

## Tips for Success on the Interview Trail

### Preparation: Build a Foundation for Success

- Identify a mentor that you trust to help guide you during the interview and match process.
  - Start the process early (M1), you need to show your interest early to learn how to set yourself up for success
  - Identify a vascular surgery mentor. If you lack a vascular program at your home institution, participate in national mentor match programs to identify a mentor elsewhere.
  - Participating in regional or national conferences offers the opportunity for networking to establish relationships that can be vital to your success during the match process. Most annual meetings offer scholarships or grants to support attendance.
- Obtain letters of recommendation from those faculty who know you best and are able to attest to your strengths and unique characteristics.
- Have some research experience on your resume if you plan to pursue an academic program. It may be hard to ensure a program that you are interested in this component if you have not previously demonstrated interest or experience.
- Know your resume inside and out. Have nothing included that you cannot discuss at length, especially research. Fluff will be identified and reflect poorly on you as an applicant.
- Ensure you review your ERAS and CV. Spelling and grammatical errors will reflect poorly. Have another person review the final draft before submission.
- Geographic signaling on ERAS- don't specify a specific geographical region unless you truly have specific restrictions as this may limit your interview invitations. If you have no restrictions, consider specifying that 'I am looking for the best possible fit for my training'.
- Include hobbies that are important to you, these are frequently what may set you apart and make you a memorable candidate.
- Reflect upon and be able to clearly communicate what you want out of surgical training and a residency program. Remember that you are interviewing the program as much as the program is interviewing you. Consider the following:
  - Location—is moving realistic for you, for your family?
  - Program type: academic, private, hybrid
  - Required academic development/research time
  - Specific training exposure: complex endovascular, limb salvage, trauma, etc
- Practice your answers to common interview questions ahead of time. You want to be confident, not rehearsed.
- Take every opportunity to participate in Mock Interviews. You want to be comfortable during your interview, not visibly nervous or unsure of your answers.
- Have a ready explanation for any gaps in your resume, i.e. gap years, time off during medical school, etc.
- Know the weak spots in your application, such as low board scores, and have a ready response if interviewers inquire into these areas.
- Be honest and truthful when answering, share what makes you unique from other applicants.

- Research the program and faculty you will be interviewing with. Demonstrate interest clearly.
- Respond in a timely manner to all communications and comply with all deadlines and listed expectations, including additional application components beyond ERAS.

### **Performance: Complement Your Preparation with Your Personality**

By receiving an interview invitation, you have already met that program's screening criteria based upon your application. You now have to show that program that you are someone that they want to work with for the next 5 to 7 years.

- Choose clothing in which you are comfortable and will instill you with confidence. Ensure clothing is pressed and wrinkle-free. If conducting interview via zoom, ensure adequate lighting and a background free of distractions.
- Avoid distracting jewelry or hairstyles. Wear professional clothing. You want the interview focused on your qualifications, not your wardrobe.
- Virtual tips: ensure a strong internet connection, in a quiet place, free of interruptions.
- Arrive early and well-prepared the day of the interview. Do not arrive late or skip any portions of the interview. With other candidates vying for the same spot, you don't want to be memorable for the wrong reasons.
- Be kind and courteous to both faculty, trainees, and support staff. Anyone, including program coordinators, can be involved in the feedback process.
- Remember to make eye contact when speaking with interviewers and answering questions.
- Listen intently to ensure you understand the question being asked and demonstrate that you are engaged in the conversation.
- Take a breath or a moment as needed to compose yourself before answering questions.
- Be able to clearly articulate your interest in vascular surgery and ensure that you leave the interviewer with no question about your dedication to pursuing a career in vascular.
- Have a ready answer for common interview questions:
  - Why do you want to do vascular surgery? What led you to vascular surgery?
  - What is your favorite operation and why?
  - What is a situation that you struggled with (or some similar variation) and how did you overcome it/learn from it?
  - Where do you see yourself in 5 or 10 years?
  - What kind of practice/career do you want and how can this program help you achieve this professional goal?
  - How has your prior experiences help prepare you to be successful as a surgery resident?
- Always ask a follow up question when prompted, one that communicates your interest and demonstrates your knowledge of the program or faculty interviewing.
- Take advantage of opportunities to interact with current trainees. Trainees will provide honest feedback about their own experiences and can help you to understand the culture of a program.
- Send a thank you letter or email to each program after your interview. This communicates your appreciation for the efforts necessary to organize residency interviews and will leave the program with a positive impression of you as an interviewee.