i.e. they have not read your résumé and cover letter), and if you do not tell them important information about your application, then they will not know.
- The interview is a two-way process: you are trying to impress them as much as they are trying to impress you. You need to present yourself in an honest, straightforward manner, and you need to evaluate potential job opportunities. After the interview, you may decide that the organization is not the right fit for you, and you should indicate that you wish to withdraw your application in your thank you note.

STEP 1: ANALYZE YOURSELF

This is the most critical stage in the interview process, but it is also the most overlooked stage. The interview is a time for you to talk about your skills and experiences, which on the surface sounds pretty easy – after all, you talk about yourself every day, right? Well, an interview is different, because you are trying to communicate skill sets and experiences that you probably don’t relay in day to day life – such as an example of your organizational skills or a time that you encountered a difficult team member. Therefore, it is essential that you prepare yourself for the interview. Does this mean that you should memorize some answers? Absolutely not! In fact, you should never memorize any of your answers – first, you don’t want to sound rehearsed, and second, if you forget what you memorized, then you will focus on trying to remember the exact wording of the answer rather than coming up with an alternate response.

The first step in understanding the skills you can offer to an organization is to take an inventory of your different personal characteristics. There are 3 types of skills:

1. **Work Content Skills**: those which relate specifically to being able to do a certain job. These skills are gained through work, education, and personal experience. Typically, these will be specific to a particular career field and will be noted in a position description. For students interested in Public Administration/Policy and Political Science, some examples may be:
   - Researching using open sources
   - Writing policy memos
   - Analyzing data sets to make policy decisions

2. **Self-Management Skills**: those personal characteristics related to your personality and to how you work within an organization or perform tasks. For example:
   - Creative
   - Accurate
   - Responsible

3. **Transferable Skills**: those general skills that can be applied to a wide variety of settings and have been developed naturally or through education, training, and experience.
   - Communication skills
   - Leadership skills
   - Interpersonal skills
## Self-Management Skills:

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## Transferable Skills:

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## Top 10 Qualities Employers Seek in Job/Internship Candidates:

- Communication
- Team Work
- Technical
- Work Experience
- Leadership
- Interpersonal
- Academic Record
- Motivation/Initiative
- Analytical
- Honesty/Integrity/Ethics
The next step is to take your skills/characteristics and relate them to the position to which you are applying. The best way to do that is to read through the position description and pick out the skills that are mentioned, especially those that are mentioned multiple times. Let’s take this job description as an example:

Seeking an Intergovernmental Affairs Liaison to be part of an energetic, collaborative and innovative team to implement a shared vision of progressive policies and community-based planning. Prospective staff members must be committed to seeking out new and better ways for the Manhattan Borough President’s Office (MBPO) to connect with, and deliver to, the borough’s diverse neighborhoods, communities, and constituents.

Major responsibilities of this position will include, but are not limited to:

- Assist in advancing the Borough President’s policy and legislative priorities throughout all levels of government with special emphasis on the City Council;
- Represent the Borough President and communicate the goals of the office with key stakeholders as well as act as an intergovernmental liaison to all elected officials and government agencies at the city, state and federal level;
- Monitor relevant pending legislation and government regulations on City, State and Federal levels, and conduct research to develop the Borough President’s legislative priorities and recommendations that will be presented to other governmental entities for partnership and support;
- Strategize on outreach to government entities for office events, mailings, and the upkeep of databases;
- Help monitor and stay informed of all office staffs’ projects and interactions that involve elected officials and government agencies, and assist all staff with the navigation at all levels of government to ensure quality service delivery and government accountability;
- Assist the Deputy Chief of Staff with administrative duties as needed, such as outreach to government entities and mailings.

Specific job requirements include:

- Familiarity with the inner-workings of government and the legislative process at the city, state, and federal levels;
- Familiarity with policy and legislative issues facing New Yorkers;
- Comfortable with flexible, sometimes long work hours;
- Possess exceptional research, writing, interpersonal and organizational skills; and
- Work well under pressure and deadlines.

The relevant skill sets (work-content, self-management, and transferable) are highlighted. More than likely, there would be some interview questions surrounding these skills, and it would be best to provide examples of some times when you have used these skills. For example, you might have taken the course “State & Local Government” and this would be a great example to prove your knowledge of government and the legislative process on the city, state, and federal levels.

