

# **Graduate School Interviews: Before, During, and After**

**Center of Ethnic Psychological Research and Application**

**Florida A&M University**

**Department of Psychology**

**Drs. Huijun Li and Novell Tani**

**January 22, 2021**

Presenters:

- Dr. Huijun Li
- Dr. Novell Tani



[www.famu.edu/cepra](http://www.famu.edu/cepra)

[www.famu.edu/psychology](http://www.famu.edu/psychology)



# Job Well Done!

So, you have just landed an interview with a graduate program?

**This is big!**

The program of your choice has found your application remarkable and now all you need to do is to impress them even more by **nailed your interview!**

## **This guide will:**

- Give an overview of the many components that comprise the interview process.
- Also give tips to make certain of your success.

# The Purpose of Graduate School Interviews

5

---

**The Faculty's Viewpoint:**

To narrow down the number of applicants

---

To decide who is the best candidate for their program

---

---

**Your Viewpoint:**

To get to know more information about the program

---

Meet the program's faculty face to face

---

To decide whether the program is well fit for you

---

To decide if you can see yourself at the institution as a whole

---

# Interview Components:

Graduate School Interviews are very similar to internship/job interviews. The interview process includes four simple components.

**Part 1: Before** Interview

**Part 2: During** Interview

**Part 3: After** Interview

**Part 4: Mock/Practice** Interviews



# Before the Interview

Be sure to:

8

1. Have **knowledge about yourself (activity)**
2. Research and **know about the [program and faculty](#)** before your visit (google one program and 1 faculty)
3. Research and **know about the university ([home page of u. website](#))**
4. Have some prior **knowledge about the career field and various career titles the field has to offer ([APA psychology careers](#))**
5. **Also:**
  - **Practice** [common interview questions](#).
  - **Prepare** questions in advance.
  - **Practice** with mentors, do a mock interview with someone you don't know as well.



## 1. Know Yourself:

9

Because graduate school is a big investment (time, money, etc.), it is essential that you choose the right program that matches your career goals. Consider the following:

- What [attracted you to this field](#)?
- What attracted you to this particular program and school?
- What are your professional goals?
- How will going to graduate school help you reach your goals?
- What experiences have you had that set you apart from other applicants?
- What are you hoping to gain from advanced education?

## 2. Know about the Program and Faculty

10

- Additionally, those interviewing you want to know that you are serious about their program. Therefore, you must demonstrate that you have thoroughly researched the program in question.
- Consider learning:
  - Who the faculty members are, their specialties and research interests.
  - Program requirements.
  - The type of students that the program attracts.
  - The distinguishing characteristics of this program

### 3. Know about the University

11

- Many learning and activities take place outside of the classroom.
- You will be spending a fair amount of time on campus, you may want to consider:
  - The facilities
  - The library
  - Student organizations
  - Support services

## 4. Know about the Career Field

12

- ▶ As graduate and professional programs are very focused, it is essential that you demonstrate your knowledge regarding your chosen career field.
- ▶ Some questions that you should be able to answer include:
  - What occupations can be pursued with this type of education?
  - What are the educational requirements?
  - In what professional associations are people involved?
  - Who are the key people in the field?
  - What are the current trends and issues facing the field?
  - What is the history of your field?

# Remember

- Respond to CALLS OR E-MAILS **promptly and professionally**
  - **Do not say 'yes'** until you are ready to commit
  - **Be clear** if you need more time
- **Read instructions carefully** before calling with logistical questions
- **Be as accommodating as possible** regarding dates offered for your visit - - Go during organized interview visits if offered
- **Follow directions** for planning your visit
- **Be sure you understand:**
  - The structure of the visit; expected arrival and departure times
  - Transportation and lodging arrangements
  - Financial commitments from the Program

