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#PhD INTERVIEW EXPERIENCE + TIPS/TRICKS (mine were for #biomed)

A thread.■

Before I begin, all of you are awesome and never let anyone tell you otherwise■

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You made it. You have an interview for a #PhD program! And we are in the middle of a pandemic! Be proud of this accomplishment, you are amazing ■

It took me a while to become confident and actually acknowledge this as something to be excited about and not anxious about.

Remember that the committee is impressed and wants to recruit you.
They would want to impress you with their the same way you want to impress them.

Now let's move on to interview prep.

An interview really is you marketing your best self as a candidate to the committee/your faculty interviewers.
If you know your interviewers prior to your interview (I also had the opportunity to pick them), read up on them, their research, recent publications/projects.

Faculty interviewers will be impressed if you have an understanding and interest in their work. It is also a good conversation starter.

One on one interviews with faculty will have more room for conversation than panel interviews.

That said, most of your time will still be spent with questions about your ability to succeed in their lab/program, your interests, and professional capability.

Answering questions might be the most challenging part of an interview and preparation is key.

Before you go for your interview, prepare 1-2 minute conversational answers for some major topics (your motivation, your relevant research experience, interest in the field, etc.). This way you could answer concisely and touch on the points you want to get across.

During the interview, you want to make sure you are honest with your responses and present your true self. That will add to your confidence and will relay the same to your interviewers.

Be yourself and be confident in yourself (what I said to myself before my interview)

TIP: If you had some "red flags" on your application (I did), be open and address them and make sure you bring it back to how you are now ready for a #PhD program.

Remember: We are humans and our journeys will not be perfect, what matters is how we overcome our challenges.

Talking/answering questions about your RESEARCH.

This is a big one for most #PhD programs.
For research focused programs, this will be the major part of your interview.
Like I mentioned before prepping answers for these will help you be concise.

The next aspect you will questioned on is your conceptual knowledge behind your research and your problem solving skills.

You should make sure you have thorough background understanding of your primary research experience/project.

TIP: Revisiting presentations helped me a lot.

Critical thinking and problem solving skills are fundamental for a grad student.

At an interview, you might be asked to present different approach to your hypothesis or talk about potential limitations.
Or you might be presented a limitation and asked how you would proceed.

For example, "The data rejects your hypothesis, what do you think could be the reason?" or "You mentioned you would like to test this in the future, what is your reasoning for that?"

These questions will vary depending on your field but they will be most likely asked.

When answering these questions, make sure you are clear and remember to start with a background to your reasoning. This will relay both your critical thinking and conceptual knowledge in your field.
TIP: If you are unsure of something or you don't know, it's OK to let them know

Answering questions about PROFESSIONALISM

Faculty interviewers who are looking to recruit you will be investing in you (and pay you) through your PhD. In this sense, they are potential employers.

Aside from research, they will also want to understand you as a professional.

There likely will be questions about your professional ethics, communication skills, and teamwork ability.

While answering these, use examples from your previous experiences. This will demonstrate your capabilities as a professional to your interviewers.

Asking about their LAB/PROGRAM.

You should definitely prepare specific questions for your interviewers to ask about their lab/program (current projects, opportunities, funding, etc.)

This will help you understand the environment you would do your #PhD in and show your interest

As an international student, this is very important for me to understand on how the program will fit my goals.
And remember to ask about the faculty's mentoring style and lab environment.
Particularly, these are things that will help you make a decision down the line.

Final TIP:

Make sure you take a lot of notes during your interviews. It will help you make a decision later on.
Make a summary of the points you noted and make specific comments that you can check back on for each program.

I use the pros/cons system (Thanks @DTPtoPhD!)

After your interview, relax, pat yourself on the back, and wait!
Good luck to all of you going to interviews this season. You got this!■■
Let me know if you have any questions ■
_____End of thread_____