When preparing for an interview, it is best to think of times when you have used a particular skill set. Your responses do not need to be all work based; actually, most employers like to hire candidates who take part in extra-curricular activities, volunteer work, and academic projects, so you should vary your responses.
Please use these charts which can help you to brainstorm some examples of relevant skills and experiences.

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<th>Class Papers, Exams, Presentations, Projects</th>
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STEP 2: RESEARCHING THE EMPLOYER

Ideally, you should know something about the organization before you submit your application. Upon interviewing, you need to have more in-depth knowledge of the employer and how you can fit in with the organization. Again, knowing how you can fit in with the organization will help you to feel confident and prepared for the interview.

The quickest and most efficient way to research an organization is to visit their website (a quick Google search should bring up their website). There are a number of places you should visit on their website:

- **Careers** – this section will help you to understand the job opportunities available, as well as the environment and type of people that work in the organization. Information like employee benefits or perks can also be found.
- **About Us** – this section will give you insight about the mission and history of the organization. It may include a staff directory with biographies of the employees.
- **Clients/Services** – this section will allow you to understand what services they provide and who they serve.
- **New/Events/Media** – this section lists any newsworthy information.

Remember that the employer’s website will only detail the information that they want you to know, so it is best to research other sources, such as newspapers.

STEP 3: DRESSING PROFESSIONALLY

The first impression does count, so you should be dressed professionally, but also comfortably. It is best to try to buy professional clothing early in your college career so you can accumulate a wardrobe over time. You should always present yourself in a professional manner, and groom yourself appropriately.

**Image Tips for Women**

- **Suit**: a conservative colored suit (black, grey, navy blue) is always appropriate for an interview, and it is the preferred interview attire of most employers. It is always best to be overdressed than underdressed, and you can never go wrong in a suit. A skirt suit or a pants suit is acceptable, though a skirt suit is considered to be a little bit more formal. If you choose to wear a skirt, it should be knee length, not too tight, and not have any high slits (a moderate slit is appropriate to allow you to walk). Pants should be freshly pressed, and match your blazer.
- **Blouse**: a business-like blouse is appropriate as long as it looks neat under a blazer. Ensure that it fits appropriately and has a conservative neckline. A button-down shirt is preferred, but it should fit appropriately.
- **Shoes**: mid-heel pumps in black, brown, or navy are preferred. Shoes should not be too high or too low. You should be comfortable in your shoes, and they should be well-polished and in good repair. Sandals, sneakers, or boots are not considered professional, and should not be worn during an interview.
- **Hose**: should always be worn under a skirt suit, preferably in a neutral color. Avoid patterns and textures. A pair of knee-high hose are appropriate to wear with a pants suit and pumps. Carry an extra pair of hose in case you get a run or a snag.
- **Accessories**: jewelry can help to accent your features and make you memorable, but you should err on the conservative side. Stick with the rule of one: 1 pair of earrings, 1 necklace, 1 bracelet or watch, etc. Avoid oversized jewelry that can distract employers from what you are saying. In addition, carry a professional looking pocketbook or briefcase, including a portfolio with extra copies of your resume, a notepad, and a pen.
- **Grooming**: you should be well-groomed for every interview, and at the workplace in general. Hair should be clean and brushed, and may be worn either up or down, as long as the employer can clearly see your face. Make-up should be natural looking – avoid heavy make-up that can distract the interviewer. Fingernails should be
clean and not too long; polish is acceptable as long as it is conservative. Ensure your clothes are clean and lint-free. Freshen your breath before the interview.

**Image Tips for Men**

- **Suit:** a conservative colored suit (black, grey, navy blue) is always appropriate for an interview, and it is the preferred interview attire of most employers. It is always best to be overdressed than underdressed, and you can never go wrong in a suit. A single breasted suit is preferred, in a wool or wool blend. The suit should be tailored to fit appropriately in the shoulders and sleeves. Additionally, you should not button the last button (unless it is a 1 button jacket).
- **Shirt:** long-sleeved button down, collared shirts in white are recommended. The collar and sleeves should fit appropriately – you don’t want to look like you’re wearing your father’s shirt. Ensure it is well-pressed.
- **Ties:** should be a conservative stripe or a small pattern – no bright colors or distracting patterns.
- **Shoes:** laced oxfords or leather dress slip-ons are appropriate in dark colors, like black, brown, or navy blue. Shoes should be polished and in good repair.
- **Socks:** should be solid and dark to match the shoes, and high enough to cover your calf. DO NOT wear white socks!
- **Accessories:** Limit the amount of jewelry you wear – a watch, cufflinks, or a tie pin is acceptable. A leather belt, matching your shoes, should be worn (even if it is not necessary). In addition, carry a professional looking briefcase, including a portfolio with extra copies of your resume, a notepad, and a pen.
- **Grooming:** Make sure your hair is brushed and neat, your nails are clean, and you are polished and professional looking. Clothes should be clean and lint-free. For facial hair, you should follow the rule of all or nothing – that means you are either clean-shaven or you have a full beard/mustache/goatee/soul patch. Freshen your breath before the interview. Do not wear strong smelling cologne.

