

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (USC)

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 20 minutes

OF INTERVIEWERS: One faculty member, one pharmacy student

TYPE OF INTERVIEW: Two-on-One

LOCATION: Los Angeles (Southern CA)

INTERVIEW AGENDA (8AM Group)

7.00 to 8am: Sign-in, talk to current Pharmacy Students

8 to 9am: Pep talk with the Dean of Admissions

9 to 10am: Interviews

10 to 11am: Writing Sample Assignment

11 to 11.30am: Q&A session with current Pharmacy Students. End.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Why do you want to become a pharmacist?
- 2) What do you think are some challenges facing pharmacy?
- 3) What do you think are some negative aspects of being a pharmacist?
- 4) What are some negative aspects about pharmacy?
- 5) What are some of your extracurricular activities?
- 6) Do you think you can manage handling academic responsibilities and extracurricular activities while in pharmacy school?
- 7) Tell me about your pharmacy experience. How many hours?
- 8) Did you apply to only California schools? USC or UCSF? (hardest)
- 9) Do you have any questions for us?

ESSAY QUESTION

Not really an essay. It's more of a test of whether you can follow directions. People call it "tricky" but it's quite simple once you understand what they're asking for. This is the set-up: You read a science article for ten minutes. My article was about whether surgeons should allow their patients to take aspirin before surgery and the consequent ramifications. You have a sheet of paper where you take "notes." That sheet has ten lines on it where you can only write five words on each line (total of 50 words- 5 words, 10 lines). Do not write more than five words on each line or you will be docked points. The article will then be taken away but you get to keep the notes sheet. Then, you have 15 minutes to write a SUMMARY of the article. Do not interject with your opinions because that is not what the prompt asked for. Write in pencil. The prompts might change but always remember to read carefully and follow directions.

OVERALL IMPRESSION

By the end of the interview, I couldn't believe how good of an impression USC imprinted on me. They definitely marketed themselves well. The emphasis was on networking and connections. That's how the world works. Going to USC will open up a lot of doors and create networking opportunities with fellow USC pharmacy alums. Case in point: over 50% of pharmacists in Southern CA graduated from USC. A bunch of current students said that they actually chose USC over UCSF and said that it was the best decision they ever made. I really liked the school's direction and emphasis on networking and pharmaceutical care (PC). Also, if you definitely want a career in retail, go to USC.

USC has rolling admissions for interviews. The earlier you send in PharmCAS and secondary applications, the better chance you have of getting an early interview (don't procrastinate and apply early!). There are 4 interviews in the year with the first in November. They accept a small number from each of the four interviews. If you don't get in during your interview round, your application will be looked at during the second, third and fourth interview rounds. Therefore, you have a better chance of getting in if you apply early and have good stats. At the end of the process, they start taking people off the waitlist as earlier accepted students choose other schools (i.e. mostly UCSF).

My USC interview was two days after my Touro interview so luckily, I had interview answers still fresh in my head. I was in the first interview session (November) in the first hour (8am), which made the situation a little scary. I got called in and walked into a small room where the professor sat behind a desk and the pharmacy student sat across from me in a chair. The woman professor wore all black and looked very stern. We introduced ourselves and began with the professor saying, "Okay, go ahead. Start bragging about yourself." I stared at them for a moment and just went for it. I started talking, laughed here and there, and everyone became super friendly. The professor asked all the questions and took notes on a clipboard. The pharmacy student didn't ask any; she only answered my questions.

In previous years, the USC interviews were closed file, which means that the interviewers don't know anything about the interviewee. So they wouldn't know if you had a 3.0 or 4.0 GPA. Therefore, your communication skills would be extremely critical. This year, however, they changed it a little bit. Still closed file but interviewees (students) wrote a short blurb about themselves (mini personal statement) that the interviewers would have access to before the interview. When I walked in, I saw that the professor circled certain things on that blurb; consequently, she asked about my pharmacy experience and volunteer commitments. When you hear yourself rambling, it's best to stop and collect your thoughts. At the interview, I heard myself saying "you know" and after that, I tried my best to refrain from using those kinds of fillers (i.e. umm, like).

At the end of the day, I could actually see myself as a BruTro (Bruin-Trojan!). I was the first one to come back into the auditorium - twenty minutes- (scary) but I still got accepted. Quality of answers should always be priority over quantity of minutes. With each interview, you have to see yourself at that school. In essence, being confident but humble at the same time. It's a fine line to tread but it's important to get a good grasp of both. Keep in mind, though, that you can't spell suck without USC...J/K!! (Your USC class will be comprised of UCLA grads...at my interview, 20 out of 30 were Bruins!)