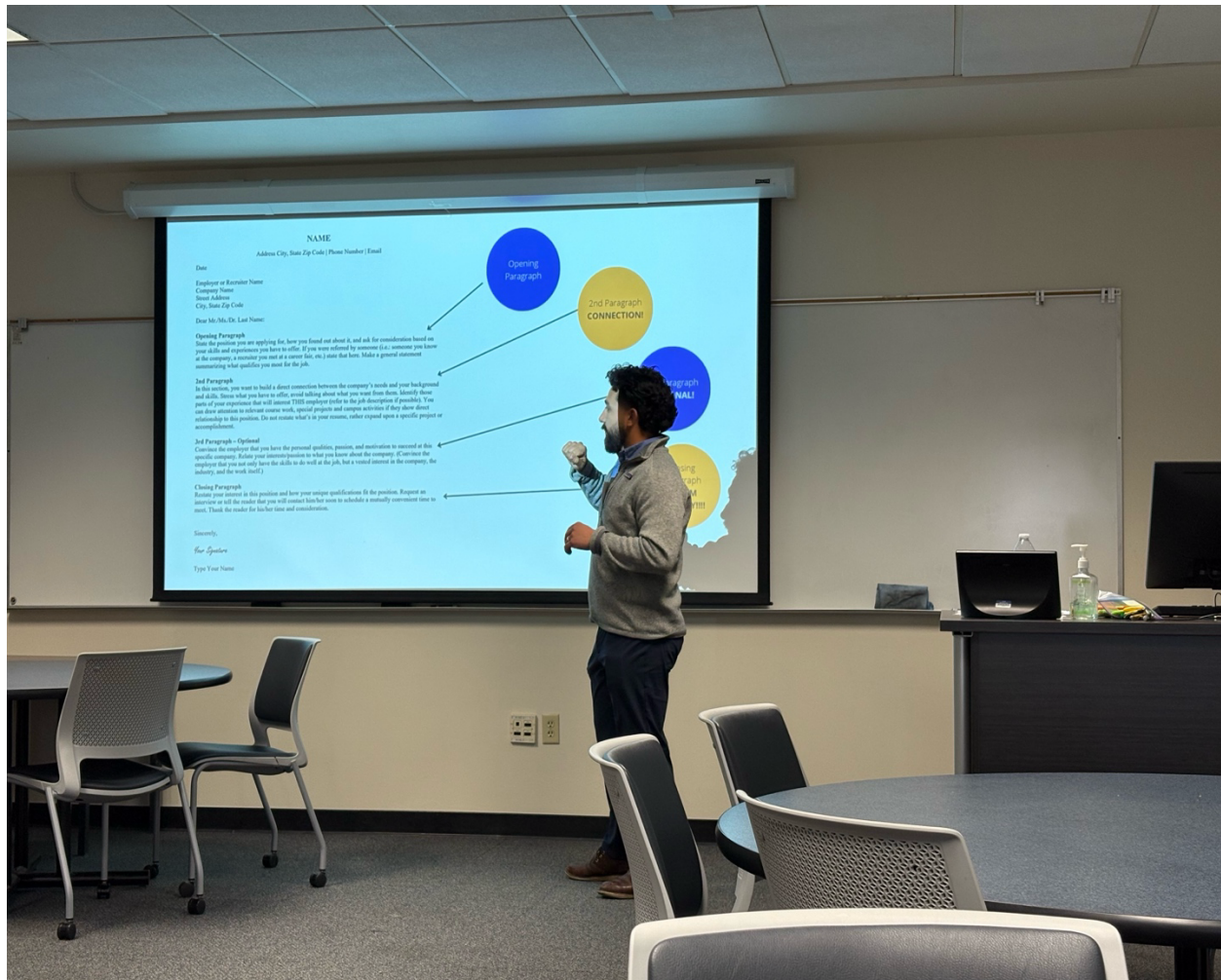


Mastering the Art of the Interview: Insights from AGBS Soft Skills Workshop #2

By S. Aaron Hegde



Dylan Wilson covering cover letters

The Agriculture Business (AGBS) program, with support from the Dean of the College of Business and Public Administration, hosted the second workshop in its three-part professional development series on Friday, March 14, 2025. Titled “Killing the Interview,” this session featured Dylan Wilson, Executive Director of Edible Schoolyard Kern County, who shared actionable advice on cover letters and interview skills. Nine eager students, hailing from diverse majors such as Agricultural Business (AGBS), Management, Accounting, Environmental Resource Management (ERM), and Psychology, attended the event.

The Art of the Cover Letter

Wilson began by breaking down the essentials of a standout cover letter, emphasizing that this document serves as an applicant’s introduction to an organization. He highlighted that hiring managers have varying preferences—some read the cover letter before the resume, others after—making it crucial for the cover letter to leave a lasting impression.

Key Components of a Cover Letter

1. Introduction – Start strong; introduce yourself and capture attention.
2. Build a Connection – Show your understanding of the company and align your skills with their needs.
3. Optional Section – Highlight relevant experiences if they strengthen your application.
4. Closing – End with a compelling hook. Dylan’s advice: “Get ‘em, cowboy!”

Pro Tips for Writing Cover Letters

- Tailor It: Customize your letter for each job to reflect the role and company.
- Leverage AI: Use AI writing tools for structure and inspiration but always personalize the content.

Mastering Interview Skills

Remainder of the workshop focused on interviews, emphasizing preparation and intentionality. Dylan underscored that an interview is as much about what the employer wants to learn about the applicant as it is about what the applicant wants to share with the employer.

Memorable Tips for Success

- ✓ First Impressions Matter: Shake hands with everyone in the room when you walk in.
- ✓ Take Your Time: Avoid rushing through answers—thoughtfulness makes a lasting impression.
- ✓ Do Your Homework: Research the company thoroughly before the interview.
- ✓ Dress to Impress: Always dress for the work environment, and when in doubt, overdress.
- ✓ Prepare for Group Interviews: Be ready to stand out in group settings, as these are becoming more common ways of interviewing a group of candidates.

Dylan also addressed the growing prevalence of virtual interviews, encouraging students to dress professionally as if meeting in person. To give practical advice, he showcased examples of appropriate interview attire for both men and women.

Interactive Mock Interviews

The workshop culminated in a hands-on activity where students participated in mock interviews. Dylan, joined by Drs. Deal and Hegde, formed an interview panel for a hypothetical job scenario. Each student took their turn answering questions, receiving immediate feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement.

Dylan’s parting advice included the importance of asking thoughtful questions to interviewers, demonstrating genuine interest in the role and company.

Key Takeaways

As Bobby Unser wisely said, “Success is where preparation and opportunity meet.” This workshop gave students the tools to prepare effectively for interviews, positioning them to seize opportunities with confidence.

The final session of the AGBS workshop series, to be held on Friday, March 21, is eagerly anticipated, promising even more valuable insights for business students navigating their career journeys. It covers strategies to succeed in the workplace.