**STEP 4: UNDERSTANDING INTERVIEWS**

Once you have a sense of your strengths and weakness, and what you can offer to the organization, you need to understand the different types of interviews. In general, you will probably encounter 6 different types of interviews – but keep in mind that your interview will be dictated by your interviewer, and some interviewers are more comfortable interviewing than others.

Also, remember that your interview begins when you submit your application materials. Ensure that you are professional in all communications, including your email message, which should be grammatically correct and formal (make sure your email address is appropriate; you may want to consider making an email address specifically for job applications – but be sure to check it!). If you receive a call from a number you do not recognize, please make sure that you are in an appropriate location to take the call and that you have the time to talk. If not, let the call go to voicemail (which should be appropriate, and should include your name), and return the call as soon as possible.

When scheduling the interview, ask for a confirmation email with the date, time, location, names, and job titles of all interviewers and contact information of within least one person at the organization. With this information, you can properly prepare for the interview.

**The 6 types of interviews:**

1. **Telephone Interview:** typically, this will be a “screening” interview where you speak with a human resource professional who will determine if you meet the basic qualifications. If so, then you will be recommended to interview with a hiring manager or committee. The phone interview is typically very short – between 15-30
minutes. You will mostly be asked questions about your background— including education, coursework, internships, and extracurricular activities. The nice thing about a phone interview is that you can have all of your materials in front of you, including your résumé, notes, and job description, which should help to answer questions. Here are a couple of tips for phone interviews:

- If you are not expecting the call, ask if you can call back in five minutes, or at a mutually agreed upon time; you are under no obligation to do a phone interview on the spot.
- Turn off all external sources of distraction, including music, television, and Facebook—you need to stay focused on the interview.
- Consider standing while talking, as it improves the quality of your voice, and projects enthusiasm.
- Smile when you talk! Looking in a mirror also helps.
- Speak slowly and articulate your ideas clearly. You do not have visual cues to guide the conversation.

2. **Structured/Traditional Interview:** this is the most common format of interview. The discussion is guided by the interviewer, who will ask you questions, and you will answer. At the end of the interview, you will have the opportunity to ask questions about the job or organization.

3. **Behavioral Interview:** this format is very popular, and is being used more, especially for full-time jobs. The premise of this format is that your past behavior will likely predict future behavior. Questions are targeted to reveal details of past performance with specific examples. The employer is looking for specific information about your approach to a situation and the result of your efforts. It is essential that you relay information in a clear, concise manner—the best approach to this is to use the STAR technique, which will be discussed later.

4. **Non-Directive Interview:** this type of interview is unstructured, and more like a conversation. The employer may not ask any questions, or will ask very open-ended questions, like “Tell me about yourself”, and expects the candidate to direct the conversation. A non-directive interview separates those students who have prepared for an interview, and those who have not, as you must be self-assured for this type of interview. You will be expected to lead the conversation for about 75% of the interview.

5. **High-Stress Interview:** this format is designed to determine how you deal with stress. Typically, this type of interview will be used for high-stress types of jobs, and is probably the least common type of interview. You will be evaluated based upon your ability to remain composed in a tense situation; interviewers are often very aggressive and may have unusual questions.

6. **Case-Style Interview:** this type of interview is most common for group interviews, although you may encounter this approach in an individual interview as well. In this method, the employer presents a potential job scenario and you will be evaluated on your ability to analyze, formulate, and present an outcome. Often, there is no “correct” response, but the interviewer is examining the process of how you came to a conclusion.

