



SOUTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Alumni Mentor Program

Mock Interview Activity

The goal of mock interviews is to create a realistic interview experience for students. Practicing interviews can help strengthen interview skills, shine a light on interview habits that need improvement, boost self-confidence, and help to calm nerves. Students and mentors are encouraged to be open, and honest, and to provide constructive feedback for the betterment of the students.

This is one of the last activities students will complete in the alumni mentor program. They should attempt to put the lessons they've learned in previous activities into practice when conducting mock interviews with their mentors.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Before the mock interview, students are encouraged to contact SDSU's Office of Career Development and schedule a time to meet with a career coach. The career coach will share interview tips and will point you to resources that will help make your interview a successful experience. More information can be found [here](#) or you can contact them directly at (605) 688-4425 and careers@sdstate.edu.

QUICK TIPS

Here are some easy tips that will make a positive impact on the interview experience.

- ✓ **Do Your Research** – Take time to research the company before your interview. You should have a working knowledge of their product, business model, clients, and key players of the organization. Review their website, LinkedIn page, and recent news articles.
- ✓ **Know Where You're Going** – A few days before the interview, plan your travel route and time (expect traffic), parking, and where to go once you're in the building.
- ✓ **Arrive Early** – This will help you acclimate to the environment and give you time to collect yourself, use the restroom or review your notes.
- ✓ **Make a Positive First Impression** – Your first contact with your interviewer should start with a smile, direct eye contact, a firm handshake, and introduce yourself.
- ✓ **Nonverbal Communication** – Maintain a good posture and eye contact during the interview.
- ✓ **Take Your Time** – Don't rush your answers to questions. It's easy to speak quickly and ramble when nervous. Collect your thoughts and take your time in providing a thorough, yet concise, answer.
- ✓ **Ask Questions** – ALWAYS come prepared with questions for the interviewer.
- ✓ **Exit Like Your First Impression** – Leave the interview the way you started it with a smile, a firm handshake, and thank them for their time.
- ✓ **Post Interview Follow-Up** – Send a thank you note (ideally handwritten but email is fine) to all interviewers.



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CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL MOCK INTERVIEW

Below are some general guidelines for mentor pairs to follow for their mock interviews.

Schedule the Mock Interview: The details of when and how the mock interview will take place will be decided by the student and mentor. Be sure to give ample time so both parties can come prepared.

Resume: Students should come with a copy of their updated resume. Make sure to make any edits or updates that were discussed during the Resume & LinkedIn Activity.

Dress to Impress: Dress for the job you want. Even when conducting a mock interview, students are encouraged to wear the same attire they would wear to an actual interview.

Interview Environment: If possible, conduct the mock interview in person and in a professional environment like a conference room. Simulating a real interview environment better prepares the student for the real event.

Mentor Interview Questions: The mentor is expected to operate in the role of interviewer and should come prepared with a series of questions. They are welcome to create their own list of questions, but some commonly asked questions have been provided.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in the position?
- How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations?
- Do you prefer working independently or on a team?
- What type of work environment do you prefer?
- What do you consider to be your professional strengths?
- What do you consider to be your professional weaknesses?
- Describe your dream job.
- Tell me about the toughest decision you had to make.
- Tell me about a time you disagreed with a decision. What did you do?
- How would previous coworkers describe you?
- Why do you feel you are the best candidate for the position?

In addition to any of the questions listed above, the mentor should consider including a few challenging questions. This will give the student the experience of using their critical thinking skills to work through the challenging questions in the moment.

DEBRIEF

After the student and mentor have completed the mock interview, they should take time to debrief by answering the following questions:

- How would the student assess their performance during the mock interview?
- How would the mentor assess the student's performance?



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- In what ways did the student shine during the mock interview?
- How can the student improve for future interviews?
- Review the Quick Tips listed above. Did the student model these behaviors?
- What other feedback would the mentor offer the student that hasn't already been discussed?
- What questions/comments would the student like to share?