MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

03/24: Resume Writing and Interviewing

The Capstone Experience

Dr. Wayne Dyksen
Dr. James Mariani

Department of Computer Science and Engineering
Michigan State University

Spring 2026



From Students…
…to Professionals

Resume and Interview Goals

- Resume
  - Get Noticed
  - Get an Interview
  - Get in the Door
- Interview
  - Tell Your Story
  - Get a Good First Job
  - Start a Successful Career

Caveats Resume Writing & Interviewing

- Partly…
  - Science (Spock)
  - Art (Captain Kirk)
- Lots of Opinions
  - Varied
  - Sometimes Conflicting
- Always Exceptions to Every Rule
- Do what works for you.

Resume Writing and Interviewing

- Resume Writing

- Interviewing

Resume Challenges

- Competition
  - 100's or 1,000's of 10,000's of Resumes
  - Lots Similar
  - Lots Qualified
- Typical Usage
  - Visual Scan (< 10 Seconds)
  - Optical (Machine) Scan
  - Often Not Read in Detail
  - Often Discarded

How will your resume stand out?

MSU CTO Search
- 72 Resumes
- ~650 Pages

Resume *Nota Bene*

Every Last Detail Matters

If...

- ...cannot find relevant information quickly
- ...email wrong and bounces back
- ...phone number wrong
- ...not visually appealing
- ...not professional looking
- ...no answer and no voicemail
- ...etc...

then...

- ...pitch your resume and move on to the next one

Resumes 101

- Exactly One (Full) Page
  - Not More
  - Not Less
- Simple Formatting
  - Black and White
  - No Graphics
  - Machine (Optical) Scan-able
- Honest
- Contains…
  - Contact Information
  - Objective
  - Education
  - Skills
  - Experience
  - Other Activities

Contact Information

[1 of 3]

- Name
- Email Address
  (Use “Professional” Email Address)
  - No
    - TheGamingWizard@hotmail.com
    - BarCrawler@gmail.com
  - Yes
    - dyksen@msu.edu
    - wayne@dyksen.com
    - wayne.dyksen@gmail.com
- US Mail Address
- Include “Permanent” Addresses
  - Both Email and US Mail
  - What if I want to contact you two years from now?

Contact Information

[2 of 3]

- Phone
  - Current
    - Your Mobile Phone
    - No Mobile Phone?
      - ❖Get one.
      - ❖Providers offer (cheap) pay-as-you-go service.
  - Permanent
    - Your Mobile Phone?
    - Your “Home” Phone (Parents’)?
    - What if I want to contact you two years from now?
  - Get and Setup “Voicemail” for All Phones

Contact Information [3 of 3]

- Phone
  - Fix your voicemail "not here" messages.
    - No
      - "Hey there! You've reached the voicemail of the funnest person at MSU. Leave your number and I'll give you a ring but only if you're one of the lucky people."
      - "I'm not here. Leave a message."
      - You've reached 517-555-1212. Please leave a message.
      - "Hi. I'm sorry I missed your call. Please leave me a message and I'll get back to you. Thanks for calling and have a great day."
    - Yes (Include Your Name!)
      - "Hi. This is Wayne Dyksen and you've reached my voicemail. Please leave me a message and I'll get back to you. Thanks for calling and have a great day."

Objective

- Very Concise (One Line)
- Indicate internship or permanent employment.
- Avoid flowery BS.
- Examples
  - To secure a summer internship as a software developer.
  - To secure permanent employment as a software engineer.
  - To secure permanent employment as a software engineer that utilizes and expands my skills in computer science.
- Be specific only if you really mean it. Why?
  - To secure permanent employment as a database administrator.
  - To secure permanent employment as a network administrator.

School Address
Calvin College
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
(616) 555-1234

Bob Dyksen

bob.dyksen@gmail.com

Permanent Address
2175 Burcham Dr.
East Lansing, MI 48823
(517) 555-1212

Objective To secure a full time position as a software engineer that utilizes my skills and expands my knowledge in computer science.

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Objective Secure an internship that will expand my knowledge and experience in computer science.

