



Preparing for the Successful Interview

Office of Training and Diversity
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Preparing for the Interview

- **Do your homework.** Learn as much as you can about the researcher and his/her laboratory and be prepared to discuss and ask questions about the research. Information about the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) laboratories is available at <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/about/organization/dir/default.htm>. Search the National Institutes of Health (NIH) 2007 Annual Report for information about NIAID researchers at <http://intramural.nih.gov/search/index.tml>.
- **Summarize your research.** Fine-tune your summary of your research experience into a talk that is 5 minutes or less.
- **Conduct a self-inventory.** Have a clear understanding of your immediate and long-term research and educational goals. Know your research style, strengths and weakness, and qualifications for the position.
- **Practice.** Enlist a friend and conduct a mock interview. Rehearse what you will say and how you will say it. Ask your friend to critique your comments.
- **Dress appropriately.** Business or business casual is acceptable attire for an interview at NIAID.

During the Interview

- **Talk about the interviewer's research.** Show your interest and knowledge of the research by asking questions about the work.
- **Talk about your research.** Describe your research experience in 5 minutes or less. Be prepared to respond to why the research is important and its relevance to the laboratory for which you are applying. Describe how you will apply your research experience to the laboratory.
- **Ask questions about mentorship.** Choosing the right mentor for you can mean the difference between a mediocre research training experience and one that fully enhances your professional career. Refer to the list of Questions To Ask the Potential Mentor fact sheet for suggested questions.
- **Describe your attributes.** Emphasize your skills and what you will bring to the laboratory. Include examples that demonstrate these skills.
- **Discuss your educational and/or career plans.** Talk about your plans for medical or graduate school and/or your next career step. Be clear about your interests and career goals.
- **Ask to speak with other trainees in the laboratory.** Trainees offer a different perspective and can provide input that may help you to determine whether the laboratory will be a good match for you.
- **Clarify next steps.** Ask when you might hear about whether you will be made an offer. Let the interviewer know of any time constraints you have for accepting an offer.

After the Interview

- **Thank the interviewer.** Follow up the interview with a quick note—e-mail is generally fine—thanking the interviewer and reemphasizing your interest in the lab. Now is also the time to include any pertinent information about yourself that you may have forgotten during the interview. E-mail addresses for all NIAID staff are available through the NIH Enterprise Directory (<http://ned.nih.gov/>).
- **Do your homework.** Now that you have more information about the laboratory, its team, and its research, conduct additional research online to determine definitively your interest in a traineeship at the laboratory.
- **Contact other trainees in the lab.** Consider viewpoints from current trainees in the laboratory by e-mailing them any questions you have.
- **Check in.** If you have not heard from the interviewer with whom you wish to work within 3 weeks, send a friendly e-mail inquiring about the position and reminding him or her of your time constraints.

Wendy J. Fibison, Ph.D., Associate Director, OTD
301-496-6400
wfibison@niaid.nih.gov