Handling Tough Job Interview Questions

The interview is the single most important part of an employer’s selection process. But there’s no need to get butterflies or sweaty palms if you’re prepared to effectively package and present your passion and fit for the position. The pointers in the UCLA Career Guide (see career.ucla.edu/CareerGuide) will help you plan, prepare, and practice for a great interview.

Anticipate what may be a tough question for you to answer. You will reduce your anxiety level if you’re ready to field the types of questions most likely to cause you to lose sleep. The following are some examples for you to think about ahead of time.

“What is your GPA?”

If you have a strong GPA, this may be a routine question. It may create apprehension if you have a less competitive GPA. If you are concerned about how an employer may view your GPA, spend some time thinking about what compensating experience you may have. Formulate a non-defensive response such as:

“I managed to maintain a 2.4 GPA while working 24 hours a week, and being active in two student groups.”

The Question Not Asked

If, for example, you have an obvious physical limitation, the interviewer is unlikely to bring up the subject. However, the question of whether you can do the job could be lingering in the employer’s mind. The best way to deal with this possibility is for you to introduce the discussion.

The same principle applies for persons who are concerned about age, gender, marital status, or other concerns. Bring the issue out in the open in a non-defensive, non-accusatory manner and cite an example that will allay the employer’s unspoken concerns.

Questions Pertaining to Your Social and Political Affiliations Mentioned on Your Resume

“Describe your experience(s) working with a specific cultural, religious, political, or LGBT organization.”

When questions pertaining to your social, cultural, religious, or LGBT involvement are asked during an interview, the rule of thumb is to relate your skills, experiences, and qualifications as a result of your involvement with that organization. The focus of your answers should not be on the organization, but what you gained from the experience and how it relates to the position you are currently applying for.

Questions? Go to career.ucla.edu or email ccadmin@career.ucla.edu