Interview Tip

- Be ready to answer questions like…
  - “What do you like to do?”
  - “What kind of positions interest you?”
  - “Where do you want to be in five years?”
- Know Positions
  - Program Manager (PM) or Developer (Dev)
  - Associate Software Developer
  - Associate/Sr. Consultant
  - Etc…

Your GPA

- Used by Companies for Screening
  - Use Varies by Company
  - If (GPA < Threshold) then { No Interview }
  - Threshold Varies by Company and by Major
- On Resume
  - Probably, but Almost Certainly (IMHO)
  - Easy to Find
  - If GPA not there…
    - I'm thinking…
    - I'm going to…
  - Remove After First Job

So-So GPA's

- Compute "Sub" GPA's
  - Overall vs CSE
  - Freshman vs Sophomore Through Senior
  - Freshman/Sophomore vs Junior/Senior
  - Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior
  - Etc…
- Give a Good Explanation
  - Was Immature. Grew Up.
  - Not Motivated When Freshman, Am Now
  - Etc…

Education

- Degree — BS
- Major — Computer Science
  - Cognate — Business
  - Minor — Mathematics
  - Date Expected — Expected, May 2026
- Institution — Michigan State University
- GPA
  - Cumulative — 3.50/4.0
  - CSE — 3.70/4.0
- Relevant Courses
  - Number — CSE 231
  - Title — Introduction to Programming
  - Topics in Parentheses — (Python)
- Non-MSU Institutions
  - May Include Other Colleges/Universities
  - Do Not Include High School

Nota Bene: Use "Expected" on resume, LinkedIn, etc. until you have the degree.

Minor or Cognate

- Highly Valued by Companies
- Leverage
  - On Resume
  - During Interview
- “Cognate”
  - Unknown Term
  - From Latin “Cognatus” Meaning “Equivalent to”
  - Confusing Label On Resume
  - Explain Cognate Like a Minor
  - Be Careful Not to Misrepresent as Official Minor

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Education B.A., Computer Science, Expected December 2002 Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI

- CS GPA: 3.50/4.0, Cumulative GPA: 3.13/4.0
- CPSC 186, Introduction to Data Structures with C++ (C++, Visual Studio 6.0)
- CPSC 210, Web Site Administration (HTML, CGI, Perl, Apache Web Server)
- CPSC 230, Data Structures and Algorithms (C++, Java, Visual Studio 6.0)
- CPSC 247, Software Engineering (C, UML)
- CPSC 270, Operating Systems (C++, Java, Perl)
- CPSC 300, Computer Graphics (OpenGL)
- CPSC 330, Databases (mySQL, Oracle, Java)
- CPSC 370, Networking (TCP, UDP)
- CPSC 380, Programming Languages (C++, ADA, LISP, Smalltalk)
- CPSC 392, Ethics in Computing
- CPSC W80, Cryptography and Computer Security
- ENGR 220, Computer Architecture (SPARC/MIPS, Assembly Programming)

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- CPSC 380, Programming Languages (C++, ADA, LISP, Smalltalk)
- CPSC W80, Cryptography and Computer Security
- ENGR 220, Computer Architecture (SPARC/MIPS, Assembly Programming)

Course Related Projects

- Linux Kernel Network Router (CPSC 370)
  - Implemented a kernel-resident network router.
  - Routed IP network traffic across two or more NICS.
  - Optimized routing times via cached routes.
- Virtual Private Network (CPSC W80)
  - Designed a virtual private network protocol.
  - Implemented a VPN via TCP/IP tunneling.
  - Utilized DES3 cryptography for secure IP data packets.

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Objective Secure an internship that will expand my knowledge and experience in computer science.

Education

BA, Computer Science — **Calvin College**
Expected May 2008 — Grand Rapids, Michigan

- CS 108, Introduction to Computing (Java)
- CS 112, Introduction to Data Structures with C++ (C++)
- CS 212, Data Structures and Algorithms (Java)
- CS 214, Programming Language Concepts (Java, Lisp, and Scheme)
- CS 232, Operating Systems and Networking
- CS 262, Software Engineering
- CS 352, Computer Graphics
- ENGR 220, Introduction to Computer Architecture (SPARC Assembly)
- MATH 161, Calculus I
- MATH 156, Discrete Mathematics for Computer Science
- MATH 256, Discrete Structures and Linear Algebra

Interview Tip

- Be ready to answer questions like…
  - “So, what did you do in CSE 422?”
  - “Tell me about a favorite course.”
  - “Tell me about your Linux Kernel Network Router.”
- Know Your Courses
  - Topics
  - Books and Readings
  - Projects
- Know Some Projects in Depth
  - Requirements
  - Implementation
  - Complexities
  - Cool Features