**The Interview Format:**

**Stage 1: Arrival**

- ALWAYS arrive 10-15 minutes early for the interview. Remember that you may have to go through security so leave extra time. If you arrive too early, sit in your car or find a bench or café where you can review your notes. If you have never been to the office location before, you may want to find the building the day before to know where you are going.
- Greet the receptionist in a friendly manner, and let her know who you are there to see. While you are waiting, observe the office interactions to determine the environment.
Stage 2: Breaking the Ice

- First impressions count and this is the moment! Convey confidence by standing up, shaking hands with the interviewer, and looking him/her in the eye. You can then gather your belongings to be escorted to your interview location. Express that you are happy to be there.
- Expect some small talk for a couple of minutes — the weather, office locations, news stories, sports victories — it is recommended that you read the newspaper or watch the news a couple of days before your interview.

Stage 3: Information Exchange

- The beginning part of the interview will be an introduction to you and the organization, and you will be asked questions to determine if you have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively perform the job. You need to verbalize your ability to do the job by giving examples using the STAR technique (more information to follow).

Stage 4: Expanding the Focus

- This is really the “sales pitch” portion of the interview — where you are going to narrow in on detailed information about yourself and how you fit in with the job, and the organization. You want to show enthusiasm and interest in the position. Additionally this is the time when you need to address anything that has not been covered thus far in the interview. Remember: if you have not told the interviewer something, then they will not know! Don’t assume that they have read your resume and cover letter. If you have an experience that directly relates to the position or the organization, you need to clearly articulate that message. You do not have to wait for a question regarding that quality; instead, you can bring up the topic and steer the interview in that way. The best time to expand the focus is towards the end of the interview, perhaps when the employer has finished asking questions and wants to know if you have questions. You can reply with: “I do have a couple of questions, but first I wanted to reiterate my interest in the position, and let you know about…”

Stage 5: The Wrap Up

- The last part of the interview allows you to ask questions of the employer (you should have some prepared). State your interest in the position. Ask about the next step in the interview process and when you can anticipate notification regarding an employment decision or a second interview. Obtain a business card from all interviewers. Thank the interviewer(s), shake hands, and state that you enjoyed the meeting. Write a thank you email upon return to your home.

STEP 5: ACING THE INTERVIEW!

General Interview Tips

Now that you are prepared for the interview, it’s time to ace the interview! Here are a couple of tips to remember during your interview:

- Convey a positive tone of voice. Sound happy to be at the interview - smile. Also, check your volume so you are neither too quiet nor too loud.
- Use correct grammar and a strong vocabulary. Preferably, try to use jargon from your career field.
- Have good posture — your back should be straight, feet on the floor and knees bent at 90° angles. Ladies, if you are wearing a skirt, your legs should be together and crossed at the ankle. Hands should be folded in your lap or on the table, though you can use your hands to emphasize specific points.
• Maintain good eye contact with all interviews. If you are interviewing with only 1 person, then you should look at them in the eye about 66% of the time, and the rest of the time you can glance behind them or to either side. Try to avoid looking down if possible. If you are interviewing with multiple interviewers, then you should look around the room at everyone and try to maintain eye contact.

• Avoid “um” and “ahs” and phrases like “okay”, “like”, and “you know”.

• Practice relaxation and breathing techniques to stay calm.

• Ask for clarification if you do not understand a question.

• Answer all parts of the question – especially if there are multiple answers to the question.

• Stop and think about an answer to a question. If you are not sure of a response, then look down at your resume for suggestions, or paraphrase the question before answering. If after careful thought, you cannot answer the question, then admit you don’t know.

• Remain positive, and never volunteer negative information. Avoid negative phrases like “No, I have not” or “No, I cannot”. Try to phrase your answers in a positive manner.

• Don’t discuss salary unless the employer brings it up first.

The STAR Technique

The STAR technique has been mentioned a couple of times already, but it is an essential part of succeeding in a job interview. All interview questions are geared towards understanding your knowledge and experience as it relates to the position, and the best way to do that is to give specific examples. After all, anyone can say that they have good organizational skills, but if you can give an example of a time when you have used that skill, then it demonstrates that you can be organized on the job.

S = Situation (background information)

T= Task (what did you have to do?)

A= Action (what you did, and how you did it)

R= Result (the outcome of your effort)

Here’s an example of how to use the STAR technique:

Question: Give me an example of a time when you used your organizational skills?

Situation: In my State and Local Government class at the University at Albany,

Task: I had to work in a 4 member group on a case study surrounding the proposed closing of a town park.

