

## Sample Interview Questions

Behavioral interview questions are designed to explore an interviewee's past behaviors to help identify future performance. These sample questions focus on desirable abilities, competencies and/or skills applicable to many Washington State University jobs.

<b>Tips for Interviewers</b>
Focus on what the interviewee did, said, felt or thought in the past.  The interviewer should be looking for phrases such as "I did....", "I said...." etc.
Focus is on what the interviewee actually did/said/thought/felt in the past.  If the interviewee uses such phrases as "I would," the interviewer should probe by saying, "What did you actually do at that time?"
Focus on what the interviewee said he/she did, rather than what "we" did.  The interviewer should probe the interviewee if "We" is used in describing actions. For example, if the interviewee says "We implemented the new payroll system by....." it is the interviewer's job to ask the interviewee what his/her role was and what he/she actually did (as an individual).
Ask the interviewee to provide a brief (30 second) overview of the situation by highlighting the beginning, middle, and end. This helps the interviewer to keep the interview on track.  For example, if you feel lost in the discussion, you can pause the conversation by asking the interviewee to explain where he/she is in the story (beginning, middle, or end).

### ACCOUNTABILITY

- Describe a situation where something that you did had a negative outcome. What did you do to turn the situation around?
- Can you explain a situation when you have made a mistake? What did you do about it?
- Tell me about a time when you had "down time" at a job. How did you handle this situation?
- Give an example of a time when you found an area of self-improvement. How did you improve in this area and what was the outcome?

### AGILITY and FLEXIBILITY

- Give an example of a time when the scope or structure of a project changed. How did you modify your plans/actions? What was the outcome?
- Give an example of a time when you had two important projects competing for your time. How did you handle? What happened?
- Describe a time in which you had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you? On your work or project?
- Give me an example of how you have used your skills to adjust to varying work flows and differing assignments in the past.
- Tell of a time when you were confronted with a difficult change and discuss how you were impacted. How did you respond to the change?

- Give me an example of a time when your job responsibilities changed and how you dealt with it.
- Tell me about a time when there was an unexpected event that resulted in you having to take on additional duties.
- Recall a time when your leader assigned you a task that you considered outside your job description. How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome?
- Give me an example of a busy day and how you handled additional responsibility.
- Tell of a time when you worked with a colleague who was not completing their share of the work. How did you handle the situation and what was the result?

#### COMMUNICATION

- Describe how you have handled implementation or enforcement of an unpopular policy or procedure?
- Describe to me how you like to receive feedback, both positive and negative. Provide an example of each.
- Please provide details of a time when you had a miscommunication with a co-worker. Were you able to resolve issues on your own and what steps did you take to communicate this?
- Please share with us a recent conflict between you and a co-worker and how you handled it.
- Please share with me the most important constructive criticism you have ever received and how you used that criticism to change something about yourself.
- Tell me about an experience when you had to use a communication tool and describe the outcome.
- Give me a recent example that best shows your ability to communicate effectively.
- Listening is a valuable tool. Describe a time when good listening skills helped you overcome a communication problem or gave you an opportunity to exceed a patient or family's expectations.
- Tell me about a situation when you had to speak up (be assertive) in order to get a point across that was important to you.
- Describe the most significant written document or presentation you've written or presented. Who was your audience? What was the outcome of your communication/presentation?
- Give an example of a time when you communicated successfully with another person, even when that individual may not agree with your point of view.
- Give an example of a complex process / situation you had to describe to someone. What specifically did you do to make sure the information was clear?
- What has been the most challenging written assignment you have had? What made it challenging? How did you approach the assignment?
- Describe a time when you realized you needed to make an improvement in your communication skills. What was the situation and how did you manage it?
- Describe a time when you communicated difficult information/critical feedback to your supervisor. How did you give the information/feedback?

#### CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Give an example of time when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. Why was this person difficult? How did you handle him/her?
- Tell me about a time when you had to resolve a conflict

- Give me an example of a time when you were able to bridge a personality conflict that existed within your work place to accomplish a task.
- Tell me about a time when you received negative feedback on your performance by a co-worker and how you handled this situation.
- Describe a situation where you had a less than perfect working relationship with someone. What have you done to improve it?

#### CONTINUOUS LEARNING

- In your previous position, what specific skills or competencies did you seek out to better yourself in that role?
- Tell me about a job that you held in the past where continuous learning was necessary and important. How did you continue to grow your knowledge, skills and expertise? How did you apply new learning to your position?
- Describe a time when you realized you needed additional skills or knowledge to be successful. What was your approach to gaining these skills?
- Tell me about a specific situation when you did not have the knowledge or skill to complete a task or assignment. What did you do?

#### COPING SKILLS

- Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stressful situations at work. How did you work through them?
- What methods or processes have you used when you were facing a change in your job responsibilities to ensure a positive outcome for you, your department, or the organization?
- What types of things in your work have caused stress or made you uncomfortable? What did you do when those situations happened?
- Describe a situation you saw an employee or co-worker do something you thought was inappropriate. What did you do?
- Tell me about a work environment that was not ideal? What was the situation? What did you do? What did you learn?