Skills

- Simple List
  - Languages
  - Operating Systems
  - Software Systems
  - Software Packages
- Avoid
  - Relative Trivialities (e.g., Microsoft Word)
  - Weak or Non-Existent Skills
  - BS (Effective Team Member, Customer Oriented, etc.)
- Possibly Classify (But Only If Room)
  - Familiar
  - Proficient
  - Certified

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Skills C, C++, ADA, Smalltalk, Lisp, Java, Perl, HTML, Windows 2000/XP, UNIX, Linux, Visual Studio 6.0

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- MATH 161, Calculus I
- MATH 156, Discrete Mathematics for Computer Science
- MATH 256, Discrete Structures and Linear Algebra

Experience

Skills

- Java, C#, C++, PHP, CSS/XHTML, Ruby (and Rails), SQL, UML, Visual Studio 2005
- Windows Server 2003 System, Exchange Server 2003, IIS 6.0, SQL Server 2005
- Microsoft Windows Vista, Tablet PC platform, Media Center platform, Windows Mobile 5.0
- Eclipse IDE, Linux, Apache, MySQL, PostgreSQL, other open source products
- Adobe Premiere Pro 2.0, Adobe After Effects 7.0, Macromedia Fireworks 8.0

Interview Tip

- Be ready to answer questions like…
  - “How proficient are you in Perl?”
  - “What have you written using Ruby?”
  - “Have you ever administered an Exchange Server?”
- Know
  - Your Skills
  - Examples of Using Your Skills
  - Your Limitations

Experience

- Position Description
- Company
- Dates
- Bullet List of Accomplishments
  - Concise
  - Specific
  - Begin with Action Verb
  - One Line Per Bullet
  - Sentence Fragments Okay
- Only Most Relevant and Most Recent

What do you do if you do not have many or any computer science internship experiences?

Skills C, C++, ADA, Smalltalk, Lisp, Java, Perl, HTML, Windows 2000/XP, UNIX, Linux, Visual Studio 6.0

Experience

Software Engineering Internship **The Boeing Company, St. Louis, MO**

- Made corrections in T-38C cockpit software Summer 2002
- Used System Integration Lab (SIL) to test changes to MDP software
- Developed ACMI debrief application for T-38C aircraft (SDT, C++, Visual Studio 6.0)
- Participated in software development processes

Software Engineering Internship **The Boeing Company, St. Louis, MO**

- Participated in SEI Level 3 Activities Summer 2001
- Developed automated testing utilities for the AHWCS project (Java, C++)
- Tested the launch control software for the *Harpoon Block II* missile
- Managed group web pages

Program Analyst Internship **Mutual of Omaha, Omaha, NE**

- Designed and implemented software (Java, some C++)Summer 2000 - Spring 2001
- Involved in a major company project
- Worked closely with associates from other companies (Trilogy, ICONIXX)
- First telecommuting intern

Experience

Program Manager Intern — **Microsoft Corporation**
Summer 2006 — Terminal Services

- Investigated solutions for a large software architecture problem
- Initiated communication with external teams for alternative solutions
- Delivered a V1 specification encapsulating the first step in the solution

System Architect and Administrator — **Michigan State University**
Summer 2005 — College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

- Designed and implemented a major Windows Server 2003 and Exchange Server 2003 installation to handle 2,000 users
- Maintained two concurrent Active Directory forests with trusts for migration purposes
- Recovered overnight from a university-wide security issue

System Administrator — **Michigan State University**
Summer 2003, Spring and Summer 2004 — Clara Bell Smith Center

- Designed and implemented a Windows Server 2003 and Exchange Server 2003 installation
- Converted from stand-alone desktops to fully managed desktops
- Packaged custom applications for group policy rollout

Programmer — **Michigan State University**
Summer 2002 — Men's Basketball

- Investigated ways to use technology in the collegiate athletic environment
- Developed web service for contacting players via mobile phone
- Administered desktops with Windows XP, 2000 in a mixed Windows/Novell environment

Skills

- Java, C#, C++, PHP, CSS/XHTML, Ruby (and Rails), SQL, UML, Visual Studio 2005
- Windows Server 2003 System, Exchange Server 2003, IIS 6.0, SQL Server 2005
- Microsoft Windows Vista, Tablet PC platform, Media Center platform, Windows Mobile 5.0
- Eclipse IDE, Linux, Apache, MySQL, PostgreSQL, other open source products
- Adobe Premiere Pro 2.0, Adobe After Effects 7.0, Macromedia Fireworks 8.0

