Interview Questions Regarding Diversity

Measuring Cultural Key Competencies during the Interview Process

Sample Questions

The following are among the questions hiring managers can ask to potential candidates of employment to measure whether they meet the essential functions of the job relating to cultural competency.

1. We expect a high level of performance from everyone at Ohlone Community College, no matter their position. Our goal is nothing short of transforming into a first class institution of higher education. We build teams of really bright people. We empower each other and value our diversity, celebrate and reward our success. What is your model of success and how will you fit into this culture?

2. Please describe how you would work to create a campus environment that is welcoming, inclusive and increasingly diverse.

3. Describe how you, as a faculty member, function and communicate effectively and respectfully within the context of varying beliefs, behaviors, and backgrounds.

4. What opportunities have you had working and collaborating in diverse, multicultural and inclusive settings.

5. What is your definition of diversity? How do you encourage people to honor the uniqueness of each individual? How do you challenge stereotypes and promote sensitivity and inclusion?

6. How do you seek opportunities to improve the learning environment to better meet the needs of students from all over the world and from students who have been historically marginalized in the USA, such as the Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and other communities?

7. What is your method of communication with students who are different from the you? How do you convey thoughts, ideas, or adverse conclusions?

8. Describe your experience or explain how you have been educated to understand the history of African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans and other historically marginalized communities in the USA.

9. Describe your experience in serving or teaching underrepresented communities.

10. Tell us about a time when you had to work with someone who had the direct opposite personality of yours?
11. Give an example of how you walk in the shoes of people we serve and those with whom we work.

12. Give an example of how you honor commitments and describe a time when you were asked to compromise your ethics. What did you do? What would you do in the future?

13. How has your current/previous employer benefited from multiculturalism?

14. How do you define social justice?

15. Describe a situation in which you encountered a conflict with a person from a different cultural background than yours. How did you handle the situation? (Please be specific)

16. In previous work experiences, what has been the greatest obstacle in developing a multicultural-competent staff?

17. Describe a situation in which you utilized your multicultural skills to solve a problem.

18. What ideas do you have for educating students about diversity?

19. How has diversity played a role in shaping your social style?

20. Tell us about a time when you changed your style to work more effectively with a person from a different background.

21. Tell us about a time you took responsibility/accountability for an action that may have been offensive to the recipient and how you did that.

22. Talk about a time when you had to abide by a policy that you did not personally agree with.

23. Talk about a time when you had to deal with conflict at work.

24. Talk about a time when you were placed on a team and you or someone on that team didn't see eye-to-eye.

25. Describe the most difficult person you've ever had to deal with at work.

26. Describe a time when you needed to work cooperatively with someone that did not share the same ideas as you.

27. Give an example of a time when you had to make an adjustment to your personal style in order to successfully work with a coworker.

28. Give an example of a time when you had to expend social capital to champion social justice.
29. Give an example of a time when you could not be tolerant of another person’s point of view.

30. What do you see as the most challenging aspects of an increasingly diverse academic community? Follow-up question: What initiatives have you taken to meet such challenges?

31. How would you work with people under your supervision to foster a climate receptive to diversity in the department, the curriculum, staff meetings, printed materials, initiatives, etc?

32. In what ways have you integrated multicultural issues as part of your professional development?

33. Talk about how you responded to a co-worker who made an insensitive remark.

34. Talk about a time that you successfully adapted to a culturally different environment.

35. What have you learned from working with diverse populations?
39. What issues have arisen from your work with non-traditional and first generation students? What has gone smoothly and what has been challenging in this work?

40. Do you speak any other languages other than English? If so, what language(s) and to what extent are you fluent in that/those language(s)?

41. What are some specific things you are going to do within the next two years to further your development in cultural competency?

42. How does your own identity impact your work with a diverse staff and student body?

43. Please tell us about an experience that you had with a student. What did you learn about yourself?

44. When interacting with a person from a different culture than your own, how do you ensure that communication is effective?
Sample Interview Questions on Diversity

1. Explain how diversity has played a role in your career and contributed to the teacher/counselor/librarian/xxxx you are today.

2. What books/materials/authors have you read on the subject of diversity? What did you find useful to apply to working with heterogeneous cohorts of students?

3. What is your vision of a campus, such as xxxx, that fully embraces diversity?

4. How have you participated in diversity events and organizations at other college and/or universities?

5. Provide us with examples of how you incorporate the diversity of your students in your classroom experiences.

6. What ideas do you have about diversity in the classroom?

7. What programs have you developed in the area of diversity?

8. What role has diversity played in shaping your teaching and advising styles?

9. Describe your involvement in writing or shaping a college plan (program review, matriculation, equity, academic master plan, professional development, accreditation, etc.) where you were the champion for diversity and equity within the plan or its outcomes?

10. As a higher education professional, what work have you done in promoting diversity in the community?

Other Sample Diversity Interview Questions

1. Provide the mission statement with value on diversity. How has your experience and background prepared you to be effective in this environment with this diversity value/initiative?

2. What do you see as the most challenging aspect of a diverse working environment? What steps have you taken to meet this challenge?

3. Tell us about a time you had to alter your work style to meet a diversity need or challenge? What happened?

4. How have you handled a situation when a colleague was not accepting of others’ diversity?

5. What does it mean to have a commitment to diversity and how would you develop and apply your commitment at this college?

6. What was/is the diversity value at a current/former college? What impact did you make on this value?

7. What efforts have you made, or been involved with, to foster diversity competence and understanding?

8. What have you done to further your knowledge about diversity? Have you included diversity in your professional development? How have you demonstrated what you have learned?

9. What kind of leadership efforts would you make to ensure a commitment to the diversity initiative or value for the college?

10. What strategies have you used to address diversity challenges? What were the positives and negatives?
Some things to avoid:

1. Asking how someone “managed” diversity puts the emphasis on diversity as something that is problematic and needs managing.
2. Asking questions for which your department or area has not agreed on a general “right” answer.
3. Asking a question about commitment to diversity that is too vague. These types of questions typically receive vague answers that downplay the real importance of embracing diverse students and colleagues.

Other recommendations:

- Look for answers that include multiple representations of diversity today (cultural, LGBT, disabilities, gender, age, religion, immigrants, socio-economic, etc.)
- Rather than use a question for screening applicants on their knowledge of diversity, try using role play and scenarios where applicants can respond to issues of diversity “on the spot.”
- Examine college materials that an applicant might review before coming to an interview (web site, catalog, campus buildings/signs/etc.) and see if these materials communicate the college value of diversity. This will help applicants know that these questions are serious and require well-constructed answers rather than rhetoric.
- Be sure that departments, disciplines or areas determine ahead of time what an appropriate response to the diversity question looks and sounds like. This may already be done with content specific questions, so it should be true for questions asked about commitment to diverse students and colleagues.