



# CAREER SERVICES CENTER

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION FOR PRE-LAW/LAW PATHWAY PROGRAM

(Information is to be used as a guidance and not repeated verbatim)

### BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

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Congrats! Based on your job application/resume, an employer saw potential in you and requested an interview with you. During the interview, you have the opportunity to determine whether the company and position matches what you want, express to the employer that you have the right skills and qualifications as well as demonstrate how you can relate/fit in with the organization.

**Do your Research:** Take the time to learn about the organization, law firm, business, company, etc. and the people who might be interviewing you. If you have a contact who works for the employer, see if you are able to meet with him/her for an informational interview. Try to identify what they're looking for in a candidate, the purpose of the position, the law being practiced, the organization's goals, mission, values, needs, etc. If you are able to identify the people who you will be interviewing with, write down their names and research who these people are, their roles, background, and interests. Often times, you can find this information on the organization's website, LinkedIn, Google, etc. Be able to explain why you are interested in working for them.

**Interview Format:** Identify the type of interview you are going to attend. There are different types of interviews. It is also common to experience a combination of the following.

- Initial Screening – Sometimes an HR representative will contact you to ask you a number of questions. This is to screen any unqualified applicants and to send those who are qualified further into the process.
- 1:1 Job Interview – This is the traditional interview where you are interviewed by one representative, most likely the hiring manager.
- Group Interview – This is an opportunity for organizations to quickly prescreen a group of candidates. This may involve a short presentation about the organization, followed by asking questions to each candidate individually. This allows employers to observe how well candidates interact with others.
- Phone/Video Interview – This usually happens because either the candidate or the employer is not in the position to meet in person. A phone interview can also happen unexpectedly. As such make sure you have a professional voicemail as well as answer numbers you do not recognize in a professional manner. Video interviews usually are scheduled in advance. Make sure you are in a quiet area with service and with few to no distractions.
- Case Interview – Candidates are presented a situation and asked how they would approach it, analyze it and solve it.
- Competency Interviews – These types of interviews are designed to see if you have the skills to do the job. For some positions, you may be required to take a test on a computer.
- Audition/Presentation Interview – Here you may be asked to demonstrate something, teach something, explain something, etc.
- Structured Interviews – With this type of interview, candidates generally are asked the same rigid and formal questions in the same order. This type of interview doesn't allow for deviation.
- Unstructured Interviews – More flexible than structured interviews. It gives the employer and candidate the freedom to deviate from the typical flow of an interview. You might be asked follow-up questions and probing questions that could lead the format into a dialogue.
- Meal Time Interview – You may be asked to interview over a meal or a beverage.
- Panel Interview – This type of interview consists of different representatives from an organization. Each panelist may be responsible for asking you questions that represent relevancy from their position.
- Behavioral Interview – During this type of interview, you will be asked questions based on



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common situations related to the job you are applying for. Utilizing the STAR method will help you in succeeding with this type of interview.

- **Situation, Task, Action, Result (STAR)** – Being able to showcase your skills and how you fit the needs of an organization in a compelling and easy to understand way, without rambling, is invaluable. Using the STAR method, you will be able to tell a story about a previous work experience.
  - **Situation** – Set the scenario for your example – A customer rang up complaining that she had yet to receive her order which was not well outside of the normal delivery times.
  - **Task** – Describe the specific challenge/task that relates to the question – I needed to address the customer’s concerns, find out what had gone wrong with the delivery and make sure that her delivery got to them as quickly as possible.
  - **Action** – Talk about the actions that you took to accomplish the task – I immediately apologized to the customer and got their information. I checked our system in addition to our delivery system and was able to establish that it was a combination of an email not checked and an address entered incorrectly by the customer. I contacted the customer, got the correct address and made sure her items were delivered the next day. I also offered her a discount on her next purchase as a goodwill gesture.
  - **Result** – Present the results that followed because of the chosen action – I recommended a protocol that meant all company’s email inboxes were checked regularly. I also followed up with the customer later and noticed she used the discount.

**Practice:** Don’t just practice responding to questions in your head. Practice out loud. This is critical. Participate in a mock interview. Practice responding to interview questions with anyone in the field, the Career Services Center at SMC, other professionals, etc. Know your resume well and be prepared to answer questions about them. Be able to talk about yourself and how you make a good candidate for the job. This requires knowing the job description inside and out. However, don’t over exhaust yourself. Make sure to get some rest.

**Prep Application Materials:** Bring extra copies of your resume, a notepad with some questions prepared for the interview as well as if you need to take any quick notes, a pen, your list of references and any other materials requested by the employer. Make sure you have cash (dollars, coins and card) to pay for parking. Depending on where you park, you may only have access to using one form of payment. It is also important to bring the contact information of the person interviewing you and/or the main office information.

**Stay Up to Date:** Read the newspaper, check the internet, read articles related to the field of law. You may be surprised with ice breaking small talk about current trends and/or events.