Experience

Microsoft Corporation — **Program Manager Intern**

Terminal Services — Summer 2006

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Michigan State University — **System Architect and Administrator**

College of Agriculture and Natural Resources — Summer 2005

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Michigan State University — **System Administrator**

Clara Bell Smith Center — Summer 2003, Spring and Summer 2004

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Michigan State University — **Programmer**

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Interview Tip

- Be ready to answer questions like…
  - What kind of corrections did you make to the T38C software?
  - What's an SEI Level 3 activity?
  - What's a V1 specification?
  - What was the university-wide security issue and how did you recover?
- Know Your Summer Internships
  - Concise Description
  - Software Systems
  - Your Responsibilities
- Know Some Specific Accomplishments

Other Activities

- Including…
  - Clubs
  - Awards
  - Hobbies
  - Outside Interests
- Concise
- Avoid
  - Trivialities and/or BS
  - High School Activities and/or Awards
- Omit If None

Experience

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- Involved in a major company project
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- First telecommuting intern

Hobbies

- Licensed Private Pilot
- Piano & Pipe Organ

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- Adobe Premiere Pro 2.0, Adobe After Effects 7.0, Macromedia Fireworks 8.0

Awards

- First Place, Memories Category, Microsoft Start Something Amazing Awards, 2005
- Choral Honor Award, Okemos High School, Okemos, Michigan, 2004

Activities

- Calvin IMPROV, Leader
- Capella Choir of Calvin College

Good idea to include links.

Leveraging the Capstone Course

Michigan State University **East Lansing, Michigan**
Software Developer **Fall 2021**

- Worked on a team of five students in MSU senior capstone course.
- Designed and implemented Amazon Web Services: AWSome Availability Zones.
- Worked directly with Amazon to develop a complete project plan.
- Produced video about project and delivered software product.
- Awarded the Design Day Amazon Sigma Award.

Good idea to include links.

Interview Tip

- Be ready to answer questions like…
  - “So, what do you do for fun?”
  - “What do you do when you’re not working?”
  - “Do you have any hobbies?”
  - “What’s ACM?”
  - “What did you do accomplish as president of WIC?”

Bonus Resume Tip

- Learn how to use Microsoft Word!
  - Use Paragraph Spacing
    - Do use paragraph spacing between lines.
    - Do not use empty lines, i.e., just hit return.
  - Use Paragraph Styles
  - Use Tabs
    - To Line Up Things
    - Do not use spaces, which won't work anyway.
  - Use Right Justified Tabs Tab
    - To Justify Things on the Right Margin Tab2
    - Do not use default tabs and/or space, which won't work anyway. Tab 3
  - Etc...
- Submit PDF, Not Word Source
- Test Print Resume (on Paper)

Bonus Resume Tip

- Single Page Limit

  But...

- Multiple Versions Possible
  - Target For Particular
    - Industry
    - Company
  - Vary
    - Objective
    - Lists of Courses
    - Lists of Course Projects
    - Bullet Points Describing Experiences/Internships

Resume Writing and Interviewing

✓Resume Writing

➢Interviewing

Clean Up Your Web Presence

- Facebook
- X
- Instagram
- Reddit
- Snapchat
- Personal Web Pages
- Etc...

HR people will and do check these things out.

What about your 1st Amendment rights?

Due Diligence

- Research the company.
- Research the interview.
  - Talk with others who have been interviewed.
  - Ask “What style of interview should I expect?”
- Research the interviewers.
  - Get an interview schedule with names and titles.
  - Figure out who does what.
  - Google for interviewer interests and hobbies.
- Research the dress code.
  - Ask recruiter/interviewer.
  - Ask others.
- Do not be surprised.

Interview Styles

- Many & Varied
  - Technical (How does IPv6 differ from IPv4?)
  - Problem-Solving (In the adjacent room are three lights…)
  - Behavioral (Tell me about a time when…)
  - Coding (Write a recursive function that…)
  - Etc…
- Research
  - Types of Interview
  - Questions for Each Type
  - Type to Be Used
- Do not be surprised.
- Practice.



