Speaker 1: I'm a new adjunct faculty, I just finished my first full semester teaching.

Speaker 2: Welcome.

Speaker 1: This is actually really great, to be able to listen to everyone, and to hear a lot of the feedback, and also the questions that we'll be getting; and then some of the insights, and experiences that everyone's had, and kind of give me a little bit of a glimpse into what I would be experiencing. So, just giving me a little bit more confidence in entering the interviewing pool at some point.

Christina Barsi: Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

Sun Ezzell: I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast.

Christina Barsi: Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground so to speak. By bringing to you the activities and events, you may not have time to attend; the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help, and guide our students.

Sun Ezzell: We bring to you the voices of Mount SAC from the classroom to completion-

Speaker 5: I know I'm going to achieve my goals, and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

Speaker 6: She is a sociology major, and she's transferring to CalPoly Pomona. Psychology major, English major...

Speaker 7: I'm transforming part-time into full time.

Speaker 8: I really like the time that we spent with Julie, about how to write a CV, and a cover letter-

Christina Barsi: We're just finding time to soak in the campus.

Speaker 9: To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

Christina Barsi: We want to keep you informed and connected, to all things Mt. SAC. But most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni and producer of this podcast-

Sun Ezzell: And I'm Sun Ezzell, learning assistance faculty, and professional learning Academy coordinator.

Christina Barsi: And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

Sun Ezzell: Welcome, today's episode kicks off the first annual series on getting a full time job at a community college. Hosted by Julie Laverty, professor of communication, this workshop series demystifies the hiring process; from the paper screening, to the interview, to the teaching demo.

Sun Ezzell: In today's episode, we'll hear from HR deputy director Sokha Song, and faculty association president Joan Sholars, as they discuss the application process; including tips and recommendations, and top mistakes to avoid. There have been some changes in the process since last year, so if you've already listened to our series, what to expect when you're applying, you can expect to learn even more about how to put your best foot forward, to land that full time position.

Julie Laverty: Welcome to our adjunct workshop. It's based on, how to get a full time tenure track position, which is like that golden ticket, right? And they're not easy to get. So, first let me introduce myself. I'm Julie Lafferty, I'm a professor in the communication department. I am a former 14 year adjunct. Preach. Right? You get it.

Julie Laverty: When I became a full time professor, I said, "I want to be a champion for adjuncts." I get the struggle, I understand what it's like, and I know that, dare I say this out loud, do you feel a little under appreciated? Maybe undervalued? A little bit? And there's great instructors at this level. But it's hard to get that full time position, there's only so many of them, and it's competitive.

Julie Laverty: So, we want to teach you tips and tricks that really work to get you in that door, so they can see how amazing you are. To answer amazing interview questions, and then to nail the teaching demo because, that's where great interviews can lose it, okay? Because, that's ultimately what it's all about, "Are you going to be a great teacher?"

Julie Laverty: Each job needs to be addressed individually. Takes a lot of time, but I'll tell you what, that salary and those benefits are so worth it. But, during the process you're going to be frustrated, and you're going to feel vulnerable. And it's going to be... You might cry. I don't know, because it just feels like a lot. But, I've got some good people here to tell you that it does pay off, they are good examples of this. I just want to encourage you, when you do feel like, "This is a lot of work." Know that, yeah it is. But, this is the only probable way you get in that door, and get that job; is to do it right, so that you make it through screening and into the interview.

Julie Laverty: So, let's get started. What we're going to do today is, we are going to start with representatives from faculty association, and the HR department. They're going to tell you the most basic part, which is that darn application procedure, which believe it or not, you could be amazing and have all your stuff in line, but not apply correctly and get knocked out just by default. No one ever even sees your product. So they're going to tell you what to avoid.

Julie Laverty: And then I have somebody that was in this workshop last year. He's back with a success story. There's lots of success stories from last year, I only asked the people that work here at Mt. SAC to be a part of this, because I just don't want to burden anyone. They're in their first year of tenure, they're busy enough. So, you're going to have somebody that's talking to you about what they did, and how it paid off. Then I am going to go over resume, and cover letters, and how to get that in the door for an interview based on that. And maybe, you didn't realize maybe what you're leaving out, or doing wrong, it's pretty eyeopening.

