Interview Question Bank

1. Tell me when you had to use your judgment to make a tough decision in your current job.
2. When dealing with multiple requests from several individuals or areas, how do you determine your priorities?
3. Give me an example of a complex process or task you had to explain to another person or group of people. Do you feel you were successful? Why?
4. Have you ever had to work with someone who is difficult to get along with? How have you handled it?
5. Tell me about your experience collaborating with someone from a different department or unit. What was your most challenging moment in this experience?
6. Tell me about a time when you received conflicting information from senior leaders. What did you do? What was the outcome? Would you do anything differently?
7. You have just been informed that a university wide change is being implemented a month from now. This will impact you and the units you support. What would your next step(s) be?
8. Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your manager. What did you do? What was the outcome? Would you do anything differently?
9. Tell us about the types of organizations you have either volunteered with or been employed by? Explain how these contributed to your payroll/fiscal approach?
10. Tell us how you would assist a mid-level operations manager who was not meeting performance expectations due to inability to adopt new technology. Assume that the manager’s supervisor has asked for your assistance and has made it clear that the employee is in danger of being demoted or let go.
11. What factors would you consider when recommending a group develop a Lean initiative? Assume the mid-size group has little formal exposure to Lean principles.
12. Provide an example of a time when you had to teach particularly sensitive information to an internal audience. How did you handle the information, prepare the audience and follow through?
13. Describe the most difficult analytical people-challenge or problem you've encountered. What was it? What steps did you take to address this challenge? What was the outcome?
14. How do you know when an (organization is developed) or an (initiative is completed)?
15. What technology, software or tools do you find most useful in a position like this?
16. What was your most challenging experience in managing staff, co-workers or volunteers under non-negotiable deadlines?
17. Describe what you consider your best moment in mentoring a struggling employee.
18. Tell me about a time when you were uncertain about how to proceed on a project and needed to make a decision without all the information needed, a critical element was missing, and your supervisor was unavailable. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
19. If offered this position, where do you anticipate your steepest learning curve to be?
20. How have you applied or integrated metrics to monitor performance?
21. Can you describe a situation where you wish you would have handled a personnel challenge differently? How did you determine the approach? What did you learn from this experience?
22. Describe some impactful leaders you have worked with and tell us how you have either incorporated or avoided some of their characteristics into your leadership style.
23. How do you see your career path changing over the next five years?
24. Emerging priorities are a reality of this position. Tell us how you balance non-negotiable project timelines while managing emergent issues and conflicting expectations?
25. Tell us about your experience and/or involvement with leading organizational change. What was your role and how did you influence or impact the outcomes?
26. What do you think the biggest obstacles to compliance are? What approach have you applied to navigate resistance to compliance?
27. What would comprise an ideal training opportunity (size and demographic) from your perspective and why?
28. Describe the difference between working with a group of 20 people versus a 200-person organization.
29. Tell me a time when you had a disagreement with your supervisor or coworker on how work should proceed. What did you do? What was the outcome?
30. Tell me about a time when you were uncertain about how to proceed on a project and needed to make a decision without all the information needed, a critical element was missing and your supervisor was on vacation. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
31. Think of a time when you made a significant mistake or missed an important deadline. Tell me what happened and what you did as a result.
32. Tell us how you would respond in this situation: it is late Friday afternoon of a holiday weekend. You receive a call from a campus counselor that a client who speaks English as a second language has reported inappropriate conduct by a supervisor in one of your unit. The counselor wanted to alert you out of professional courtesy while information is still being gathered but couldn’t reach the Director. You attempt to contact your supervisor who is next in line to the Director but she is on vacation with unreliable cell phone reception. What are your next steps? (Team Note: escalation points; direct call from employee , media call, facebook post reported)
33. What would be your first steps in changing a culture that was content with the status quo?
34. Which component of this position; (list 3 top position responsibilities), do you enjoy the most and why?
35. Tell us about your experience supervising or leading individuals or a team. Please give us an example where you were able to motivate others to elevate their performance. How did you decide your coaching strategy? What worked well and less well?
36. Describe the most difficult problem you've encountered in training/supervising/working with adults in the workplace. What steps did you take to address this challenge? What was the outcome?
37. Can you describe a time where metric -based process improvement would have added value to a project or initiative?
38. Health Sciences Administration’s service profile includes a range of research, service and regulatory units. Many staff members may have been hired for specific technical expertise and/or credentials rather than well- established supervisory or leadership skillsets. What resources will you leverage to develop a standard level of supervisory competency and build capacity across our HSA units?
39. If you had 5 minutes to prepare a communication to HSA leadership about a sensitive, time-urgent incident that may involve unprofessional, non-compliant, and possibly actionable behavior, what would be your first steps?
40. From your perspective, what is the greatest threat to employee productivity?
41. You have been working successfully with a middle-management interdisciplinary group that has become very comfortable with your leadership (facilitation). The members understand their roles, have forged productive collaborative relationships, and are making excellent progress towards their goals. For some reason, one of the stellar members of the group is replaced with an individual known to have difficulty working in teams. What do you do?
42. During your phone interview, we mentioned our recent strategic planning process. Two of the distinctive values we identified in the strategy plan are excellence and accountability. Can you tell us how you would describe those values to a subset of personnel identified by their manager as underperformers?
43. Think of a specific situation where you needed to give critical feedback to your supervisor or leadership regarding an initiative that sounded great in theory but is failing in practice. How did you share that feedback? What was his or her response?
