

Interview Questions Regarding Diversity

Measuring Cultural Key Competencies during the Interview Process

Sample Questions

As a component of the Diversity Action Plan and the President's Strategic Mission of achieving global excellence, Portland State University strives to become an institution that is recognized nationally and internationally for the accomplishments of its faculty, the reputation of its programs, and the preparation of its students as world citizens. Consequently, all our employees are required to demonstrate cultural competencies. 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. The questions include a scoring grid, 5 being the best, which people can choose to use depending on their interview methodology.

1. We expect a high level of performance from everyone at PSU, 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 Professor? 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. As a PSU professional, have you done any work in the area of social justice in the community?
31. 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?
32. What is your sense of the complexities and leadership challenges related to social justice and multiculturalism at PSU?
33. 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?
34. Suppose that in working with a University unit you discover a pervasive belief that diversity and excellence are somehow in conflict. How do you conceptualize the relationship between diversity and excellence? What kinds of leadership efforts are needed to encourage a commitment to excellence through diversity?
35. In what ways have you integrated multicultural issues as part of your professional development?
36. Talk about how you responded to a co-worker who made an insensitive remark.
37. Talk about a time that you successfully adapted to a culturally different environment.
38. 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?