Action: I took the initiative to serve as team leader of the group, so I organized weekly meetings for the team members to discuss the progress of the project. I made a list of all of the necessary components of the case study, and delegated each task. I followed up with each team member to clarify responsibilities and ensure that the task was being completed in a timely fashion. Personally, I managed the budget aspect of the project, which included organizing all of the fiscal information into an Excel spreadsheet, and analyzing the funds to determine where cuts could be made. Lastly, I compiled all of the components into a written report.

Result: The group made a presentation of our findings to the class, and we received an “A” on the project.

By providing an example, you clearly demonstrate organizational skills, but we also find other skill sets mentioned as well, such as computer skills, leadership ability, team work skills, analytical skills, and budgeting. The STAR approach can be used to answer all kinds of interview questions, but specifically should be used for behavioral based questions/interviews.
Commonly Asked Interview Questions

• **Tell me about yourself.** This is a very open-ended question and you should use it to make a brief statement about your education and professional background, why you’re interested in the position, and how you are qualified for it.

• **Why did you choose this major/career?** Indicate a particular skill or interest. Tell a story about it.

• **What courses/subjects did you like best or least?** Talk about the courses in your major and the ones in which you performed best.

• **What are your long and short term career goals?** You need not be specific but you must show knowledge of career paths and opportunities in the industry.

• **What do you consider your greatest strength?** Pick one that relates to the position and give an example using the STAR method.

• **What do you consider your greatest weakness?** Choose a weakness not related to the position, but indicate that you are working to strengthen it. Avoid personal weaknesses by focusing more on a technical skill or area of knowledge. You could also discuss a negative which the interviewer already knows or one which you have clearly improved upon that was a former weakness.

• **What motivates you?** Tell a story about your accomplishments and what was personally satisfying.

• **Why should we hire you?** Use this question to review the major key points of your interview outline. Stress your strengths.

• **Why do you want to work for our company?** Show your knowledge of the company, what you’ve learned at the interview, and discuss your personal goals and values.

• **What have been your most significant achievements?** Tell a STAR story!

• **What qualities do you possess that make you think you’d be successful in this job/industry?** Use your research to back up the personal qualities that make you their best candidate.

• **What do you do in your free time?** Talk about a hobby, sport, or special interest, but don’t fake it.

• **In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?** Reiterate contributions made in the past and relate them to this organization.
The following are behavioral based questions, and should be answered using the STAR technique.

- Describe a situation where you had to coordinate the activities of other people.
- Describe a time when you successfully balanced several competing priorities.
- Tell me about a time when you worked the hardest and had the greatest sense of achievement.
- How do you go about organizing your work and scheduling your time?
- Give me an example of a goal you set and how you achieved it.
- Describe a successful project you completed which required long hours.
- Describe a time when you had to work with someone who was uncooperative.
- What is the greatest decision you’ve had to make within the last 6 months?
- Describe a time when you had to adapt to a variety of people or situations.
- Give me an example of where you had difficulty in a course and what steps you took to remedy it.
- Give me an example of a time where you took on a leadership role.
- Tell me about a time you had to handle a difficult situation with a co-worker.
- Tell me about a time when you failed and what you learned from that experience.
- What did you do in your last position to contribute toward team success?

**Sample Questions to Ask in an Interview**

- Could you describe more fully the duties and responsibilities of the position?
- Is this a newly created position or are you filling a vacancy?
- How are new hires trained and developed?
- How many employees are in the department and will I be working as part of a team?
- Who would be my immediate supervisor?
- What is the management style of the organization? The department? The supervisor?
- What new projects or initiatives are planned for the near future?
- What major projects could I expect within the first six months/year on the job?
- How would you describe the work environment?
- Could you describe the career paths of people in this job/department?
- What are the opportunities for advancement or professional growth?
- How and when will my performance be evaluated?
- What do you see as the strengths of this department/division?
- What are the priorities of the organization over the next year?
- What is the greatest challenge currently facing the department/organization?
- Could you describe a typical day for someone in this position?
- What does it take to be highly successful in this organization?
- What percentage of employees pursue advanced degrees?
- What skills are most valuable in performing this job?
- How are important decisions made in this department?
STEP 6: FOLLOW UP

Congratulations! You have gotten through the interview process, but now the hard part comes - waiting. While you are waiting there are a couple of things you should do to assess your interview performance and improve for the next time.

