Interviewing

First Things First:

- Be confident!
  - Remember that an invitation to interview means that the employer is serious about hiring you
  - Remember that your goals are the same as the interviewer’s goals. They want to find a great fit and you want to be a great fit.
- Always be yourself
  - Present the best version of yourself, not someone else. If you only say what the interviewer wants to hear, you might end up with a job that’s not a good fit.
- Remember: You are also interviewing the company
  - The goal of any job interview is to find a mutual good fit for you and the employer.
- Always ask if you can take notes – this will help you remember key details and provide an opportunity to break eye contact naturally while writing.

How to Prepare:

- Prepare three stories describing times when you faced a challenge and worked to overcome it as an individual or as part of a team.
  - Do NOT put others down in your story. Preferably these stories will be related to work, projects, or classes. Personal stories can sometimes be appropriate, but you want to stay professional. These stories can be used for multiple types of questions.
- Know the company and the job and why you applied
  - Ask: What does this company do? Review the website past the home page.
  - Ask: Why did I apply? Write down what appeals to you about the company and the job.
- Practice standard interview questions
  - Be ready for small talk before the interview: weather, your trip, sports, etc.
  - Tell me more about yourself? Practice talking through your background
  - Tell me about a time when…? See above.
  - Why should we hire you? See above.
  - What are your career goals? Think about how this job would help you reach your goals, but don’t indicate that this job is just a stepping stone to something else.
  - What other jobs are you looking at? Focus on jobs you’ve applied to that are similar to this job if possible. Companies want to know that you’re genuinely interested in their industry.
  - What are your strengths and weaknesses? Be honest, but present the best version of yourself. When talking about weaknesses, stay professional and describe how you’re working to improve.
- Practice tricky interview questions
  - If you were an animal, what would you be?
  - How would you figure out how many stop signs are in St. Louis?
  - Remember: Interviewers are looking for your thought process and how you work under pressure more than a right answer. Talk through your thought process and ask questions if needed.
  - Don’t be afraid of silence with any question. It’s okay to pause and think or buy yourself a few seconds by saying, “That’s a great question…”
• Of course you will probably ask some questions throughout an interview, but you should also prepare in case the interviewer asks an open-ended question like, “Do you have any questions for me?”
  o Prepare 3-5 questions
  o Do NOT ask about salary or benefits
  o Ask about personal experience at the company (e.g. What is your favorite part of working here? What challenges do you face on a daily basis? What skills have been most helpful to you? You can even show off your research: I saw X project in the news – has your team worked on that?)
  o End with questions about process if not already covered: What does the rest of the application process look like from here?
• Concluding the interview
  o End on a positive note by thanking them and reiterating your interest in the role

Presenting yourself at the interview:

• Practice non-verbals before the interview
  o Do a mock interview at the UCC, record yourself answering questions, or practice with family/friends to catch habitual movements and filler words
• Get plenty of sleep and arrive early to the interview
• Dress comfortably but professionally (default dress code is a suit or similar unless directed otherwise)
• Firm handshake
• Open, relaxed stance with good posture
• Smile (especially when meeting people)
• Make eye contact and nod appropriately to indicate that you’re listening. Remember that you can use taking notes as an excuse to break eye contact naturally.
• Practice good personal hygiene before the interview (shower, brush your teeth, etc.)
• Turn off your cell phone or leave it behind

What to bring:

• A portfolio or nice folder
• A few copies of your resume
• A notepad and pen
• Anything the employer specifically requests

Following up:

• Send your interviewers a thank you email or connection request on LinkedIn with a thank you note
• Tip: As you complete each interview, write down your interviewer’s name and something specific you talked about with him/her. Reference that specific item in your thank you email to make it more personal.

Contact the EOC at coe.careers@ttu.edu with any questions.