

The following advice and tips were collected by Career Pathways Panelist prior to the 2017 GSA Annual Meeting. Panelists are listed below:

- Roger Cooper, Newmont Mining Corporation
- Bret Dixon, Anadarko Petroleum Corporation
- Alicia Kahn, Chevron Energy Technology Co.
- Mike Kelley, NASA Headquarters
- Johanna Kovarik, U.S. Forest Service
- Bill Laprade, Shannon & Wilson, Inc.
- Aisha Morris, UNAVCO, Inc.
- Jeffrey Rubin, Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue

Do you have any interviewing tips or strategies to help students get hired?

• **Roger Cooper:**

Perseverance in applications – keep sending them out. And when you get to the interview just try to be yourself (but don't crack jokes – that can be over-revealing). Short of failing some technical test or they can't move towns the reason people get hired (and there are usually more than one "acceptable" candidate from the interviews) is that the interview team liked them. They felt at ease with them. That's much less a cultural issue than it was decades ago – mining is very diverse in human terms now but an issue of how we get along. Sometimes interviewees (and especially new hires) also underrate the power of the person at the front desk. Be unassuming, cheerful, helpful and nice as opposed to imperious and overconfident.

• **Bret Dixon:**

Be friendly, be open about what motivates you, be inquisitive, share what makes you unique, be team oriented, good communication skills. You need to be passionate about geoscience and have a desire to learn and build upon the foundation you have created via your academic education.

• **Alicia Kahn:**

Practice interviewing. Go to your career center and solicit help and mock questions. Most interviews have situational questions so try to think of specific scenarios that will help describe your personality, communication skills, scientific prowess, team suitability, leadership. The more you interview the more polished you become. Be sure to tailor your answers so they are appropriate/relevant to that which you know (do your research) about the company/organization/department to which you are applying.

• **Mike Kelley:**

Work on your communication skills, both written and verbal. Practice both in front of people who are willing to give you critical comments – good and bad. An inability to articulate coherently can be the death of an interview. Likewise, a résumé with poor grammar and spelling mistakes is destined for the shredder.

Diversify. A candidate who is skilled in several areas and can show how those skills are complementary will have an advantage. It's important to be able to verbalize how your

particular skill set interacts and applies to the desired position. Be honest about your skills, background, and experience. It is important to market yourself well, but don't try to bluff your way into a job. You're likely to get in over your head quickly and it will be obvious if you're not up to the challenges of the position.

Never underestimate the value of personal contact. Talk to people at meetings. Let prospective employers see that you are enthusiastic and self-motivated.

- **Johanna Kovarik:**

Be honest and genuine – and remember that the interview is also a good opportunity to ask the hiring team questions about the position. Engage and make the interview a conversation, but keep your answers concise and to the point. Practice interviewing with mentors or friends with experience hiring, and ask them for current hiring questions that may be challenging to answer. After you apply for a position, and are “referred to the hiring official”, I recommend calling the hiring contact (not the Human Resources contact) on the job you are interested in. That is a great opportunity to get your name on the map with the hiring official and to make sure the position would be a good fit for your skill set. If you were under consideration/interviewed but not selected for a position, after the interview process reach out via email or phone to the hiring official to thank them for the opportunity and inquire about ways to improve. The land management agency world is quite small – networking and relationships can be very important, so make sure to learn as much as you can from those around you and be persistent and vocal about your career goals.

- **Aisha Morris:**

The most important thing for me to tell students is to do your homework ahead of your interview. The organization you are interviewing with will want to know that you are aware of their core values and mission, and you have already put some thought and effort into how you can strategically move the mission forward.

Also, practice answering a variety of questions so you have a general idea of how you can address different topics an interviewer might want to know about you. For example, many interviewers are interested in learning how a candidate handles competing priorities and pressure. In advance of your interview, prepare a short anecdote highlighting a situation in which you demonstrated your ability to succeed in challenging situations.

- **Jeff Rubin:**

Similar to what I offered in response to question #1: do your homework in advance. If you're relying on sending in a CV and/or application to do the job, reconsider. That said, pay attention to what you submit: quality is more important than quantity. Whether in an application or interview, skip the buzzwords, rehearsed statements, and trying to predict interview questions. As trite as it sounds, be yourself, because it's really difficult to fake it for an extended period, and most positions have probationary periods. If you need practice at presenting yourself, talk to friends, faculty, family: the goal is to be comfortable in your own skin, not prepared for a recitation of rehearsed responses. I'll repeat from an earlier response: there's no substitute for effective written and verbal communication. That's more than just



grammar and spell-check, but grammar and spelling actually do count. A poorly written application or CV is an easy cull for someone going through a large stack. It's pretty likely you can thrive if you have the opportunity to describe your "Noble Prize," bit for the rest of us, remember that effective communication is likely to be a critical part of any job you apply for, regardless of whether it's stated in the position description, and it's absolutely a critical part of your interview.

Interviews are two-way streets, so be observant: a well-designed interview process or assessment center can make a prospective employer look good, just as a poorly designed one (NOTE: irrespective of your performance in it) may be a sign for you to look elsewhere. Talk to employees you might meet while you're waiting, and remember that what you say and do outside the interview room counts, too.

Remember: whether internship or full job, if you're applying or interviewing it's because you and your prospective employer have an intersecting need and both parties should see it as an opportunity. The better you can demonstrate how you can make the most of that opportunity for both parties, the better your chances of getting the position.

Last but not least, recognize that you can do really well, make a great connection with your prospective employer, be a great fit, and still not get the position. To the degree possible, actively seek feedback and see if there's a way to remain in consideration for future opportunities. You'll know you've made a positive impression if you don't get a position you interviewed for but one of your interviewers refers you for another position a few weeks later.