#### CREATIVITY

- Describe your most recent idea to improve a process at work. What steps did you take to bring the idea to life?
- Tell me about a time when you have been creative in your work. What was the situation and what did you do?
- What have you done that might be considered innovative?
- Give specific examples of how you have promoted your organization's missions and values in the past.

#### CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

- Describe a time when you had to commit to a plan of action in an emergency. What were the details and what did you do?
- What was your most difficult decision in the last six months? What made it difficult?
- Tell me about a time when you had to solve a problem with very little guidance or direction.
- Can you tell me about a time when a slow, deliberate and methodical approach made a difference in your response to a problem?

- Describe a time when you had to analyze a problem and generate a solution. What was the result?
- Tell me about a situation that did not work out as expected. How did you handle and what were your next steps?
- Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.

#### CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Tell me about a situation which you had to deal with an upset client, customer, staff member, or student. What was the situation and how did you handle it?
- Describe a time when you exceeded expectations of a client, customer, staff member or student. What was the situation and what did you do?
- Tell me about a time you assisted a customer who'd worked with multiple employees and didn't get the help they needed. How were you able to resolve the situation?

#### DECISION MAKING

- What has been one of the most difficult decisions you have had to make on the job? What facts did you consider? How did you reach your decision?
- Give an example of a time in which you had to make a decision quickly.
- When (if ever) have you delayed making a decision to give more thought to the situation?
- Describe a time when you did not have all the information you needed to make a completely informed decision. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision

#### DILIGENCE

- Getting the job done sometimes requires persistence in the face of obstacles, such as time demands and shifting priorities. Tell me about a time when you were very persistent in order to achieve goals. Be specific.
- Describe a time when you had to do a job that was particularly uninteresting. How did you keep yourself focused and motivated to complete the task?
- Name a time when you went above and beyond at work and the result exceeded expectations.

#### DIVERSITY

- Working with people from different backgrounds or cultures can present challenges. Describe a time when differences in background made communication or work challenging. How did you handle the situation?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with someone from a different background/culture than yours. What did you do to ensure that there was good communication between the two of you?  
OR What steps did you take to make the individual feel at ease?
- Do you have experience advocating for diversity? Can you provide an example?
- Please describe your experience working with a diverse group of individuals
- What is your experience in supervising a diverse group of employees with varied backgrounds and skills? How have you ensured the best fit of employees for each job?

#### EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

- Describe a work situation in which a project that was important to you was delayed or postponed. How did you respond? What were your next steps?

- Describe a time when you received feedback about your performance that was not positive. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you had to be very analytical and focused in a situation that was personally sensitive and emotional.
- Describe a time when you used good judgment in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to keep from speaking or making a decision because you did not have enough information.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to be quick in coming to a decision. What happened and what did you do?
- Provide an example of how you reached a decision by reviewing facts, information at hand and available options. What was the situation and what did you decide?
- Describe a situation where you handled decisions under pressure or when time limits were a factor. What was the outcome?
- If after working here for two or three months, you noticed some major problems or challenges with the company, and you recognized that those problems were because of me, as your leader or boss, what would you do about that and how would you approach it?
- Of everything you know about this role and understand about this position so far, what is the thing that you think you're the least qualified for?
- Have you ever had to change your behavior, either at work or home, if so, why did you have to change, and how did you change?
- After working together for five or six months, when the job honeymoon has worn off a bit, what will I say is my most favorite thing about working with you? And what will I say is my least favorite thing about working with you?

#### INITIATIVE

- How do you prioritize your tasks?
- At times our work load may feel unmanageable. Describe a time when you recognized that you were unable to meet multiple deadlines. What did you do about it?
- Tell us about an idea you started that involved collaboration with your colleagues that improved morale/customer service/productivity in your Department. When you had extra time available at your last job, tell me ways you found to make your job more efficient.
- What processes or techniques have you learned to make a job easier, or to be more effective? What was your discovery process and how did you implement your idea?
- Give me an example of a new idea you suggested to your manager within the last six months. Describe steps you have taken to implement your idea.

#### LEADERSHIP

- Name some qualities you feel are important for effective leadership. How have you demonstrated these qualities in your previous/current positions?
- How have you helped develop the skills of your staff, colleagues, or superiors?
- Tell me about a project/idea that you initiated. Explain how you communicated progress to your team.
- Explain a situation where you had an opinion that differed from a manager. Were you able to persuade the manager to change his or her opinion?
- Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.

- Describe a time when an employee or your supervisor gave you feedback on a leadership skill you needed to develop. What was the skill and what did you do? What was the outcome?
- What are some of the ways you reward and recognize your staff? Provide examples of when you have done this.

#### PROBLEM SOLVING

- What steps do you take to analyze a problem before making a decision? Can you tell me about a time when you have taken these steps? What happened?
- Sometimes a small problem can be identified and fixed before it becomes a major problem. Give an example of when you have done this and what the result.
- Describe a situation where you had to research and review information for the purpose of making a decision or recommendation.
- Provide an example when you used tools such as survey data, research or statistics to define or solve a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you made an important decision with a limited amount of information.
- Required information to complete an assigned task is past due. The responsible department staff member or manager is non-responsive. Give me an example of your follow-up steps. How would you manage the process of solving the delinquency of delivery of needed information?
- Tell me about a time when you had a difficult time gathering needed information in order to complete a task? How did you manage the process particularly as it relates to follow-up?