It's that time of year again; interview season! Most of you have probably been sending out materials and applying for summer internships or post-graduation jobs for a while now. Resumes and portfolios are hitting the printers and you’re ready, and waiting to hear back from your dream firms. If you’re still putting the finishing touches on your portfolio, have a look at the American Society of Landscape Architects' Portfolio Review Week, where faculty outlines some pointers for portfolio success. While waiting for your internship job emails to filter in, review a great tool to dust off your interview skills.

Practice, Practice, Practice
Many students talk with other students, faculty, and local practitioners can be great ways to gain valuable interview skills. Keep an eye on your school’s calendar — many schools offer “mock interviews” with local landscape architects as a way to help students prepare. At your school’s career fair, firm representatives are eager to speak with students and see the work you are producing. These impromptu meetings can be great opportunities to practice your interview skills with active employers and professionals from a variety of firm types across the discipline. At the end of your internship discussion, don’t hesitate to ask for feedback and pointers for improving your interview skills going forward.

Know Your Materials Handy
Have physical copies of your resume, design sheets, and/or portfolio with you at your career fair and for on-site job interviews. If you applied for the position prior to the interview the hiring manager/interviewer has more than likely already skimmed your materials, but physical copies give you the opportunity to expand on your experience and show just how much you are appreciative of their time and ask they keep you updated on the position. After a few days it is crucial your card (or email) is a must and should be sent as soon as possible (best the same day). Let the interviewer know you are new to the profession and still developing your professional toolkit.

know Your Own Work
This seems like a no-brainer, but can be the difference between being able to field tough questions and being caught off guard about your own materials. Interviewers are likely to ask you to relate your personal experience to the firm, not just how they relate to projects of interest. Take the time ahead of your interview to look through your materials and refresh yourself on projects you may have worked on a while back. It’s even a great opportunity to research projects or images you can reference specifically should an interviewer ask you to pinpoint a project of personal interest or something that might demonstrate a relevant skill.

Know Your Strengths (and Your Weaknesses)
Interviewers are going to ask you about both strengths and weaknesses. Be honest! Saying you have skills that you don’t understand how to back up will likely come back to haunt you later on. Let the interviewer know you are less familiar with a certain tool or task, however you would like to continue to develop your skills in that area. Good employers will understand that you are new to the profession and still developing your professional toolkit.

Know the Firm
If you applied for a position ahead of time then you’ve hopefully already researched the firm you are interviewing with. Either way, take the time and do some digging. What kind of work do they do? What drives their design? What’s their process? How is the office structured? How many people are in the office? etc...

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Ask Questions
When you go to interview for a position you expect to be asked plenty of questions, but one of the things that sets strong interviewers apart is the questions they are prepared to ASK rather than ANSWER. Use your knowledge of the firm to prepare a few questions ahead of time that show you are actively interested in their practice. This is your opportunity to interview them, too! Depending on the interview stage, your questions should vary between you and the firm. What support do they have in place for emerging professionals? What tasks might you undertake for your first month as an entry-level employee? Does advancement within the firm work, and what advancement opportunities might be available within your first year? And of course, any other questions about the position, the office (committees, social groups, continuing education events)? What are the next steps after interviewing?

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Follow Up
After your interview, don’t forget to follow up. Take an active role in maintaining dialogue with the firm. At the end of your interview, ask the interviewer for one of their business cards so you can contact them directly. A “thank you” card (or email) is a must and should be sent as soon as possible. During the days to follow, ad the interviewer know you are appreciative of their time and ask they keep you updated on the position. After a few days it is important to follow up via email or phone. If unsuccessful, don’t worry — it’s even a great idea to keep in touch with the hiring manager/interviewer. If you applied for a position ahead of time then you’ve hopefully already researched the firm you are interviewing with. Either way, take the time and do some digging. What kind of work do they do? What drives their design? What’s their process? How is the office structured? How many people are in the office? etc...

Best of luck in your job/internship searches!
Need some help furthering your landscape architecture portfolio? Sign up for ASLA’s Virtual Portfolio Reviews!

The week of February 24 is ASLA Portfolio Week, offering students and emerging professionals the opportunity to meet virtually with seasoned professionals. Brush up your portfolio and interview skills with this hands-on learning opportunity, and find the best landscape architecture hiring and mentoring up and coming landscape architects. Open for February 21.

What ASLA event have you enjoyed the most?
Respond: Tag an instagram post with ASLASTUDENTASLA or email membership@asla.org with pictures and/or responses to be featured in our next newsletter!

Questions?
202-898-2444
membership@asla.org

Looking Ahead
Feb 24-28 ASLA Portfolio Review Week
April
May 04 ASLA 2020 Student Awards REGISTRATION Deadline
May 17 ASLA 2020 Student Awards ENTRY Deadline
ASLA Student Advisory Committee's Newsletter
For Student Members – By Student Members