

Interview Tips & Tricks

**STRATEGIES FOR
TACKLING COMMON
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**



Lyman Briggs College
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

LET'S GET STARTED

Interviews can be incredibly overwhelming; but they don't have to be!

This workbook provides strategies for tackling common interview questions including...

- Tell me about yourself
- Why this position/type of work?
- Tell me about a time when...

Use the information here to prepare your 'interview roadmaps'. This will give you an opportunity to think through your strategy for common questions, and how you might draw upon the experiences you have had in order to best highlight your skills. When you're ready, take the next step and book a mock interview appointment with the LBC Career team on Handshake!

ELEVATOR PITCHES

OVERVIEW

The dreaded 'Tell Me About Yourself' question is so open ended! How do you narrow down what to share with a prospective employer?

Enter: The Elevator Pitch. Use this easy formula to come up with some ideas about what to share with employers in the early stages of an interview.

Within the **context of the opportunity**, consider the following:

- What in your **PAST** has ignited your interest in this work?
- What are you **PRESENTLY** doing to prepare yourself for this work? Think about your jobs, volunteer groups, student groups, academics, etc.
- What impact do you want to make in the **FUTURE**? How will this position/program help you to pursue that?

Let's suppose that you are an LBC student applying to be a ULA.

SAMPLE ELEVATOR PITCH

- My name is Jordan; I'm a Sophomore at MSU studying Biology. **During my time at MSU** I've had the opportunity to work in a research lab with Dr. M, and am a Briggs Ambassador, which is a leadership role in which I give tours to prospective students and their families. As a first year student, I found a lot of my research & leadership opportunities with help from my Chem ULA, and I am excited to empower other new students in this way as well. These experiences have helped me to develop both technical, and leadership skills, which I have brought **into my current role** as an Briggs Ambassador. This position requires me to learn about the incoming students, and adjust my explanation of the college application process, descriptions of Lyman Briggs College & MSU Resources according to their familiarity with the content already. **My long term goals** are to pursue leadership roles in a research lab here at MSU, and so this experience with teaching others technical skills, and helping them to better understand complex material will help me to develop skills related to that work.



INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

ELEVATOR PITCH: ROADMAP

WHAT IGNITED YOUR INTEREST IN THIS WORK?

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY DOING TO PREPARE?

WHAT KIND OF IMPACT DO YOU WANT TO MAKE?



INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

WHY ‘THIS WORK’?

Now that we know a little bit about you, we want to hear more about why you want to pursue this work more specifically. But how do you condense years of interest and experience into one concise answer? Let's narrow it down.

OVERVIEW

While you've probably had an interest in this area for quite some time, we always want to provide the interviewer with **specific, unique experiences** that have contributed to our interest in pursuing this work.

Within the **context of the opportunity**, consider the following:

- What are your **VALUES**? Where do they come from? How do they show up in the work that you do?
- What **EXPERIENCES** have you had that have led you to this work?
- What is **UNIQUE** about your story? How can you bring a different perspective to the work that this employer does?

So, why do you want to be a ULA?

As I mentioned in my introduction, I have always been interested in **science**, and the **leadership** positions that I have had so far have helped me to develop my **communication** and **teamwork** skills. I am excited to collaborate with faculty and other ULAs to create a better educational students for other Briggsies the way that my ULA did for me.

As a first year student, I really struggled with chemistry, and knowing that I could go to someone who understood my experience because they had been through it themselves a student here in Briggs is really meaningful. My ULA was patient with me, and adapted to my learning style. I have tried to embody that same time of approach in my work as a Briggs Ambassador.

When meeting a new student and their family, **I ask them questions** about their interest in science, in MSU and in LBC. **I get to know them, and adapt the information I share to be unique to them.** I will do the same when working as a ULA, seeking to understand what topic areas/concepts students are struggling with, and getting to the root of the problem **in order to be as effective as possible when helping them.** While there are many positions on campus that I could teach and 'do science' in, **I really love the LBC community** and want to help other students to feel supported as a ULA.



INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

WHY 'THIS WORK: ROADMAP

WHAT ARE YOUR VALUES?

HOW DO THEY CONNECT TO THIS WORK?

WHAT EXPERIENCES HAVE YOU HAD RELATED TO THIS WORK?

WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT YOUR PERSPECTIVE?



INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN...

Finally, you'll likely get a lot of what we call, 'behavioral-based questions' throughout the interview process. This is predicated on the idea that past behavior predicts future behavior. It's important to strike a balance between simplicity & detail - but how do you do it?

OVERVIEW

In thinking about experiences that have helped you to develop a skill that an employer is looking for, it's important to have **stories/narratives** that you can easily share. **Look through the job description for skills** and come up with stories about how you know you have those skills using the **PARK method**.

What is the PARK method? We're glad you asked.

- **PROBLEM:** Give us the basic facts. What was the situation? Who were the players? Set the stage for your story.
- **ACTION:** What actions did you take to address the problem? Be specific and focus on things that YOU did, not other people around you.
- **RESULTS:** As a result of all of your work, what happened?
- **KNOWLEDGE:** This is the most important part! What did you learn from this situation? How would you apply it to your work in the future.

Tell us about a time that you failed.

Last semester, I was in a calculus class. **I went to every class and did all of the homework, but I still failed my first test.**

I was committed to getting at least a 'B' in the class. **I decided to go to my professor's office hours for further assistance and joined a study group.**

I ended up passing the class with an 'A'.

I learned that getting help doesn't show weakness. By getting help from my professor and classmates, I was able to really grasp the material and learned better study habits. I know that as a new ULA, I won't know everything. It will be important for me to remain open and curious, and to be willing to ask for help in order to best serve the students that I am working with in the classroom and in recitations.

LET'S BUILD ON YOUR ROADMAPS.

Reviewing your roadmaps and completing mock interviews is a great way to prepare for 'the real thing.'

Book an appointment on Handshake with a Career Advisor.

- Log on to msu.joinhandshake.com
- Click on Career Center, then select Schedule an Appointment
- Select your appointment group (we suggest choosing your college or Interest Area Advising: Health Sciences)
- Select your appointment type
- Choose a time and date that works for your schedule

Questions? Contact us at LBcareer@msu.edu



INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN...

WHAT WAS THE 'PROBLEM'?

WHAT 'ACTIONS' DID YOU TAKE?

WHAT WERE THE 'RESULTS' OF YOUR ACTIONS?

WHAT 'KNOWLEDGE' DID YOU GAIN + HOW WILL YOU USE IT?