Julie Laverty: Then we'll have a break, and then we have this amazing panel of people. They are all either deans, are full time tenured professors. They are going to be telling you about interview questions, they're going to tell you some of the awful things maybe they've heard before, what to avoid, what are great interview answers, and same with teaching demos.

Julie Laverty: And then do you know what's coming up on the 31st? So we're going to ask you to come back with a teaching demo on the 31st, and actually get real life feedback from people who've been on many hiring panels before. We're going to make sure that we group you up in a way where you don't have anyone in your group from the same subject, because now they're your competition, right?

Julie Laverty: I mean you like them and all, but come on now. What if, what if they stole your ideas, and yours was good? And also, I think we'll arrange it to where you're not with somebody, maybe from your own department that's giving you feedback. So that you're free to fail, there's no job on the line. It's just you walk out, and it's a gone memory. And we're offering to proofreader resumes, and cover letters next time you come back. I know, right?

Julie Laverty: Let's get started. This is Joan Scholars, she is the president of our faculty association here on campus, and this is Sokha Song. The two of them are going to be speaking with you now-

Joan Scholars: So, I actually am a math teacher. I've been teaching math now, I've been here as a full time faculty member for 29 years. Yeah, too many. And part time before that for a few years. So, I've been around for a while, and now I'm president of the faculty association. We're here to talk to you about some of the top 10 mistakes you make on an application.

Sokha Song: Well, let me introduce myself as well. I'm the deputy director in human resources. This is the third college now that I'm working at, hopefully my last college. But I have had experiences working in three other colleges. I've sat as an EEO rep in faculty hiring. So, I've seen a lot of what's been going on behind the scenes. I also oversee all of the recruitment here on campus.

Sokha Song: As Julie mentioned, last year there was a lot of good hires, but we also have 45 openings. We have about 12 openings right now, and we're anticipating any more retirees, or vacancies, we may add more positions. They are never what they say they are. Joanne, my analyst in the back, we know this. They'll say, "Oh, we're just going to do five this year, or 10." And somehow it explodes into 20, or 30. HR is just ripping their head out, just trying to figure out what to do.

Sokha Song: What we're going to go over today, just really speaks to, based on our experiences, what we've been noticing with applications. First and foremost, the way our process works with the application submissions we have an initial screening deadline. If you apply, and submit all your documents by the initial screening deadline, you are guaranteed consideration. If you missed the deadline, we still welcome applicants to apply however, that's only if the committee decides they want to see more applications, will they look at who's applied since.

Sokha Song: So don't think that, "Oh man, I missed the deadline. I'm not going to apply." There may be that opportunity where they say, "You know what, this pool is too small. We want to see who's applied beyond." Or, "We've interviewed, or looked at these applicants. We're not happy with what we see here we want to see more." So, if you don't put yourself in there, you're going to miss an opportunity. So I wanted to share that.

Sokha Song: Secondly, the part that's always overlooked. I understand there's a hiring process, you're getting interviewed by the committee, but the first phase is HR. So, you have to make it past human resources in order to get to the committees. And human resources is screening you to see if you've done everything that is required of you, that your application pack is complete. If you've noticed that what's standard resume, cover letter, three letters of recommendations, right? And they're not always all there.

Sokha Song: I remember last year looking at screenings of about 90 to 100 applications, and screening out 30 people because they were missing letters. Or they were missing resumes. And they looked like they were qualified folks, I felt awful thinking, "Man, they look good on paper, but because of this technicality they're out." And committees, although they like volume, they don't like too much volume.

Sokha Song: The fact that you can narrow a hundred down to about 60 for them, they're happy with that. Whereas, where I get more pushback if I have a technical position where it's just five applications or 10, they're going to push me to be more expansive, and say, "You know what? Forget the three letters, if they have two send them through, if they have one, we'll take them." But that's a risk you take if you don't have your information complete.