# Interview Appearance

- Get a good night's sleep
- Wear wrinkle-free clothes
- Wear little jewelry, perfume and makeup
- Tuck in shirt, pull up pants, and secure with a belt around the waist (gentlemen)
- Items to **avoid** include:
  - Loud colors (preferably black, navy blue, khaki, or grey colors)
  - Low cut blouses
  - Short skirts
  - Clanging jewelry, flashy and long artificial fingernails and eyelashes
  - Sandals/open-toed shoes and character ties

# Appropriate Interview Timing

- ▶ Know the exact time and location of the interview.
  - Download a campus map (for in person).
  - Test out Technology (for zoom/skype).
- ▶ **Arrive 15 minutes early** to freshen up hair and clothes or to sit and wait.



# During the Interview



## The Interview is the Time and Place to Let Yourself Shine!

► Here you want to expand on your academic interests, research experience and skills, professional goals and how this program ties into the big picture.

This is also the time when you can expect any questions that focus on **weaker areas of your application**. So, be prepared.

► Be enthusiastic!

# Key Things To Remember

- The interview begins once you step into the outer office, so be nice to everyone you meet.
- Enter and greet the interviewer(s) with a smile, good eye contact and a firm handshake.
- Always refer to the interviewers by their name (ex. Dr. Tani).
- Listen to question carefully.
- Mention examples and results of your past work.
- Avoid slang (i.e., uh, you know, like).
- Speak in a clear tone.
- When it is your turn, ask questions ( shows responsibility and alertness).
- Take important notes if needed.

# Key Things To Remember

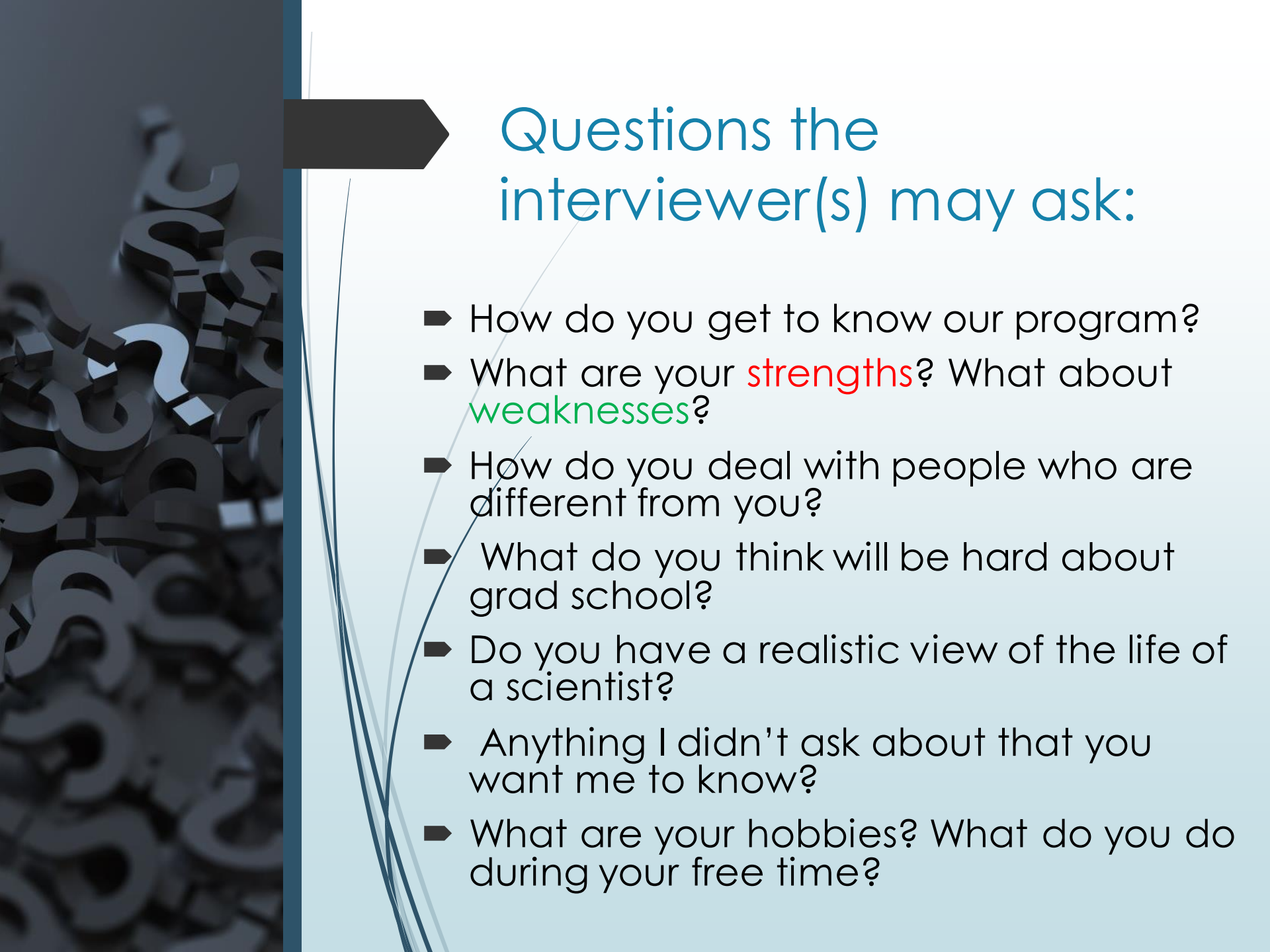
- Ensure great posture and firm handshakes.
- Ensure eye contact and facial expressions.
- Ensure gestures and nervous mannerisms.
- Be aware of your verbal communications (Voice and tone).
- Grammar & sentence structure when communicating via internet.
- Master the ability to organize & express ideas.
- Master the ability to listen and respond appropriately.

