

Interviewing for Success

SUNY Cortland Career Services

Revised Summer 2024



Connect with Career Services to design your career and life after college

- Conversations about majors and careers
- Document reviews (resume, cover letters, and personal statements) visit drop-in hours!
- Teacher certification information
- Mock interviews
- Internship program
- Student Employment Services
- Volunteer opportunities
- Opportunities to connect with employers (local, state and nationwide) and graduate schools
- Job search, Handshake, and more!

Learning outcomes

- Overview of different types of interviews
- Before, during and after interviews
- Learn how to develop your story and articulate your skills and experiences
- Types of interview questions
- Practice, practice, practice
- Increase your knowledge and confidence to decrease your stress and uncertainty

Types of interviews

- Individual interviews
- Group interviews / panel interviews
- Combination: 1 hour, half-day, full-day, etc.
- AI (Artificial Intelligence e.g. HireVue) interviews

Different modes:

- Phone interviews
- Video/online (Teams, Zoom, Webex, etc.)
- Case-study/working interview
- Second/on-site interview
- Meal interview

** Questions asked in any interview may be traditional or behavioral*

Before the interview

- Take time to prepare – do not wing it
- Know yourself and know the organization
- Read the job description carefully
- Develop your story and talking points
- Plan what to wear (specific to industry)
- Location, location, location (confirm location and know how to get there on time – whether in person or via videoconference)
- Keep all communication with all organizational parties professional, respectful, and friendly
- Practice answering questions with mock interviews

Developing your story

- Assess yourself!
- Step outside of yourself and think about how others would describe your personality – list 5 main descriptors
 - What would some of your supervisors or peers say about your strengths, special skills, and competencies?
- Now jump back into yourself and think about some key experiences you have had both positive and negative – things you have learned from (related to your career goals)
- Match these qualities to things in the job description to think of examples and small stories you can share
- Anticipate possible questions and practice in the mirror, with a friend, and/or with a mock interview

Research and preparation

- Research the organization (website, print materials, staff profiles)
- Carefully study the job ad and make a list of the job requirements
- Understand where the position fits in the organization.
- Develop a list of references that will be needed for reference checks
- Anticipate possible questions and create “talking points” for each job requirement

More preparation

- Be ready for versions of “tell me about yourself” and “why do you want this position?”
- Be ready with at least five stories that demonstrate examples of your most relevant skills/competencies
- Prepare some questions to ask your interviewer(s) at the end of the interview (You can have them written down)
- Research and set your salary range (typically not discussed during an interview, but rather during an offer)

During the interview

- Arrive early (5-10 minutes early is ideal)
- Have something to write on (padfolio) and copies of resume or other portfolio materials
- Greet each person professionally.
 - Practice your digital or in-person handshake
- Keep it positive, diplomatic, and never badmouth a previous employer!
- Display relaxed and confident body language
- Maintain good eye contact and show active listening
- Be alert, calm, and enthusiastic

During the interview

(continued)

- Participate in the conversation – don't dominate
- Communicate thoughtfully, honestly, and be confident (but not cocky)
- It's okay to use "the pause" and it is okay to ask for a question to be repeated to be sure you understand it
- Demonstrate appropriate sense of humor
- Know how to close, reiterate interest in the position, and offer to provide any needed follow up
- Make a good first, middle, and last impression

Types of interview questions

- Traditional questions – straightforward about experience, background or personal qualities
- Behavioral questions – based on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future performance
 - Interpersonal skills
 - Leadership
 - Communication skills
 - Planning and organization
 - Initiative
 - Flexibility
 - Decision-making
 - Creativity
 - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Technical or situational questions – discipline specific and shows you would solve/approach problem

Sample interview questions

- Tell me what you know about our organization.
- Why is customer service so important in business today?
- Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your boss.
- Tell me about a time when you were swamped with work and how you handled it.
- Describe a difficult decision you had to make.
- What is an accomplishment you are proud of?
- Tell me about an area you are currently growing in.
- What qualifications do you have that make you believe that you will be successful here?
- Give me an example of a time you learned something new.
- What are your long and short-term goals?
- How has your college experience prepared you for your career?

Questions you may ask

- What does success look like for this role?
- What does the 30/60/90 day look like for this role?
 - Can you describe an average day in this role?
- Why do you like working for this organization?
- What challenges might you see for this role?
- The company's mission statement emphasizes [fill in the blank]. Can you tell me how that comes across in daily life working here?
- What is the performance review process like and how do you measure performance?
- What is your timeline for the hiring process/next steps?

