

TOOL #7

PROTOCOL FOR REFERENCE CHECKS

COMMITTED TO STUDENT ACCESS AND SUCCESS

- What three things motivated the candidate most in his/her work? What leads you to that conclusion?
- What in the candidate's work do you believe brought the candidate the greatest satisfaction? What leads you to that conclusion?
- How does the candidate respond when data show that students for whom the candidate has some responsibility are not succeeding at high levels? Does he/she readily accept the data? What has he/she done to close success gaps?
- What were the three things the candidate was most likely to say about his/her institution in public?
- How often did the candidate spend focused time with students? In what contexts?

TAKES STRATEGIC RISKS

- What was the biggest challenge the candidate successfully faced during his/her tenure? How did the candidate deal with the challenge?
- What was the biggest challenge the candidate was unsuccessful in overcoming during his/her tenure? How did the candidate handle the challenge? What could the candidate have done differently?
- What was the most significant change the candidate brought about during his/her tenure? How did the candidate accomplish that?
- What was the biggest program/division/initiative the candidate played a role in closing (or stopping) during his/her tenure? How would you describe the candidate's handling of that situation?

BUILDS STRONG TEAMS

- How cohesive was the candidate's senior team? On what aspects did they collaborate best? Where were they least effective?
- How would you generally characterize the candidate's relationship with college faculty? How often did the candidate spend time in close collaboration with faculty? How would you characterize his/her relationships with staff?
- With which three individuals at the college did the candidate have the most contentious relationships? How would you describe those relationships and the way they evolved over time?

ESTABLISHES URGENCY FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Did the candidate create urgency for change among people at the institution? If so, how?
- Relative to others in similar leadership positions whom you know, how effective would you say the candidate was in effectively motivating people to change?

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PLANS LASTING INTERNAL CHANGE

- What was the candidate's role in the strategic planning and/or reaccreditation processes? Was it run out of (or through) the candidate's office?
- To what extent would you say the candidate has contributed to positively changing the college's culture? How deep has change led by the candidate run?
- Were strategic plans the candidate led (or participated in) successful? Why or why not? What was the candidate's role in that success?

RESULTS-ORIENTED

- How did the candidate's major change initiatives stand up to evaluation? Were they effective? If not, how did he/she respond?
- What is the candidate's record of ensuring that his/her major initiatives continuously improved? What leads you to that conclusion?
- How did the candidate use data to focus others on ongoing priorities? In what contexts did the candidate use them?

COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY

- Relative to college presidents you admire, how would you rate the candidate's communication abilities? As a communicator of ideas? As a listener?
- Was the candidate able to communicate in ways that influenced stakeholders to support key strategic objectives?
- Can you point to specific successes and shortcomings the candidate had in communicating with college faculty and other internal stakeholders? With board members? With policymakers and members of the community?

FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL ABILITY

- Relative to others in similar roles, how would you rate the candidate's ability to lead organizations to effective implementation of programs and policies?
- Please provide an example of a role the candidate played in leading implementation of a complex project or difficult change. Did the initiative succeed? Did it create lasting success?
- How did the candidate fare in keeping budgets balanced? Did he/she succeed (or struggle) more on the revenue-raising or expenditures side? How so?
- How did the candidate allocate resources to achieve student access and success priorities?



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ENTREPRENEURIAL FUNDRAISER

- What were the biggest fundraising/revenue-generating goals that the candidate had during his/her tenure? To what extent did the candidate achieve them? Relative to community college leaders most successful at fundraising, how successful is this candidate?
- Are there examples of fundraising strategies that related directly to student access and success goals? How successful was he/she?
- How creative was the candidate in his/her revenue-raising? Can you provide an example?

DEVELOPS EFFECTIVE EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Who were the most important external partners to the candidate? What did the candidate do to develop and sustain those relationships?
- What steps did the candidate take in developing relationships with outside organizations, including K-12 schools, employers, 4-year colleges, and community-based organizations? How did those partnerships impact attainment of student access and success goals?
- Among the external relationships the candidate developed, which had the greatest positive effect on student access and/or success? What was that effect? How was it accomplished?

SUMMARY VIEWS ON THE CANDIDATE

- On a scale of one to 10, how was the candidate at his/her job as compared to others in similar jobs?
 - If answer is “10,” prod a bit and say, “Everyone has some attributes that are stronger than others. Are there any areas that are less than perfect for this candidate?” If answer is less than 10, say something like, “That is quite a recommendation. Thank you. What would it take for this candidate to become a 10? In what ways could the candidate become even better?”
- If we were to hire the candidate, what advice would you have for the board in terms of how to relate to him/her? What should we do to ensure that we have the strongest working relationship possible? What should we do to ensure his/her success?

