

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

UWHR Total Talent Management & Office of Minority & Diversity Affairs

Diversity Statements and Interview Questions

BE BOUNDLESS



Purpose of Diversity Statement/Questions

Diversity statements are a great way to learn about a candidate's commitment to diversity and are becoming a common practice for employers who are making efforts to improve the diversity of their workforce. However, this can be problematic during the application stage of the recruiting process. For some candidates, diversity statements are an opportunity to be transparent about one's identity, and candidates are more likely to self-disclose when applying for organizations who put a strong emphasis on diversity and inclusion. When asked to provide a diversity statement, a candidate may include self-identifying statements referencing their race, gender, or orientation. If practices and standards are not put in place to mitigate and minimize bias, requiring a diversity statement as a part of the application materials may pose a threat to the identity of underrepresented populations in your applicant pools.

Quick Tip: Consider asking questions about diversity during the interview and requesting a diversity statement in the latter stages of the selection process. If you do add a diversity statement assessment as part of the application, try to include diversity statement questions that are less likely to prompt applicants to self-disclose their identity during the application process and be sure to consider the Principles for Developing Diversity Statement and Interview questions below:

Principles for developing Diversity Questions

The purpose of the diversity statement or question is not to assess the applicant's personal identity, but to assess the applicant's knowledge of the value and importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The overall goal is to create an environment of inclusion and hire people who are aligned with the values of the University. Below is a list of principles to consider when including a diversity statement or interview question in your hiring process:

- Explain why valuing diversity is important in the role or department at all stages of the process.
- Consider using scenario or technical questions vs broad open-ended questions.
- Make sure the question is relevant to the position and team culture.
- Assess for the candidate's skills and knowledge of the value of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, not the candidate's personal identity or proximity to diverse populations.
- Develop components of a "quality answer" with hiring committee prior to screening candidates.

- Look for actionable answers vs ideals and theories
- Make sure the question is appropriate for the level of position (entry level, student-facing, administrative, leadership, faculty, staff, etc.).

Components of a “Quality Answer”

If you choose to add a diversity question or statement in your recruiting process, identifying the components of a “quality answer” is essential to ensuring a consistent and equitable assessment. Ideally, this step should be completed with the all members of the search committee prior to the first phase of screening, and should identify what skills and knowledge you want to assess. Think of specific **competencies** and **criteria** that support and provide evidence of the candidate’s commitment to diversity. Below is a list of sample diversity questions and components to consider:

Sample of Diversity Questions and Components of a “Quality” Answer

1. “How have you committed yourself to understanding and aiding in the pursuit of equity and inclusion in your professional and or personal life?”

Components of a “quality” answer:

- *Actionable: articulates specific actions or steps taken (Proactive and/or Reactions)*
- *Clearly articulates or explain their “why” or “motivation”*
- *Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the terms (equity and inclusion)*
- *Able to articulate and explain connection between equity/inclusion and their personal and/or professional opportunities*
- *Acknowledges the challenges and difficulties of this work*
- *Demonstrate specific classes, tools, resources, trainings used to gained more understanding*

2. “What steps have you taken to mitigate your biases in the workplace?”

Components of a “quality” answer:

- *Clearly demonstrates knowledge of bias in general and different types of bias*
- *Able to articulate and explain self-awareness of their own biases*
- *Clearly defines their measure of success or failure*
- *Acknowledges challenges around recognizing and minimizing biases in the workplace*
- *Speaks to knowledge of impact of biases on themselves as well as others*
- *Identifies specific steps taken and additional growth and resources desired*

3. Scenario: You are in a departmental meeting/training where a co-worker communicates that they feel targeted by the facilitator's micro-aggressions. They express that they feel they need to communicate this to the facilitator after everyone else has left. They seem uneasy and very much affected. What is your response?

Components of a "quality" answer:

- *Actionable: What specific actions would they take? Did they use "I" statements?*
- *Clearly demonstrates importance of acknowledging and validating their co-workers feelings and concerns*
- *Acknowledges personal challenges or difficulties of the scenario*
- *Did they act as an ally, advocate, or accomplice?*
- *Articulates and explain how they would support and follow-up with their co-worker*

Additional Sample Diversity Questions

1. Can you tell us about a time where you had to overcome societal constructs regarding your identity in order to reach a goal?"
 - a. "What was the most valuable lesson you received from that experience?"
 - b. "How did those around you respond to your efforts?"
2. "Please share with us a time when you were a part of an event, meeting or setting where there was diverse representation in thought and culture,"
 - a. How did you contribute?
 - b. What did you take away and apply?"
3. Technical: Have you mapped out a plan for DEI training going forward to further your career?
 - a. What resources do you feel you may need?"
4. Technical: Explain what framework you are using to confronting inequities in your workplace?
 - a. How did you construct that frame work?
 - b. How do you measure its success?
5. "Can you tell us about a time where you had to overcome societal constructs regarding your identity in order to reach a goal?"

- a. "What was the most valuable lesson you received from that experience?"
 - b. "How did those around you respond to your efforts?"
6. What privileges have afforded you the opportunity to apply for this role and how does that influence your outlook on the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the workplace?
7. What are some specific things you want to do in the next year to further your development in diversity, equity, and inclusion work?
8. Scenario: You have been asked to be a part of a panel on the topic of diversity and inclusion but you notice that the panel is anything but diverse in appearance yet it was diverse in thought. At the end of the discussion the facilitator asks for your feedback. What is your response?
9. Scenario: An employee of yours has expressed concern about an event that is taking place on campus. The event is offensive to many groups, however your employee does not feel safe coming to work that day. What would be your response and or action taken?