Sokha Song: Do not withdraw your application, if you turn in your application or subbmitted it, pretty much what's happens is, it looks like it's final, but it's not. If you decide, "You know what, the deadlines at the end of the month, and I just submitted it today, I just realized there's some changes I want to make." Contact human resources, please ask them to release your application, so they'll send it back to you to make edits. If you withdraw, it means that you've cut yourself off completely. You will have to create a new username and email to reapply, which shouldn't happen, we can still fix the withdrawals. But don't withdraw your applications to try and fix something, call us so we can release it back.

Sokha Song: Another tip is, sometimes I get it, we get nervous we're looking at things at the last minute, you're trying to submit something at 11:55, and the deadline is 11:59 PM, and it doesn't work. Send an email to HR-

Joan Scholars: Take a screenshot.

Sokha Song: ... Yes, "I tried to submit this letter, there was an error, it didn't go through." That's okay, we'll fix it for you the next day. But you don't call us the next day and say, "I tried it last night, but it didn't work." And you have no evidence that you made the attempt, that there was an error on our part. We're not going to fix it for you. We want you to make the attempt, document it, send it to us, we'll work with you.

Sokha Song: And we do send out notifications throughout the application process. So you will hear from us through each phase, whether you've met minimum quals, or if you were selected to move forward to first level interviews, or second level interviews.

Joan Scholars: Be careful with your letters of recommendation. Every department is different, and every school is different about how important letters of recommendation are. I will tell you in the math department, they are super important. They read them like crazy. They're reading in between the lines. "Okay, they said the word I am happy. Does that mean they happy, or they're not happy or they're...?"

Joan Scholars: But, the letters of recommendation should be fairly recent. Three years at the max, maybe five years, but fairly recent. From somebody that's actually seen you in a classroom, that knows how you teach, what's going on, that can maybe answer some of the things that are in the job brochure. Maybe they're asking for somebody that has taught statistics, and has used SPSS while teaching statistics in the math area; and this person knows that you've done that, then ask them to please write that in your letter of recommendation, then you can check that off. I hit that preferred qualification or something.

Joan Scholars: But, be careful with your letter of recommendations, they should be fairly recent. Hopefully, from somebody that has seen you in a classroom, and you're ticking off some things on the preferred qualifications, and stuff that are there. That way, you know everything has been addressed.

Sokha Song: I completely agree with that. You have to remember, at the end of the day you're competing against a bunch of other folks out there. A generic letter that says, "Great person, I liked them." Does nothing. The suggestion I always give when you're getting letters of recs, focus on your strengths that they know you related to the area of assignment. If you are strong in statistics and you do well with students, and they see the work that you do, write a letter towards that.

Sokha Song: Get a letter from someone else that focuses on a different strength, so you can highlight the different areas that you're strong in, and they're reading that. If you can send three letters of, "They're a great person, I like them." It's not going to do anything for the committee.

Sokha Song: One thing I wanted to come back to, I see a lot of rejections come through. Confidential letters, so I understand you can't see those confidential letters that you solicit, they send them in. That's perfectly fine. What you do have control over is, calling human resources and checking with that person, "Please let me know of the date that you submitted the confidential letters in, so that I can verify with human resources that it was received."

Joan Scholars: That they got them.

Sokha Song: And that's the part where applicants don't have control over is, they don't know those letters have come in. And maybe they tell you they've submitted it, but there's an error in their transmissions. We've rejected people because of that as well. So, just be careful about confidential letters. And then if anything else, a big pet peeve of committees, do not be lazy and take letters from other schools and sending them over here to us.

Joan Scholars: And forget to change the name of the school, or the name of the department you're actually looking for.

Sokha Song: It sounds funny, but it's common.

Joan Scholars: We see it all the time.

Sokha Song: I see letters from Fullerton, from Pomona, with different areas of teaching coming through. You have to understand that letters should be from peers, or colleagues. Or a department chair, or someone that knows your work. So, our AP allows committee members to write letters for applicants. So, you can solicit that from them, but it's up to them whether or not they want to write that.