Look the Part

[1 of 2]

- People do judge books by their covers.
- Research the “look.”
- If you want the “part,” “look” the “part.”
- Appearance
  - Clothes
  - Shoes
  - Hair (Style, Length, Colors, …)
  - Body Piercings
  - Etc…

Look the Part

[2 of 2]

- Get Advice From Someone With Taste
  - Styles in General
  - What Looks Good on You
  - Size and Fit
  - Whole Package
    - Clothes
    - Shoes
    - Jewelry
    - Hair
    - Etc…
  - View as Investment
- Do due diligence.
- Expectations for interviewee may be very different than expectations for interviewer or employee.

Your Personal Presence

- Introduce Yourself
- Avoid Nervous Habits
- Make Eye Contact (But Don’t Stare Down)
- Give “Right Length” Answers
  - Long Enough
  - Not Too Long
- Speak Correct English
  - Subjects: I, He, She, It
  - Objects: Me, Him, Her, It
  - NOT
    - “Him and I went to the basketball game.”
    - “Her and me went to the football game.”
- If Necessary
  - Repeat Question to Buy Time
  - Ask for Clarification
- Practice Wearing Interview Attire Including Shoes

The First Question

- What's the first question at many interviews?
- Tell me/us about yourself.
- Be Ready
- Practice Answer
- Avoid
  - Too Short
  - Too Long
  - Too Vague
  - Too Detailed

Bad Comments to Make

...During the Interview

- "I see you just lost that big contract to Acme."
- "Wow, your stock price really took a hit yesterday."
- "It sure looks like the cost of living is high here."
- "Windows 8 was a big mistake."
- "I didn't do well in that course because the professor was terrible."
- "I didn't do well in that course because I wasn't interested in it."
- Etc…

Bad Questions to Ask...

...During the Initial Interview

- “Can you tell me what your company does?”
- “How much will I make?”
- “How much vacation will I get?”
- “Is there dental coverage?”
- “Will you pay moving expenses?”
- “Will I get my own office?”
- “How soon will I be promoted?”
- “Will I have to work more than 40 hours per week?”
- “How is your work/life balance?”
- Etc…

(What if they ask you “How much do you expect to make?”)

Good Comments to Make..

...During the Interview

- “That T-38 looks like a really cool plane.”
- “The 787 looks amazing. Passengers will really like the large structure bearing windows.”
- “I’m running Windows 11 and it’s great.”
- “I’ve been running Tahoe since it was released in beta.”

The Last Question

- What's the last question at many interviews?
- Do you have any questions for me/us?
- What's a really bad answer?
- What are some good answers?

Good Questions to Ask...

...During the Interview

- "Are there opportunities for professional development?"
- "Is there support for advanced degrees?"
- "What career paths are available?"

Okay Questions to Ask…

- "What's the corporate culture like?"
- "What's a typical week like?"

Things Not to Do

- Don't complain about anything like…
  - …your trip
  - …the airline
  - …the hotel
  - …the weather
  - …the interview process
  - …other interviewers
  - ...other companies
  - …etc…
- Don't discuss politics or religion.
- Don't drink alcohol (ever, never, not at all).
- Etc…

Business Cards

- Be ready to handout your business card.
  - Use MSU email account.
  - Include personal URL with link to resume (downloadable).

