Diversity and the Law: 2021

Example DEI Application and Interview Questions[1]

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This document provides illustrative and adaptable student and faculty application and interview questions that can elicit meaningful DEI-related information from student and faculty applicants. These examples can serve as a foundation for further refinement and adaptation within specific institutional settings.[2]

Introduction

The following examples of application and interview questions are intended to help an institution of higher education (IHE) assess student and faculty applicants' and candidates':

♦ inclusive conduct and experience breaking down barriers for themselves or others;
♦ knowledge and understanding of diversity and equity issues and ability to elevate others' understanding at the IHE;
♦ commitment to serve communities targeted for bias and to eliminate societal inequity; and
♦ self-identity (as distinct from societally-imposed identity) and how that is connected to an IHE's diversity- and equity- associated mission.

Although all of these abilities and commitments are valued, each is distinct. It should not be expected or required that any individual will have all of them, that all people of color, women, and LGBTQ+ people will have them, and that others will not.

Practice pointers. Consider providing student applicants with a list of questions on a range of topics (not all related to diversity and equity) from which they can choose, while adapting a question or two from the following list.. Generally, it is important to require applicants for faculty positions to address diversity and equity issues in instances where an IHE prioritizes these issues in its educational, research and service programs. This list can inform the development of those inquiries.

Contextualizing DEI Questions

Setting the context and institutional interests associated with DEI questions can be important. The following statement can be adapted in writing or as part of an interview process:

Our institution is committed to serving our [local community, state, nation, and world] by providing access to exceptional educational opportunities for students [and teaching, research and service opportunities for faculty] who have the promise to contribute their talents, perspectives, knowledge and life experiences to a broadly diverse and inclusive academic community and a diverse and equitable society. We are also committed to creating an academic community where all of our students [and faculty] can fully participate as individuals, reach their fullest potential, and benefit from an experience living, learning, working and socializing with people who reflect a breadth of backgrounds, cultures, identities, talents, perspectives, interests and roads-traveled. We encourage you to be open in answering the following question(s). Our objective is to truly understand you; we

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[2] The introduction and the first question are adapted, with permission, from *The Playbook: Understanding the Role of Race Neutral Strategies in Advancing Higher Education Diversity Goals*, Coleman, A.L., Keith Lewis, J., Webb, E., 2nd Ed., (College Board and EducationCounsel 2019), *https://professionals.collegeboard.org/pdf/playbook-understanding-race-neutral-strategies.pdf*.

respect the differences among individuals and recognize that individuals may be able to contribute in different ways to a welcoming and richly diverse academic community.

Student and Faculty Questions

1. Describe specific experiences in which you have meaningfully come to understand differences between people and the hostilities or barriers they may experience (e.g., cross- socio-economic, racial, gender, faith or other identity); or experiences in which you may have contributed to enhancing understanding and eliminating such challenges for others or yourself. With respect to those experiences:
   ♦ How did you respond and, in hindsight, would you have responded differently?
   ♦ How would this experience and understanding affect your engagement in and benefit from the university's programs, and how would they contribute to [your peers' or your students' and colleagues'] experience at the university?
   ♦ How is this experience likely to benefit society [and contribute to your personal and work-related goals after graduation]?

2. Please answer these three related questions:
   ♦ What are the most significant aspects of your self-identity (how you define and what you value in yourself), and what knowledge or life experiences have most influenced this identity?
   ♦ Describe specific examples of how your self-identity, knowledge and life experiences would influence your ability to both benefit from, and contribute to, the inclusive climate and experience that we seek to provide for all members of our community (students, faculty and staff). (For example, tell us about an experience where you did not have a sense of belonging or struggled with discomfort in trying to create an inclusive environment. How does that experience affect your perspectives and actions in our community?)
   ♦ Provide specific examples of how your self-identity influences your aspirations or would influence your commitments [during and after college or in teaching, research, and service].

3. As you reflect on life, educational and work experiences you have had, please describe an experience that shows how you have advocated for diversity, inclusion and equity with individuals who don't see their value.

4. As you consider what it means to join our campus community, which has a commitment to creating a sense of belonging and realizing equity for all people, what diversity and equity issues do you think you have to learn more about and how would you go about doing that?

5. As you consider the impact that your teachers and/or other instructors/coaches/mentors have had on your experiences to date, please share whether or not they reflected a broad diversity of races, genders, perspectives and experiences and how that has affected you and the quality of your educational experience [or career].

Student Questions

6. Leadership and advocacy for diversity and equity can be demonstrated in many ways—some formal and acknowledged, and others not. How have you demonstrated such leadership or advocacy and what do you think are your most important values as a leader? In what ways have you failed as

leader or advocate for diversity and equity? Why? Describe ways in which you have taken leadership or advocated to enhance diversity, inclusion, and equity in a situation where you were not the designated leader? How have these experiences informed your interest in joining our campus community?

Faculty Questions

7. Please describe your perspectives on the definitions and roles of diversity, equity and inclusion in a college or university's educational mission, your record of advancing these interests as a faculty member [as a graduate student, post-doctoral associate or in other early career roles leading up to your application for this position], and your specific ideas and commitments for advancing these interests going forward, if you were to join our faculty.

8. Please explain your perspectives on whether diversity, as an interest, and excellence in the substance of teaching, research, and service, as an interest, are separate but complementary interests or are integrated interests—and why.