After the interview

- Send a thank you note
 - Email is acceptable
 - Written notes stand out
 - Keep it professional and positive
- Stay in pursuit – follow up, but don't haunt
 - If you haven't heard back in two weeks (or by the follow up time they shared), follow up to see if they need any additional information for you to make their decision
- Be patient
- Keep job searching – multiple offers lend to more choice and may lend to negotiation

Practice, practice, practice

- Develop a list of questions and ask someone to mock interview you
 - Start by having the “interviewer” ask traditional questions like, “please tell me about your experience and why you are interested in this job.”
 - Then, have the “interviewer” ask behavioral questions like, “tell me about a time when you showed initiative at work. What did you do? How did it work out?”
- Set up a mock interview with Career Services to continue your preparation and practice and assess what you’re doing well and where to grow

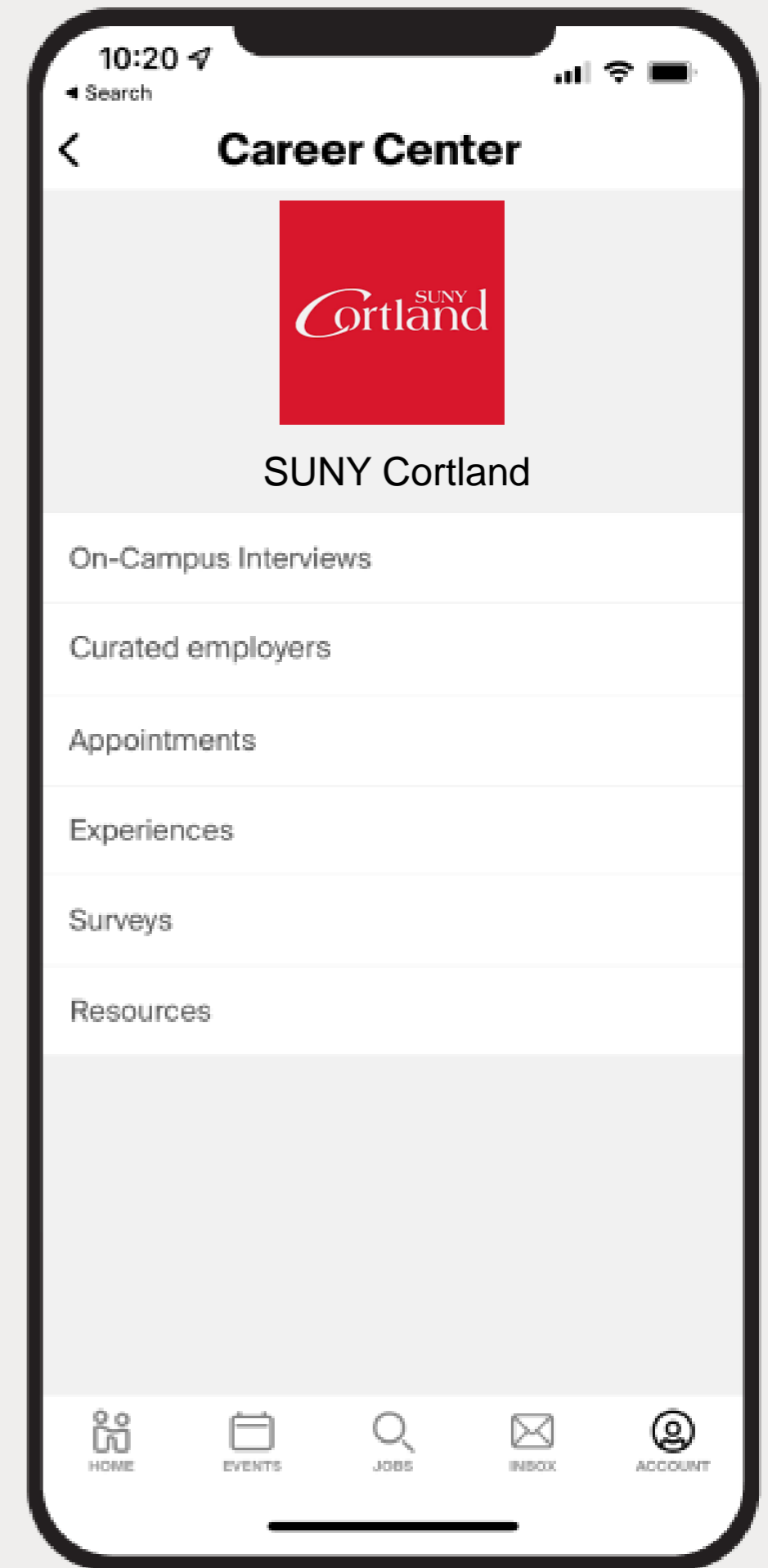
Articulate career readiness



- Use your interview to show how you have built these important skills during your college and work experiences
 - These skills are the “big 8” that all employers, regardless of industry, consistently mention they are looking for in new hires

Handshake

- Your job search and networking tool
- Jobs, internships, volunteer opportunities
- All students and alumni have FREE access
- Set up appointments for mock interviews and other support
 - cortland.edu/handshake



Next steps

- Work with Career Services!
- Schedule a mock interview and other appointments:
 - via Handshake
 - Call 607-753-4715
 - Stop-in office at Van Hoesen Hall, Room B-5
- Resume and cover letter drop-in hours during semesters, in-person or via Webex: Mondays through Thursdays, 1-3 p.m.

Questions?

- Contact career.services@cortland.edu if you have questions about this presentation or interview preparation

Acknowledgement to sources: National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), University of Michigan School of Information Career Development Office

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