Sample Interview Questions

The following are actual interview questions Ford School students were asked during campus, phone and on-site interviews in recent years. While some questions may not apply to your policy area, similar types of questions may be asked of you in a variety of interest areas.

To best use these sample questions, don't just say "ok, I know how I'd answer that"! Actually answer the question out loud or in writing. Practice putting complete, articulate sentences together, not just the thoughts or examples you "plan" to use. As much as possible, use specific examples from your experience that demonstrate the point you are making. There can be a big gap between knowing what you want to say and actually getting your response to sound intelligent, articulate and concise! P R A C T I C E !!!!!!!!!

- Tell me about a problem you had to solve, either in your work experience or your course work? How did you go about it? In retrospect, what would you have done differently?
- What was your favorite class - why? Least favorite?
- What did you like best/least about the Ford School of Public Policy?
- From your classes – what is the most important thing you have learned (in a specific class)?
- So, why should we hire you?
- Talk about a time when you may have worked on a project and your supervisor failed to provide much direction for the project. What did you do?
- What is your preferred working style?
- How do you approach a problem or solve a problem?
- Tell me about a time you had to speak in public. How did you prepare for the presentation?
- Tell me about a group project where one of the group members was difficult to work with or didn't pull his/her weight. How did you handle this?
- What would your colleagues or classmates say are your greatest strengths/areas for improvement?
- What are you looking for in your first job?
- What do you know about our organization and why do you think you could like to work here?
- Why do you want to work here?
- Tell me about a time you worked with a large data set? What was the project? What were the challenges?
- How would you evaluate the Ford School? What criteria would you use and how would you measure it?
- Interpret this graph for me. (Assume recruiter has handed you a graph relevant to his/her work.)
- What is the relationship between correlation coefficient and r2?

- Describe some project you worked on where you used econometrics or your quantitative skills?
- What are some of the policy issues you've dealt with generally? Those you've analyzed?
- What type of experience have you had evaluating policy?
- At your previous employer – why should funding on your program be continued? What might be a better way to evaluate the success of that program?
- Where do you see weaknesses in this project?
- Talk about your experiences working with community members.
- Talk about your quantitative abilities with time series data.
- As an environmentalist, you might be called to lobby for something that isn't in line with your ideals. How would you handle that situation? What would you do? Give me an example of time when you were in that situation? How did you handle that?
- What areas of community development interest you most?
- Tell me about a time when your ethics were challenged and how did you handle it?
- Most of our researchers end up choosing either a qualitative or quantitative approach to research. At the beginning of your work here you might do both, but which actually is your research preference - qualitative or quantitative?
- Based on your resume I see you've done a lot of advocacy work? How would you feel about the revenue generating/profit maximization focus of our economic work? Would you be uncomfortable with the revenue generating side of economic development?
- You have been asked to propose spending USAID $ on creating democracy in Cambodia. Create a program there for us. What is your spending plan?
- Pick a state. Tell me the five most important policy problems in that state. Now pick one of those issues - what is the nature of the problem? What could be done about it? What information would you need to gather?
- What do you think of the welfare reform bill?
- How would you design a benefit cost analysis of a welfare-to-work program?
- How would you implement a brownfields redevelopment program? Who would be involved?