# Be Sure To:

- Remember **your goals** during your interview:
  - convey your interest, motivation, and professionalism,
  - gather the information you need to determine if this is the graduate program for you.
- Show that you understand the “big picture” and the details of your project(s).
- Ask questions about faculty/student research.
- Ask good questions about science.
- Accept any responsibility for and any poor grades or blemishes on your record when discussed.


## Be Aware of:

- Bad mouthing other schools and programs
- Talking too much about other schools
- Forgetting to thank each interviewer



## Questions the interviewer(s) may ask:

- How do you get to know our program?
- What are your **strengths**? What about **weaknesses**?
- How do you deal with people who are different from you?
- What do you think will be hard about grad school?
- Do you have a realistic view of the life of a scientist?
- Anything I didn't ask about that you want me to know?
- What are your hobbies? What do you do during your free time?

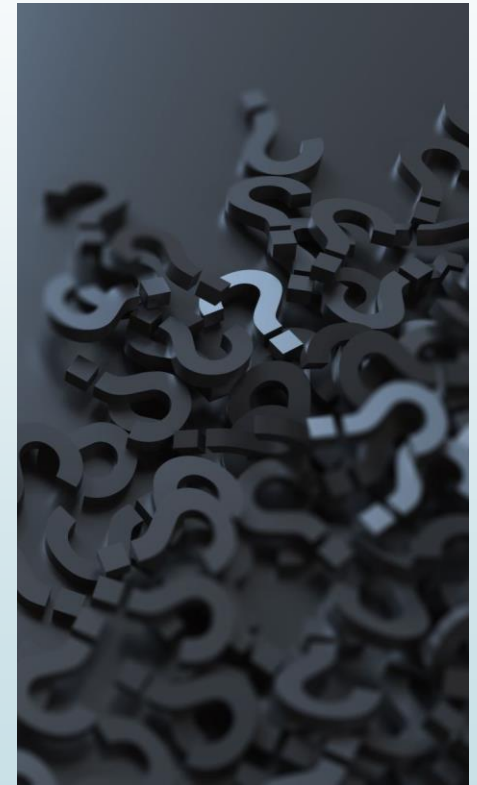


## Questions the interviewer(s) may ask:

- Tell me about your previous research experience.
- What do you enjoy most about doing research?
- What don't you enjoy about doing research?
- What types of scientific problems do you hope to work on? What approaches would you like to apply?
- Why do you think you are ready for graduate school?
- What interested you in our program?
- Why did you do so poorly in \_\_\_\_\_?
- Why do you want to be a scientist?
- What are your career goals?
- Do you have any questions for me?