**Dress to Impress:** Consider the company’s culture when dressing for an interview. In general, be conservative with your choice of clothing, accessories, hair style, make-up and jewelry. Examples of outfits include dress pants, dress shirt, tie, sport coat, business dress, skirt and blazer. Avoid wearing sneakers/workout shoes, athletic gear, ultra-high heels or flip flops/sandals. Engage in good hygiene practices prior to your interview. Look neat, be clean and well-groomed. It is also important to be cognizant that some people are sensitive to different and/or strong scents/perfumes/colognes. Do not smoke or chew gum. Cover tattoos and any unprofessional piercings.



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**Know Where You Are Going:** Ideally, you want to know where you are going before the day of your interview. Drive by the location of your interview before the day of your interview. Identify places to park. If possible visit the location of your interview during the same time of day so you can see what the traffic is like. Do not be late to your interview.

### **DURING THE INTERVIEW**

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It is okay to be a little nervous in an interview. Everyone experiences nervous feelings during an interview. Try to stay focused and remember what you practiced. Still nervous? Try taking slow, deep breaths to help you relax.

**Arrive Early:** Always give yourself extra time. You don't want to be late because of unexpected traffic, street closures and/or traffic accidents. Plan to arrive at least 15 to 20 minutes early to give yourself a buffer and to use the restroom. Arriving early will allow you some time to remove animal hair, shoulder flakes, check for static, wash clammy hands, etc. Consider checking in only 5 to 10 minutes before your scheduled interview time. Leave your coffee or soda in the car.

**Technology:** Turn off or completely silence your phone, smart watch, tablet, etc. Everyone can hear a phone vibrating. This is different than completely silencing your phone. Stay off any forms of technology while you are waiting to be interviewed. Use this time to focus on your interview.

**Greetings and Handshakes:** Treat everyone you encounter like an interview. Don't forget to always smile. Remember, you need to demonstrate that you fit with the organization and smiling helps to convey that you're friendly and approachable. Hiring managers may also ask other staff to share their impression of you. Treat everyone as if you are being interviewed. Always stand to greet someone. Practice giving a firm handshake with others. Make sure it represents what you want to convey to the interviewer(s). You should shake hands with everyone you meet as well as at the end of your interview. When you have the opportunity, write down the names and titles of anyone that interviews you, so you can follow up with a thank you note to each interviewer. Always wait to be seated.

**Be Genuine:** Be concise and to the point, yet sincere in your responses. Your answers should be authentic. Do not lie about or exaggerate any aspects of your education or experience. You should be the best version of yourself. Remember, to have a professional conversation. If you mess up, you can acknowledge it and correct it. Always be positive in your communication and attitude. Do not speak negative of past employers. Remember you are trying to sell yourself. Communicate clearly and avoid any grammar errors or use of profanity. Steer clear of expressions such as "like," "um," "uh," "yeah," and "you know." It is okay to pause briefly and collect your thoughts before responding to a question. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification on a question. Never answer a question with just "yes" or "no." Always elaborate.

**Be Engaged:** Listen carefully to the questions and comments from employers. Show interest in the interview by smiling, nodding as well as using other verbal/non-verbal cues. Sit up straight, lean slightly forward towards the interviewer and make frequent eye contact with those interviewing you. Do try to avoid slouching, fidgeting, playing with your pen or other objects, leaning too far back, crossing arms, finger tapping, cracking knuckles, yawning, touching your hair/face, etc. Ask questions.

### **AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

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Congrats! You have just finished interviewing. However, your work is not done yet. It is important to follow-up after the interview.



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**Thank You Note:** It is recommended that you send one email within 24 hours of the interview to each interviewer. The sooner the better. A handwritten card is suggested as a supplement when a personal or more creative touch might be especially valued. Reference in your note either of the following: a topic that discussed during the interview, one or two examples showing off your expertise or a response to one of the key interview questions.

Dear Jane Hahm:

I would like the opportunity to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I enjoyed our discussion, and I'm even more excited about the possibility of working for the LA Monitor Firm and your team.

I am confident that I can make a strong contribution to the continued growth at the LA Monitor Firm. As we discussed, through the courses I completed in the Law Pathway Program at SMC, I have experience in the areas of writing and research. I also have 2 years of experience working in a fast paced-environment, managing the needs of approximately 40 to 50 customers per dinner shift. I feel my background and qualifications prepare me well for the client intake position we discussed.

In closing, I would like to thank you again for the time and courtesy extended to me. If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact me at (310) 987-6543 or by email at [Corsair\\_Joe@student.smc.edu](mailto:Corsair_Joe@student.smc.edu).

I look forward to hearing from you soon and in joining the team at LA Monitor Firm.

Sincerely,

Joe Corsair

**Follow Up Instructions:** Make sure to follow the instructions provided to you by the hiring manager/HR team. For example, if they tell you it will take two weeks, wait the two weeks. If they said follow-up needs to be done by email, do not call them on the phone. It is natural to be anxious but that doesn't give you the permission to pester/stalk the employer. After you have left a message and followed up at their recommended time, if you haven't heard back after two calls, you should move forward and prep for your next round of interviews.