A huge thanks to our Interview Panel participants, Alka Kanaya and Yiwey Shieh!

These notes are based on their insights and my (Urmimala’s) opinions. Any mistakes are entirely mine and should not be attributed to our speakers.

**Before:**

The most important step in interviewing is preparation. First, **cultivate enthusiasm**. Do not think about whether you want the job. You can worry about that when they offer it to you! Until then, focus on nailing the interview. Even if you are not offered the position, or choose not to take it, you will make an impression. Make sure it’s a good one! Second, **gather intelligence**. Every position has stakeholders, and you need to engage with those stakeholders in advance. If you are looking for a faculty position, ask your peers and mentors to introduce you informally to people at the institution/ department/ division. You know more people than you think! Do not forget to talk to staff as well as faculty- they know what is really going on. Ask them to share their perspective, listen carefully, and follow up with an email thank-you. This will serve you throughout the process.

For a panel interview with standard questions, it is fine to ask for the questions in advance. If you receive them, write out answers and **practice** them with trusted mentors. Consider recording yourself- as cringe-inducing as it is to watch yourself, it really helps. Also, if diagrams or visual aids help you get your message across, don’t be afraid to use them.

For individual interviews, when you receive the list of interviewers, look them up! You would be astonished at how few people I interview take the trouble of glancing at my faculty profile. Try to understand why they are interviewing you and ask about overlapping interests. If you cannot find a point of engagement with an interviewer, prepare some general questions about the location or institution. You don’t have to have everything scripted, but **you should have some planned topics** for each person. Also, you can turn back to any of your stakeholder sources, and share your interviewer list. I recently reached out to a friend because I had an internal interview scheduled with an important person I had never met. She said “I guess the only piece of advice may be to not worry if they don’t smile during your interview. They may come across as a bit stern and a little chilly, but don’t let that derail you!” Can you imagine how much more nervous I would have been if I hadn’t known that in advance?!

For virtual interviews, **check your virtual setup and have a backup plan**. Make sure you have cell phone/ email contact information for everyone so you can connect in another way if your videoconference software or wifi fail you. Check your lighting, and make sure your attire works.

**During**

During interviews, **do not rush yourself**. It is better to take a moment to gather your thoughts than to meander verbally, and pauses are preferable to “ums” and “you knows.” If you don’t understand a question, ask if you can restate it to ensure your understanding. If you feel like your answer did not land with an interviewer, ask about it. I recently asked an interviewer if I answered her question, and she said, “no, you didn’t. I wanted to you to tell me when you actually messed up, not share an awkward situation.” She gave me the chance to answer again, and I was able to provide the type of information she was looking for.
The advice to “be yourself” is a cliché because it is so true. It’s better to say honestly, “please bear with me, this is my 5th interview of the day and I need a moment to gather myself,” than it is to be slow to respond and have the interviewer assume you are not interested in the conversation. During a long interview day, you might run out of questions. Don’t say, “all my questions have been answered.” Instead, you can say you are sure you will have questions later, and ask to follow up.

**Take notes.** Otherwise, all the interactions from the day(s) will blur together. It’s better to write than type, because written notes telegraph interest and typing can feel distracting, but ask permission and explain that you want to retain as much information as possible. No-one will mind.

On the interview day, if you are not at your best, for any reason, only you can decide how much to share. Consider that interviewers are also humans, and are more likely to be understanding if they know that there is a barrier for you. **You can control what you share, you can’t control what they assume if you choose not to share.** It is better to reschedule an interview when you have a migraine than to squint and wince your way through it (trust me on this one!)

Remember that **you are interviewing for every second and with every person** - the admin staff, over dinner, on the shuttle, et cetera. It’s OK to be you- I once signed up a division chief for twitter and taught them how to use it over dinner - but know that whatever you do or say will inform how you are perceived.

**After:**

Make sure you **follow up.** Be substantive- don’t say, “thank you for your time.” Mention something concrete from your interaction with them. If they mentioned a paper, look it up and then connect it back to your work.

**Take-home:**

**Anyone can nail a job interview.** Sure, it helps to be socially graceful and quick on your feet, but preparation trumps charm every time. People who interview faculty candidates know that this is high-stakes for you, and they won’t hold nervousness against you. They are looking for how you would fit into their work environment, and you can get there if you put in the time.