Sokha Song: One other big error I always see, please do not give us your student evaluations, they are not considered letters or recommendations. Sometimes people think that, "Let me give you all my..." I'll have 50 to 60 pages of student evaluations attached as a letter of rec, and it is not a letter of recommendation. It's letters from department chairs, colleagues, or deans that know your work. You can always to include them as additional information for them to see, but not as part of the requirements. Because you'll see a section that says other, and you can attach anything you want. I've seen people include their dissertations, maybe it's relevant. Seeing them and do the student evaluations, or maybe they have more letters that they want to include that they want to see that beyond the three letters.

Sokha Song: Let's talk about real quick. If anyone here has a foreign degree, make sure that you get the equivalency done, and authorize an educational agency. If we don't see those, you get rejected, they're pushed out. There's a heavy emphasis on diversity statements, equity statements, it's in the application. Be thoughtful in your writing of those. Focus it on how it relates to you, and the students that you teach, and your classroom.

Joan Scholars: And remember, diversity is not just race and ethnicity. I was just mentioning about the diversity of this group. We are diverse as far as age is concerned here. We are diverse as far as racist concerned. I mean, there's other ways of being diverse. If you're in my fourth semester calculus classes, it's divers if have three women in there, the setup. That type of thing. So, it's other ways of being diverse. So, be open with your definition of diversity, and what you really mean with equity.

Joan Scholars: Right now, our focus here at Mt. SAC is diversity and equity, and we're trying to really focus in on that. So, that particular part of the application should take you a while to write, and have somebody read it, and look at it, and come back to it, and fix it, and then go back. It is that important here at Mt. SAC.

Sokha Song: Yes. The best advice I can share right now when it comes to diversity and equity is, if we can find a way to infuse that into all of your answers, that'd be phenomenal. One quick thing that I want to put out there. One of the most common mistakes of applications, I cannot stand it when I see, see resume. You cannot be any more lazy than to put see resume on there.

Sokha Song: HR is trained not to look at the supporting documents. We only look at the applications, and if I can't identify on your application that you meet the minimum quals, you're out. At the application, and the transcript is what tells us that you have the degrees. Anything but to see resume, just tells us that, we're one of many colleges you're applying to, I don't care enough to give you a completed application. So we're just going to randomly submit to see what sticks. And that's not what the committee wants.

Sokha Song: And also just to put it out there, when you're looking at minimum quals, a lot of you should be aware there's the typical master's, bachelor's and master's, or equivalency, right? So, equivalency is an opportunity for you to submit anything that you feel is relevant to why you're equivalent to this degrees. So, don't limit yourself on any submissions that you put out you want us to see. HR's recommendation is, when in doubt, if you don't know if you meet the minimum quals or not, submit to equivalency. Let us make that decision, don't dismiss yourself from applying, or not put something through, and then have yourself be disqualified.

Sokha Song: One other thing I want to put out is, like the English department has said, I've had many committees tell me, "Sokha, this person looks like they're qualified, but I can't even get through this resume-

Joan Scholars: They can't spell.

Sokha Song: ... or cover letter. The grammar errors, and the spelling errors are just awful. I just can't even read this." So they give up and you automatically get that low score. My suggestion is that, you reread your own work so much, you may not catch it. So, utilize what Julia's saying, or what the others are saying. Have someone else take a look at it, and have them go through to see if they can catch things. Or maybe you need to take a break, give yourself a few days, go back and look at it again, but there's no way you're going to catch your own errors if you're constantly reading through your own work.

Sokha Song: You may see some applications talk about preferred qualifications. There's three meetings that they have. They have an orientation meeting, committee puts together the screening criteria, the interview questions, and they use that based on the descriptions. So, the screening criteria is just looking at your applications and supporting documents, to determine whether or not you're someone they want to interview. I can guarantee you, preferred qualifications are in there somewhere. So, it's important that if you see preferred qualifications listed-

Joan Scholars: Address them.

Sokha Song: ... under the announcement, address them. Be thorough, and like I said also the other hints we gave, is equity, diversity statements. That's also going to get evaluated, and may be a criteria as well. You have to show evidence in your application that you meet these criteria, in order to be selected to move forward to be interviewed.

