Nursing Job Search:
Preparing for Interviews
Types of Interviews

- Career Fairs/Open Houses
  - Brief opportunity to make positive first impression
  - Could possibly lead to longer interview at or after the event, so be prepared.

- Screening Interview
  - May be over the phone, via video or in person
  - Often relatively short: 30 minutes or 1 hour

- Second or On-Site Interview
  - Usually meet with multiple people at different organizational levels
  - Can be entire day - maintain energy!
What Do Interviewers Look For In Candidates?

• Ability to apply core skills (e.g., clinical, interpersonal, etc.)
• Ability to collaborate with others
• Alignment with organizational values
• Enthusiasm and interest in position
• Honesty and integrity
• Confidence and coachability
Before the Interview

- Know what information you want to convey about your interest and qualifications in advance
- Check online for any interesting developments at the hospital/facility and in the applicable specialty
- Review and practice commonly asked questions
- Formulate questions to ask
- Have a mock interview or practice using Big Interview
- If possible, request a schedule and list of people you will meet during the interview day
Before the Interview (cont’d)

For in-person interviews:

• Make sure you are clear on the location of the interview and how to get there

• Aim to arrive to interview site about 15 minutes early for in-person interviews

• Dress professionally; if you need to arrive in scrubs due to time constraints, let the recruiter know ahead of time.

• Bring portfolio with extra resumes, pen, paper, etc.
Special Cases

• Phone Interviews
  • Test phone reception, Smile for increased energy in voice

• Video Interviews
  • Test video/audio reception, Have good lighting and uncluttered background, Dress professionally

• Asynchronous Interviews
  • Practice with _Big Interview_
Types of Interview Questions

- **Alignment/Interest**
  - “Tell me about yourself.”
  - “Why are you interested in this hospital/facility?”

- **Behavioral**
  - “Give me an example of ____.”
  - “What strengths do you bring to this position and how have you used them?”

- **Case**
  - “Suppose ____ occurred with one of your patients...how would you respond?”

- **Issues**
  - “What concerns you about health care today?”
Tell Me About Yourself: Tips

• Your answer should typically last from 30 to 60 seconds.
• Your answer should trace relevant themes in your background.
• Your answer should touch on the most relevant highlights from your experience.
• When you are finished, the interviewer should know why you are interviewing.
Tell Me About Yourself: Basic Answer

“I am a senior here in the School of Nursing interested in pediatric nursing. During my time at Penn, I have gained key clinical and teamwork skills during my summer externship and my rotations. I have also been active in various community service activities.”
“I will be graduating from the School of Nursing in May (or December). My interest in nursing was sparked when I served as a camp counselor and realized that I was drawn to issues related to the health of the campers. While at Penn, I have especially enjoyed my pediatric rotations and summer externship at a pediatric hospital.

I have also continued working with children as a tutor and mentor. In all of these roles, I’ve enjoyed building relationships with families as well. In fact, it is Hospital A’s emphasis on family-centered care that makes me excited about the possibility of working there. Pediatric nursing would be a great way to combine my passion for young people and health with my clinical skills.”
Why This Hospital/Facility?

• Search the website for:
  • Mission / Core values / Philosophy of Care
  • Interesting research, projects, and initiatives
  • Specific programs: Nurse Residency, Externship Program

• Recall highlights from:
  • Previous experience at the hospital
  • Previous conversations with those who work at the hospital.
Examples of Employer Information

Newark and Wilmington Residencies

- Women's and Children's units
- Labor and Delivery
- Postpartum and Neonatal Continuing Care Unit
- Critical Care
- Successful residents will be hired as staff nurses within the Critical Care units of either the Wilmington or Newark campus hospitals.
- Units that may be hired include Cardiovascular ICU, Medical ICU, Neuro ICU, Post-Anesthesia Care, Surgical ICU, Trauma ICU and Wilmington Med/Surg ICU
- Emergency Room

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a well-studied leadership style that promotes innovative problem solving to move an organization forward and energize employees by:

- providing a clear vision
- creating high standards of accountability
- respecting each individual as an intellectual

Why Does Transformational Leadership Matter?

Today's health care environment is evolving dramatically, and with unprecedented change comes unprecedented challenges. Forward-thinking, visionary and engaged clinicians will be among the transformational leaders who help to solve health care's new and existing problems.
Behavioral Questions: Important Skill Sets

- Clinical
- Critical Thinking
- Interpersonal
- Teamwork
- Leadership
Behavioral Questions: Telling the Story

• Context: What was the situation/issue?

• Action: What did you do?

• Results: What impact was made?
Behavioral Questions: Example

• **Question:** What is a strength that you would bring to this position?

• **Answer:** “During the course of my clinical experiences, I have found that I have a special ability to establish rapport with families of patients. For example....”
Context: “During my externship, a family brought in a toddler who was visibly agitated and seemed to have a fever. There was quite a wait and one of the parents who brought in the child was getting anxious.”
Behavioral Questions: Example

**Action:** “I brought over some toys that I thought would cheer up the child and assured the parent that he would be seen as soon as possible. I then proceeded to make conversation with the parent and ask questions about the child including his age and what he enjoyed doing.”
Result: “The parent started to become a bit more relaxed, especially as I picked up on the fact that the toddler was her first child. I think that this helped the toddler to feel a bit better as well. As a result, when the parent returned with the toddler for a follow-up visit, she asked for me by name.”
Strengths Exercise

Visualize and describe a time when you demonstrated one of your strengths. Use the C.A.R. framework:

• Context
• Action
• Result
If asked to share a weakness/mistake:

- Be genuine
- Have examples on hand that you will not get flustered discussing
- Discuss how addressing the weakness or mistake has helped you develop as a student nurse
During the Interview

• Stay positive – don’t volunteer negative information or criticize former employers, co-workers, or faculty
• Don’t ask about salary and benefits
• Avoid distracting non-verbals such as fidgeting, hand wringing, poor eye contact, etc.
• Ask thoughtful questions based on your curiosity and interest.
• Inquire about next steps and time-line
• Request contact information (for future follow-up)
Send a thank you email within 24 hours

• Thank interviewer for taking the time to interview you

• Reiterate your interest in the position (assuming you’re still interested).

• Touch on any particularly notable highlights of your conversation with the interviewer.

• Touch on any qualifications that you may have neglected (or not had the opportunity) to mention.
Resources

Interviewing – Career Services Website

Big Interview
How to meet with a career advisor

• Make a video, phone, or in-person appointment. Use Handshake or call 215-898-7530 during office hours (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm)

• Virtual Nursing same-day 15-minute advising available on most Mondays from 12:00-1:00pm via Handshake (space limited; slots open at 9:15am)