First, you want to analyze your interview. Note your areas of strength and weakness, and determine how you can incorporate your areas of strength into your next interview, and how you can improve upon your weaknesses. Ask yourself: Was I prepared? Which questions were difficult to answer? How would I answer those questions in the future? Did I cover my “selling points”? Did I do enough research about the job and the employer? Create a list of interview questions – if you were asked those questions once, you will probably be asked them again. Next, assess whether you want the job and would like to work for that organization. Think about potential areas of concern, and if necessary, address them with the employer before you accept an offer. Discuss the interview with a staff member from the Rockefeller College Office of Career & Alumni Programs to gain further insight and to determine the next steps.

Next, you should write a thank you letter/email within 24 hours of the interview. A thank you letter should be written regardless of how the interview went. If, after some reflection, you determine that the position and/or the organization is not a right fit for you, then a thank you letter is the appropriate time to withdraw your application (see sample below).

**Thank You Letters/Emails**

*Why do I need a thank you email?*
- Expresses appreciation for the interview.
- Reiterates your interest in the position, department, and company.
- Reminds the employer of your relevant skills and qualifications.
- Provides additional information that did not get covered in the interview.
- Failure to provide a thank you letter can be regarded as lack of interest in the position.

*Guidelines:*
- **A thank you email should be sent after every interview.**
- Everyone who interviews you or helps you in any way should get a thank you letter.
- Personalize the thank you letter/email, do not write the same email to multiple people.
- Emphasize additional information that didn’t get covered in the interview, such as a project you worked on or a relevant experience that relates to the job. You can also use the email to clarify or expand upon something discussed in the interview.
- Send an email within 24 hours OR a letter within 48 hours; in most cases an email is acceptable, and should be written in the body of the email (not as an attachment).
- **PROOFREAD!**

*Sample Thank You Email*

Dear Ms. McCarty:
Thank you for meeting with me on Thursday, May 29th to discuss the Graduate Internship program at the New York State Assembly. I enjoyed talking with you and Bob Jones about the direction and goals of the program.

As you described, the New York State Assembly is looking for individuals to conduct research and develop policies. I am confident that my experience working with Congressman Tonko’s campaign assisting in writing and revising policy will enable me to fulfill the requirements of the Assembly internship. At the same time, I was happy to learn that there are ample opportunities for me to continue to grow professionally.

Once again, it was a pleasure meeting with you. I look forward to hearing from you soon. If there is additional information you need from me, please do not hesitate to call me at (555) 555-5555.

Sincerely,
John Doe
Sample Thank You Email – Withdrawing Application

Dear Ms. McCarty:
Thank you for meeting with me on Thursday, May 29th to discuss the Graduate Internship program at the New York State Assembly. I enjoyed talking with you and Bob Jones about the direction and goals of the program.

After learning more about the New York State Assembly and the Graduate Internship program, I do not think that the opportunity matches my career goals. Therefore, I would like to withdraw my application.

Once again, it was a pleasure meeting with you and I thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
John Doe

Following Up

After you have written your thank you email, you have to sit back and wait for a response from the employer. During the interview, you should have asked about when you will receive notification regarding employment or a second interview, and you should have a timeline of when you should hear a response from the employer. You should wait to hear from the employer, but you should not wait too long. For example, if the interviewer told you that they should have a decision within 2 weeks, and it has been 3 weeks, then you should send a follow up message. (If you did not ask about the employer’s timeline for hiring, then you should follow up after 2 weeks.) Here’s an example of a follow up message:

Dear Ms. McCarty:
Thank you for meeting with me on Thursday, May 29th to discuss the Graduate Internship program at the New York State Assembly. I enjoyed talking with you and Bob Jones about the direction and goals of the program.

I wanted to reiterate my interest in the position, and to determine where you are in the hiring process. Any information you can give me on the status of the position would be appreciated.

Once again, it was a pleasure meeting with you. I look forward to hearing from you soon. If there is additional information you need from me, please do not hesitate to call me at (555) 555-5555.

Sincerely,
John Doe

If you receive a rejection letter, follow up with a note expressing your interest in future positions for which you may qualify. If you are comfortable, ask for feedback on your interview and why you were not selected as a candidate.