# Great questions to ask:

- What types of **job/positions** do students who graduate from this program typically take?
- How many **mentors** can I choose from?
- What **Journals** do students publish in?
- Do students attend **professional meetings**; who pays?
- What is the average **time for degree**?
- What is the program **retention rate**?
- Are there **teaching requirements**? Teaching courses?
- Do many students have their own **grants**? *Do they get help writing and submitting grants?*
- Do current students feel **supported**?
- Is the **campus** welcoming and diverse?







# After the Interview

## Be Sure to:

- **Send emails or cards to thank the Program Director(s)**, the program administrator, and student host.
- **Follow up with the program coordinator** to check the status of your application.
- Acknowledge offers with a prompt thank-you;
  - o find out when the program needs a firm commitment.
- **Do not** hesitate to email or call with questions.
- Again, **DO NOT** commit before you are ready to.



Questions?

We Thank  
you!!

Please complete  
the workshop  
**survey!**

# Possible Interview Questions



# Personal Questions

- ▶ Tell me about yourself. (What skills do you have? What experience helped you develop those skills? What are your interests and goals?)
- ▶ What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- ▶ How do you handle conflict?
- ▶ How do you deal with stress?
- ▶ What has been your proudest personal accomplishment?
- ▶ What areas do you feel you could develop or improve?
- ▶ How would your professors describe yourself?
- ▶ Share something about yourself that is not on your resume.



## Academic Experiences (past & current)


- Why did you choose to go to FAMU (or other undergraduate school)?
- Why did you choose to major in \_\_\_\_\_?
- Tell me more about your research.
- What has been your most meaningful experience as an aspiring [ ]?
- What activities have you chosen to be involved in to better prepare yourself for graduate school?
- What were your favorite and most difficult courses?
- If you were allowed one "do-over" for your undergraduate years (or master program), what would it be?
- How has your undergraduate/master program classwork prepared you for the rigor of graduate work?



## Career & Future Goals

- ▶ How would you balance full/part time work or assistantships with graduate course work?
- ▶ Where do you see yourself five years from now?
- ▶ How would you like to contribute to the field?
- ▶ Why are you interested in our graduate program?
- ▶ Who do you most admire in this field?





## Other Questions

- ▶ What was the last book you read (that was not required)?
- ▶ What newspapers and magazines do you read?
- ▶ What do you do in your free time?

# References

- ▶ McDaniel College (n.d.). Acing the Graduate/Professional School Interview. [Powerpoint Slides]. Retrieved from [https://www.mcdaniel.edu/gradschool\\_interview.ppt](https://www.mcdaniel.edu/gradschool_interview.ppt)
- ▶ Milgram, S.L. (n.d.) Preparing For Graduate School Interviews. [PDF]. Retrieved from [https://www.training.nih.gov/assets/Slides-12\\_13\\_2010](https://www.training.nih.gov/assets/Slides-12_13_2010)
- ▶ Western Illinois University (n.d.) Graduate School Interviewing Tips. [PDF]. Retrieved from [www.wiu.edu/student\\_services/career.../pdf/GraduateSchoolInterviewingTips.pdf](http://www.wiu.edu/student_services/career.../pdf/GraduateSchoolInterviewingTips.pdf)
- ▶ From <https://www.elon.edu/u/spdc/students/graduate-school/interviews/>