

TOOL #4

QUESTIONS FOR IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RELATED TO “COMMITTED TO STUDENT ACCESS AND SUCCESS”

- Why do you want to lead this college?
- What, in your view, are the three most important responsibilities of the president?
- How should a college president view student access and success relative to other priorities?
- What troubles you most about current student outcomes at our college? At the college where you currently work (or one at which you have recently worked)?
- Please provide a specific example of something you have done that had a significant positive impact on student outcomes at a community college or higher education institution.
- Please provide a specific example of when you have overcome a significant obstacle to advancing student access and/or success. What was the obstacle? How did you assess the situation and decide what to do? What happened? In hindsight, would you have done anything differently?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RELATED TO “TAKES STRATEGIC RISKS”

- Please discuss the need for a college president to take data-informed risks. In your mind, what are the most likely scenarios in which a college president might need to take risks to advance an important goal?
- How would you characterize your attitude toward risk-taking as a leader?
- What 2-3 specific examples from your past would you cite where you took a risk to advance student outcomes? Please discuss the situation, the reasons for your actions, and the results for student success. Looking back, would you have done anything differently?
- Can you think of a time when you took a significant risk to improve student access and/or success that did not succeed? What happened? What (if anything) would you have done differently?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RELATED TO “BUILDS STRONG TEAMS”

- Please discuss your philosophy about building a senior team.
- Please discuss how you think about systematically bringing about change in a college culture to improve student access and success. How does your experience inform your understanding of how change processes work at community colleges?
- Please discuss the role of faculty and staff in achieving institution-wide student access and success goals. How have you worked with faculty to improve student access and success? Did you encounter challenges and, if so, what were they and how did you address them? How have you worked with staff to improve student access and success? Did you encounter challenges and, if so, what were they and how did you address them?
- Please describe how you have worked to engage in institutional reform efforts with members of a faculty council, faculty senate, or union executive committee, as applicable.

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- Please provide specific examples of what you have done to simultaneously build strong, trusting leadership teams and maintain accountability. Can you think of a time when these goals conflicted? How did you handle the situation? Looking back, what (if anything) would you have done differently?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RELATED TO “ESTABLISHES URGENCY FOR IMPROVEMENT”

- Please discuss 2-3 specific examples of how you have built urgency among disparate campus constituencies to rally them around a strategic change initiative.
- What is a president’s role in acknowledging institutional shortcomings to pave the way for progress? What are specific examples of when you’ve done this effectively in the past?
- How have you used data to build urgency for change?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RELATED TO “PLANS LASTING INTERNAL CHANGE”

- Please discuss how you typically engage in planning major campus change initiatives, including whom you include, how you involve them, how you communicate, and how much time it takes.
- What are the hardest things to change on a college campus that, in your view, need to be changed to improve student access and success?
- What are the most important components of a plan to confront those challenges?
- What role should the president play in setting goals for, and leading improvements in, student learning? How can you know if those objectives have been reached?
- Please name one or two of the most important things you do during planning processes to ensure that plans actually lead to the achievement of desired results.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RELATED TO “RESULTS-ORIENTED”

- Discuss large-scale change initiatives you have led. How did you know if they were effective? What evaluation processes did you put in place?
- What kinds of student access and success results do you think you would be able to achieve within five years at this institution?
- Please describe a situation in which data revealed failure of a major initiative in which you were involved. How did you know? What did you do in response?
- Can you think of a time when your institution (or department or division) defunded significant programs or initiatives? How were these decisions made? What did you do to build support for the decisions? How were they communicated to faculty and staff?

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RELATED TO “COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY”

- Provide a specific example of when you had to win over someone who was unresponsive to your message. What did you do to achieve your desired outcome?
- Describe a situation where you were able to influence lawmakers or other public policy figures on an important issue. What approaches or strategies did you use?
- Describe a situation when you did not communicate appropriately and the consequences that ensued. What lessons did you draw from the experience that will serve you in this role?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RELATED TO “FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL ABILITY”

- Please describe 2-3 complex implementation challenges that you have led.
- What dimensions of implementation pose the greatest challenge for a community college? Can you provide an example? How did you handle that challenge?
- Please describe the greatest threat to fiscal stability facing an organization or unit you have led. How did you respond to the threat? What was the result?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RELATED TO “ENTREPRENEURIAL FUNDRAISER”

- Please discuss your fundraising capabilities and 2-3 biggest accomplishments, providing specific examples of gifts raised or revenues increased and for what purpose(s).
- What student access and success priorities guide your fundraising and other revenue-raising activities? How do those priorities influence your revenue-raising activities, in practice?
- In the past, how have you gone about raising significant funds to drive major improvements in key student access and success indicators? What were the results? How many students were helped?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RELATED TO “DEVELOPS EFFECTIVE EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS”

- Are there areas in which our community college cannot, acting alone, achieve significant student access and success outcomes? If so, what areas are those? Why?
- To what extent should our college hold itself accountable for the outcomes of students before or after they are enrolled, such as college readiness in K-12, baccalaureate attainment, and labor market outcomes?
- Please provide 1-2 specific examples of your experience building effective partnerships with third-party organizations, especially with K-12 schools or school districts, other colleges, community-based organizations, and/or employers. How did the partnerships yield measurable results for students? How did they grow over time? What did you do to sustain them?
- What is your vision for our college in terms of partnering with outside entities? What would you hope to accomplish via these kinds of third-party partnerships?

