Welcome, Word Nerds!
Joke of the month

I now pronounce you he and she.

When English Majors Marry

(BIZARROCOMICS.COM)
Tips and tricks for effective interviews

> Jamie Swenson, senior copywriter, UMAC
Interviewing is personal

> Sooooo ... why should you listen to me?

> Well, I have no formal training
> Wait — that’s a bad start

> MANY of us have no formal training
  – We may not think about the underlying strategy behind our interviews
Goals

> Think about *how* and *why* you interview the way you do

> Generate conversation about interviewing strategy
Interviewing for different mediums

> Different strokes for different ... mediums
  – Print (or Web)
  – Video
  – Speeches

> Consulted:
  – Hannelore Sudermann, *Columns* managing editor
  – John Haslam, associate vice president and general manager, UWTV external affairs
  – Jack Martin, senior director of strategic communications
Interviewing for print and the Web*

*This section focuses on interviews for print, but much of it applies to all interviews.
Location, location, location

> When possible, conduct interview in subject’s space
  - Puts subject at ease
  - Personal details emerge

> If time allows: Go out in field, hang out informally and see where story leads you
Structure of interview

- Explain purpose at outset
- Make subject comfortable
- Have at least a rough plan
Question types

- Closed questions
- Double-barreled questions
- Open questions
Strategies

> Be mindful!
Strategies

> Be mindful! Listen!
> Be open to where conversation is going, man
> Help guide organic conversations
  – The wait
  – Tell me more
  – And then what happened?
Strategies

> Esoteric subject matter: playing dumb
  – Doesn’t mean *being* dumb
  – Ask subject to clarify again and again (and again)
  – Often necessary for highly technical quotes

> Example: Student designing apps for an HIV research and intervention project in Kenya
  – Acronyms (HOPE, CATCH, ICTD)
  – Assumed knowledge
  – Impact? Real-world examples?
To record or not to record?
Recording an interview

- Great for full-on, in-depth profile
- Or if someone talks fast
- Or if it’s highly technical terrain

- BUT: Consider time to transcribe
Writing or typing notes

> Typing
  – Good way to capture full quotes
  – Distracting?

> Writing
  – Less formal
    > BUT: Don’t rely on memory
    > Be vigilant — if you don’t get something at first, ask subject to clarify
Interviewing for video

From Homelessness to Solving for Success — Undaunted
Video

> Very different medium, additional challenges to consider*
  – Get subject to answer in own words
  – Restate questions in own answer

> Preparation:
  – Send question *areas* ahead of time
  – Practice answering questions beforehand

*Technical resources available at end
If you are *in* interview:
- Stay out of way
- Keep quiet during response
“Interviewing” for speeches
Speeches

> Also a very different medium

> Access to speaker is important
  – Personality
  – Topics of importance to subject
  – What makes them tick

*Resources available at end*
Speeches

> Preparation
  – Understand speaker’s background, voice, views
  – But *also* understand context of speech

> Bring OAM — formal or informal — to meeting
  – Objectives
  – Audience
  – Message

> If a *big* speech, have outline prepared
Speeches

> “Interview”: More of a briefing/discussion/conversation
  – Share basics of what you envision with speaker
  – Review OAM

> But also:
  – What does speaker need you to say?
  – What is important to speaker?

> Find where speaker’s personality meets your strategy
Additional resources

> Audio recording
  – iTalk
  – TapeACall

> Video: technical tips outside scope of presentation
  – YouTube: StoryGuide
  – UW Video: Advice is free!
Questions and conversation starters

> How do the dynamics change when you’re interviewing in a lab/noisy space?
> How do you interview professors who are afraid you will water down their research?
> What questions do you ask when you’re writing or shooting a philanthropic story?
> What do you do when you are struggling to get the answers you want?
> Anything else?????