Sample Interview Questions

Departments and units are required to develop a core set of questions for each selection process as a mechanism for gathering consistent information about each candidate they consider. These questions should assess candidates based on the position responsibilities/duties (for example, “Can you discuss your experiences using software to create professional presentations and give me an example of a time you did this?”) and should also include questions that assess whether an individual is committed to our institutional values.

Below is a set of sample questions based on these values that go beyond the standard questions regarding research, teaching and service accomplishments. A search committee should use sample questions that are relevant to the faculty or staff position for which the search is being conducted. You are welcome to develop additional relevant questions for specific needs using the questions below as a guide.

Diversity (Valuing and Encouraging)

Tell me about a time you had to adapt to a wide variety of people by accepting or understanding their perspectives.

Tell me about a time you adapted your style in order to work effectively with those who were different from you.

Tell me about the most difficult challenge you have faced in working cooperatively with someone who did not share your ideas, values, or beliefs.

Give me an example of a time when your values and beliefs impacted your relationship with a peer, coworker, supervisor, or customer.

Tell me the steps you have taken to create a work environment where differences are valued, encouraged, and supported.

Change Management

Tell me about the most difficult change you have had to make in your professional career. How did you manage the change?

Describe a time when you felt that a planned change was inappropriate. What did you do? What were the results?

Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to an uncomfortable situation.

Tell me about a time you led a change effort.

Describe a time a change effort you were involved in was not as successful as you would have liked.
Give me an example of a time you had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?

Give me an example of a time when you helped another person accept change and make the necessary adjustments to move forward. What were the change/transition skills that you used?

Describe a situation where you, at first, resisted a change and later accepted. What specifically, changed?

**Continuous Improvement**

Tell me about a suggestion you made to improve the way job processes/operations worked.

Tell me about one of your workplace improvements that another department now uses.

Give me an example of when you initiated a change in a process or operation.

In your last or current job, what problems did you identify that had previously been overlooked? Were changes made? Who supported the changes as a result of your ideas?

Tell me about something new or different that you initiated that improved customer service, productivity, quality, teamwork, or performance.

Tell me about a time you found and took advantage of an opportunity to make an improvement in your position or department/team/group.

Tell me about a time you had to sacrifice quality to meet a deadline. How did you handle it?

In some aspects of work, it is important to be error free. Describe a situation where you tried to prevent errors.

Describe a time you caught an error that someone else made that could have affected the outcome of a project (or affected a customer).

Tell me about a suggestion you made to improve the processes or operations in your position or within your team

**Creativity/Innovation**

Describe a time when you came up with a creative solution/idea/project/report to a work problem you had been dealing with for sometime.

Tell me about a situation when you had to come up with several new ideas in a hurry. Were they accepted? Were they successful?
Goal Setting/Accomplishment/Focus

Successes
Give me an example of an important goal you had to set and how you accomplished that goal.
Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
Tell me about a time when a team you were involved with was going through long-term changes or working on a long-term project. What did you do to keep yourself and others focused?

Failed/Negative Incidents
Tell me about an important goal you failed to achieve.
Describe a time when you set a goal for yourself and did not achieve it because it was too high. What was the standard? Why was it too high? What were the ramifications of your failure to achieve your goal?
Describe a time when you set a goal for yourself that was too low.

Challenges
Tell me about a time you were given a goal by someone else that you believed would be impossible to attain.
Give me an example of a time you made a major sacrifice to achieve an important goal.
Tell me about a time when you were unwilling or unable to make a sacrifice necessary to achieve a goal.
Describe your organization's culture and how that culture made it challenging for you to achieve one of your goals.

Integrity
Describe a time when you were asked to keep information confidential.
Give examples of how you have acted with integrity in your job/work relationships.
If you can, tell me about a time when your trustworthiness was challenged. How did you react/respond?
Tell us about a specific time when you had to handle a tough problem which challenged fairness or ethical issues?
Trust requires personal accountability. Can you tell me about a time when you chose to trust someone? What was the outcome?

**Personal Accountability**

Tell me about a time when you took responsibility for a failure.

Tell me about a time when you assumed personal accountability for a situation or event because you realized the role you played in the situation or event?

Describe what personal accountability means to you.

Tell me about the last time you made a mistake.

Please describe what you believe to be the biggest failure in your career. What did you learn from this situation and how have you grown as a result?

Within a work situation, tell me about a time you did something you regret.

Being fully accountable for results sometimes means acknowledging what more we, personally, could have done to achieve desired results. Share about a time when you did not reach the expected results. What more could you have done in that situation to meet expectations?

Tell me about a time when you received negative feedback from your boss.

**Personal Growth and Development**

Think about a time when setting a positive example had a highly beneficial impact on people you worked with. How did you determine that a strong example was needed? What did you do? What was the effect on the people?

Tell me the one thing about you as an employee that you hope your current or last boss doesn’t tell me during a reference call.

Tell me about a time when you were not pleased with (or were disappointed in) your performance. What did you do about it?

Tell me about a time when one of your weaknesses got the better of you.

Give me an example of a time that you used one of your strengths to help another person or teams succeed.

Describe a work situation or project that brought out the worst in you. Why did it bring out the worst in you? What did you learn?

Give me an example of something that you have done in the past to improve yourself.

Describe a situation in which you received constructive feedback about your work. What was the feedback about? What was your assessment of the feedback? What did you do with the information you received? What changes did you make?
Teamwork (Encouraging and Building)

Tell me about a time you were able to gain commitment from others to really work as a team.

Provide an example of a time when it was critical that you establish an effective working relationship with an individual or group outside your department to complete an assignment or deliver a service.

Tell me about a time you needed to get two groups or people to work together effectively, who historically had never done so.

Give me an example of a time that your leadership transformed a group of people into an effective, healthy, productive team.

Tell me about a time you led a team that had one or more unproductive/negative members. How did you find out about the unproductive member? What did you do? Why did you choose to do that? How did it work out?

Describe a time when you had to have coworkers with different work styles or ideas work together on a project. What, specifically, did you do to pull them together?