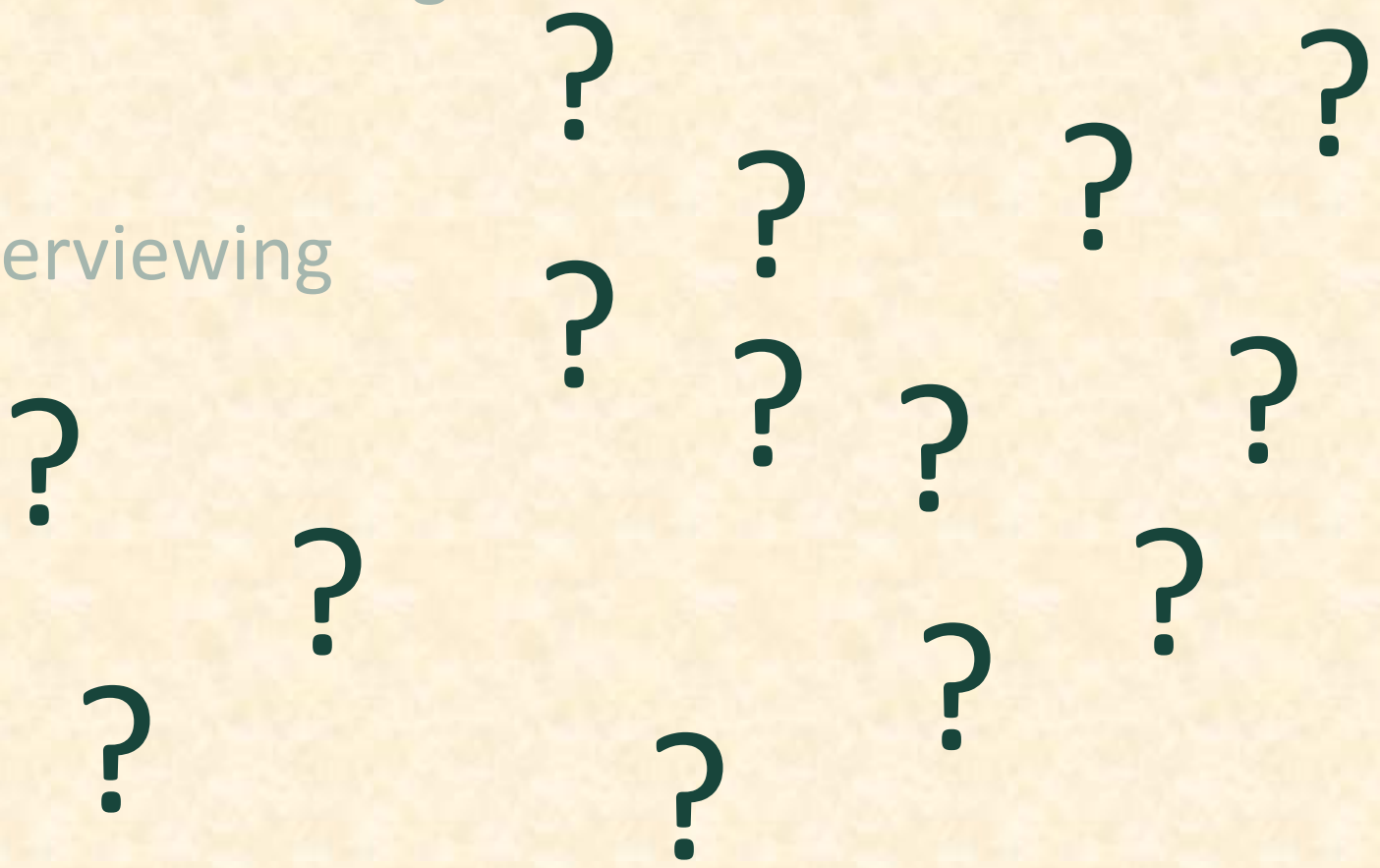


Follow-Up

- ASAP
- Hand-Written Note
  - US Mail
    (Get Business Cards for Address)
  - Buy Nice MSU Note Cards
- Try to Include Brief Personal Comment
  - Related to Interviewer
  - Record Info on Back of Business Card ASAP

Resume Writing and Interviewing

- ✓Resume Writing
- ➢Interviewing



What's ahead?

[1 of 2]

- Upcoming Meetings and Due Dates
  - ~~W11, 03/24,Tu: Resume Writing and Interviewing~~
  - W11, 03/26,Th: Conner Bean
    - CSE/Capstone Alumnus
      - December 2018
      - Team TechSmith
    - Senior Engineer, Technical Lead
    - Stripe
  - W12, 03/31,Tu: Garret Gaw
    - Vice President, Software Engineering
    - Walmart
  - W12, 04/01,We: Beta Slide Decks Due ←9 Days
    (Must Present with Submitted Slide Deck ←Note)
  - W12, 04/02,Th: Beta Presentations ←10 Days
  - W12, 04/02,Th: Start on Project Video ←Note

What's ahead?

[2 of 2]

- Upcoming Meetings and Due Dates
  - W13, 04/07,Tu: Beta Presentations
  - W13, 04/09,Th: Beta Presentations
    - Finishing Touches on Software
    - Creating Project Video
  - W14, 04/14,Tu: Project Video Status Reports
  - W14, 04/16,Th: Intellectual Property
  - W15, 04/19,Su: Project Videos Due ←Note a Sunday
  - W15, 04/21,Tu: Project Videos / Split-Hands
  - W15, 04/22,We: All Deliverables Due
  - W15, 04/23,Th: Project Videos / Split Hands
  - W15, 04/23,Th: Design Day Setup
  - W15, 04/24,Fr: Design Day
  - W16, 04/30,Th: Capstone Wrap Up Time
    5:45 p.m. — 7:45 p.m. ←Put on Calendar