STEP 7: EVALUATING JOB OFFERS, NEGOTIATING, AND ACCEPTING OFFERS

Congratulations! You have received a job offer, or perhaps several job offers! Do not feel pressured to accept a job on the spot – it’s important that you carefully evaluate the job offer. When you receive a job offer, either over the phone or via email, you should ask for some time to review the offer (even if you know that you will accept). The polite way to ask for time is to state, “Thank you very much for the offer. I would like some time to review the offer – can I get back to you tomorrow (you should ask for no more time than a week)?” Whenever possible, try to get the offer in writing. An offer should typically detail your salary and start date, though it may include information about benefits as well. You should share your offer information with the Rockefeller College Office of Career & Alumni Programs, who will help you to sort out the details of the offer, and determine if it fits in with your long-term career plans.
When evaluating a job offer, you should consider:

- **Job Content:** Do you fully understand the nature of the job? Will you be happy performing this job for an extended period of time (at least 1 year, if not 2). Will this job make you marketable for future opportunities?
- **Your Manager/Supervisor:** When you interviewed for the position, did you meet with your immediate supervisor? What was your impression of him/her? Will s/he serve as a mentor? Does s/he have a management style conducive to a productive work environment?
- **Coworkers:** Even though you will be reporting directly to your supervisor, you will more than likely need to work collaboratively with your coworkers. You will be spending between 30-40 hours at work every week (if not more), and you should get along with those individuals.
- **Time Commitment:** What is a typical work week? Are you required to work overtime? Will you have to travel?
- **Location:** How long is the commute? Is the office in a location where you feel comfortable? Is this an area where you would want to live?
- **Salary and Benefits:** Is the salary competitive? How are individual salary increases determined? When and how are salary/promotions determined? Evaluate vacation time, medical/dental insurance, retirement plans, and other fringe benefits.

**Negotiating**

After reviewing the full job offer, you may decide that you want to negotiate. You will need to prepare a strategy ahead of time and approach the negotiation with a positive attitude. You will also need to provide a reason why you are worthy of an increase in salary or benefits (not just because you think you deserve it). This is very similar to an interview – you must convince the employer that you possess skills or experience that they need. Follow these steps to help you with the negotiation:

- **Assess your budget:** Create a budget of your expenses, and determine if the salary will allow you to live comfortably. Estimate about 28% of your salary will go to taxes.
- **Research:** Determine typical salary ranges for someone of your educational background, experience level, and geographic location. You can find salary information on the NYS Bureau of Labor Statistics, www.salary.com, or you can ask the Rockefeller College Office of Career & Alumni Programs for the average salary of recent graduates.
- **Benefits:** Your salary is not the only compensation you will receive. Most companies will offer a retirement plan, health and dental insurance, and paid vacations. In addition, some organizations may also offer bonuses, increases, stock options, commissions, company cars, pensions, signing bonuses, and relocation expenses. You should factor these perks into your total offer.

After evaluating the total offer, you should then determine what factors you would like to negotiate. Typically, you will negotiate salary, and you should determine how much more you would like. The salary increase should not be much higher than what the original offer was – for example, if you were offered $40,000, then it would be inappropriate to ask for $65,000; instead, you may want to ask for $50,000. Keep in mind that the company may come back with a counter-offer, which will typically be in the middle of the two salaries. Therefore, if your budget is $45,000/year, you should ask for a higher rate, in case the organization counter-offers. After determining the salary amount you will ask for, you should start the salary negotiations by stating something like, “I’m very pleased to receive the offer, but given the responsibilities of the job and my qualifications, I wanted to determine if the salary is negotiable.” It is best to ask if the salary is negotiable first, as you do not want to offend the employer, and also, there may be set pay structures in place that don’t allow for room to negotiate. If the salary is not negotiable, you may want to consider negotiating other benefits, such as working from home/telecommuting, working a reduced schedule, or having the employer pay for transportation costs.
Accepting a Job Offer

When accepting a job offer, you should adhere to some ethical considerations.

- If you are not interested in the offer, you should decline as soon as possible.
- If you are waiting to hear back from other organizations regarding employment, be honest with the organization that gave you the offer. Indicate that you are flattered by their offer, but you would like time to consider additional offers. You should then contact the other organizations, and let them know that you have another offer, and when can you anticipate notification regarding the position.
- **Accepting a job offer is a serious commitment.** Once you accept, it is considered proper business ethics to discontinue all job search activities. In fact, you should inform employers that you have accepted an offer and are no longer eligible for consideration. **It is unacceptable to reverse your decision.** Once all negotiation has ended and you’ve agreed upon an offer, obtain written confirmation. Asking for an offer in writing prevents a possible future misunderstanding.