Sokha Song: I want to emphasize, the biggest drawback for current employees who apply for promotions or full time opportunities is, all committees are trained to treat all of you like they don't know who you are at all. What is in your application and your supporting documents is what they see about you. Whether they like you a lot, and think you're phenomenal they're not going to bring that up and say, "But I know this person."

Joan Scholars: And then, if they actually say in the middle of the process and they say, "But I've seen this person teach..." All of a sudden, everybody in the committee is going to go, "You can not bring that in, that is outside knowledge you can not bring that in." And the reason for that is, think about it, you teach here at Mt. SAC, you know some people, but maybe the other person walking in the door after you doesn't know anybody at Mt. SAC, and so they have everything on the paperwork, because they know we don't know them.

Joan Scholars: So we're going to look at the paperwork that's there. You assume somebody's going to know you, and you didn't write everything down, you don't look well. You don't look as good, you're not going to rate as high, because you don't have everything on that paperwork.

Sokha Song: One of the most common complaints I always get from adjuncts, "I've been here five years, 10 years, 20 years. Sokha, why can't I get a tenure position? This is the third time, fourth time I've gone for this. I am getting ones, and twos in my evaluations. Why am I not getting hired?" And this is one of the main reasons why, it's because you make the assumption they know who you are.

Sokha Song: You cannot make those assumptions, you have to treat your application, and supporting documents, as if you're submitting it to a group of people who have no idea who you are, and you're trying to prove yourself that you're worthy to be selected for the interview, to go through the process. And I have to give the same recommendations for interviews. "You know me. You know what I do."

Joan Scholars: No.

Sokha Song: "Joan, you know that work that I did?" No, they don't. They're going to look at you like, "I don't know what you're talking about. All I heard you say is you know what I do, and that's what I'm going to rate you on. I don't know what that means." So, be careful with that.

Sokha Song: Two other quick things I want to reference. Gosh, I've seen some negativity with references. Do not put people down on your references, without letting them know you put them down. Because, I've seen references say, "You didn't ask for my permission, I'm going to give you a bad reference."

Sokha Song: And I've had them tell me that. "This is offensive that you put me down without asking me for my permission?" And again, and they said that, "I want to give him a bad reference." Make sure you check, and make sure they're aware that you're being selected to go through the process.

Sokha Song: The other part, sometimes we have life situations, "My mother is ill, I needed to take a break to go take care of them." Or maybe, "I got in trouble with the law." Maybe, I had to go to jail, or whatever the situation is. People like to over explain and reasons for leaving. Okay?

Joan Scholars: Yeah. No.

Sokha Song: You do not need to explain reasons for leaving, they're all protected statuses. Even those with criminal records, we're not allowed to ask questions about criminal records, we're not allowed to ask questions about disability, we're not allowed to ask questions about FMLA statuses. That's all outside of the process, the focus is only on your experience, and your ability to do a good job working for us, everything else is addressed afterwards. It can hinder you to give a paragraphed story about something that is not related to your job.

Joan Scholars: And because remember, we use what you have on your application, or what you say to us. And if you say it to us, it's open for discussion among the team.

Sokha Song: I can tell you right now when you write the word terminated in one of your jobs, what is the committee going to do? "Hey, why were they terminated? What is going on? Does that mean they're a bad person, do we want to hire them?" They shouldn't be doing any of that. We trained them not to do that, but humans you know?

Sokha Song: So, that's an HR issue, that's a reference check issue that we figure out whether there's something that we need to be concerned about that does not belong in your application.

Joan Scholars: We have so many State initiatives going on right now. AB-705, Guided pathways, Strong workforce, you name it. If it has something to do with your area and you know something about it, mention it.

Julie Laverty: Thank you guys.

Christina Barsi: Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie podcast. Remember to subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you like to get your podcasts; so you can listen in the car, in your office, or however you like to listen. Once you subscribe, we'd love to hear what you think by leaving us a review. And don't forget to share your favorite episodes.