44. Have you ever been in a work situation where you were faced with a significant ethical dilemma? Can you walk us through how you handled it? (If “no”, then ask candidate what they would do when faced with an ethical dilemma)
45. You are leading a system roll-out team made up of delegates from across your department. How would you approach a unit manager who may be at conflict or approaching non-compliance due to evolving expectations and slipping deadlines? That manager’s performance is affecting the team and your ability to meet stated milestones. How and when would you communicate your solution and progress to your supervisor?
46. What do you consider to be the most important elements in a (service unit) situated on a large urban campus?
47. Please describe the mission of (unit) and your specific experience(s) indicating probable success in managing the complex, multi-dimensional program to meet this mission.
48. (Unit) is a well-respected, complex (subject/service) program serving a broad constituency. What specific skills would you leverage to orient, integrate, and lead change in (unit)?
49. (Unit) is an essential service at the UW and an integral part of the UW Emergency Response Plan. Please describe your experience in emergency management and business continuity planning and the relative importance of these issues in an organization.
50. Specific to health-related units: Maintaining health and wellness in the young adult is often about counseling them on healthy lifestyle choices. Considering that many of our students do not access our clinic directly, how would you propose we engage students in making healthy choices? Please provide specific examples.
51. What approach and strategies have you used to foster teamwork and collaboration across the various departments of a health care organization?
52. If you determined it was necessary, what steps would you take to be successful in resource-reduced environment?
53. What do you consider to be the primary impacts of the state budget reductions on existing services and productivity? How would you identify the primary impacts of such cuts how would you communicate the reality and projections to staff?
54. Please provide an example of how you involve your staff in decision-making and describe how you ensure that decision-making processes are transparent to staff when appropriate?
55. Can you describe a specific example of how you kept clients and staff informed about important policy changes in order to minimize frustration with a challenging process?
56. Can you outline a strategy for helping staff understand their options when faced with adopting a new initiative in addition to existing responsibilities?
57. Please describe the key elements of a strategic planning process. Once a plan is complete, how do you measure its success?
58. Research personnel are facing escalating regulatory burden. Provide an example of how you have communicated with your employees regarding increased regulations and the resulting impacts. Please include the outcome of this communication.
59. What do you perceive are the most important elements in this position and how would you ensure appropriate prioritization and balance across those elements?
60. Within an institution like the UW, with widely diverse research, teaching and student communities, how would you equitably and practically go about instituting policy and process change?
61. If you had to select a supervisory candidate who was an excellent subject matter expert or one who was adaptable and excellent at forming strategic relationships, which would you chose?
62. Which element of process improvement work do you enjoy the most and why?
63. What is your ideal approach to project management involving multiple inputs and requirements?
64. Tell us about at least two of the types of organizations (private or public) you have been involved with throughout your career. Explain how these organizations contributed to your approach to workflow and time management.
65. Can you describe the challenges you believe could exist in an organization that is required to keep an institution in compliance with multiple regulations and yet does not have the authority to write “tickets” or “provide police powers”? What would be your approach to addressing these challenges?
66. How would you approach a trend that you are seeing in unit employees that do not meet project milestones and deadlines? ( Get response …. Then ask…) What if you have evidence that there are staff who are not working to full capacity, yet their supervisor covers for their lack of effectiveness or accountability?
67. It has been said that “the only thing constant is change” – which fits the University and EH&S situation currently given the economic challenges. How do you know when you are in conflict with a pending change and how do you assist yourself and your team to deal with the change?
68. Tell me about a situation where you conformed to a policy or procedure you disagreed with. How did you make that decision? Tell me another time when you didn't conform to standard policy or procedure. What's the difference in these two situations?
69. This position requires supervision of several staff members with a diverse set of skills. Please share what you consider to be your leadership style. How do you engage staff to build individual capabilities as well as the overall team? (specific examples most useful)
70. Can you give us an example of when you have had to respond to an incident outside of normal work hours and what were your responsibilities? Can you describe what type of circumstance would prevent you from responding to such an incident?
71. You receive a call from a Department Chair unhappy with the department’s room (personnel, technician, etc.) assignment for an important seminar. What would you do?
72. In (unit), there are often competing priorities and tight timelines. Please describe how you set your priorities and follow through with tasks? How do you manage the tasks of team members and keep them engaged and on track?
73. You are asked by the Provost to describe how your department aligns with the mission of the University and the value created by your services. What strategy do you apply in developing a response?
74. How do you learn about an organization’s subject matter, operations and relevance to the organization’s mission?
75. Tell us about your experience and/or involvement with professional industry or academic organizations?
76. How would you approach (unit) contacts who were concerned about transitioning to a new policy or system when they are facing other urgent deadlines or events in their own department or lab?
77. What is your ideal approach to project management involving multiple inputs and requirements?
78. How do you approach converting a paper-based office to an electronic system?
79. Describe experiences you have had with arranging travel, hosting visitors, purchasing and/or supporting events. What aspects do you enjoy most and what aspects do you enjoy least? What has made you successful in these settings?
80. Describe your feelings surrounding the need for animals in biomedical research. What do you think animal rights activists hope to achieve?
81. Do you have experience or exposure to working in a secure facility? Can you tell us how this impacts or supports the work of this unit? How do you think you would respond to working in this environment?
82. Tell me about how you have used the MS Office suite of software in your work. What are the typical tools you use in Outlook? How have you used calendar/scheduling tools?
83. Do you prefer the technical focus of the position description or the personnel support functions of the position?
84. Describe the most difficult learning challenge/problem you've encountered with new technical applications. What was it? What steps did you take to address this learning curve? What was the outcome?
85. Tell me about your experience as a team member. Give me an example where you were able to support or motivate staff to perform well as a team. What was your most challenging experience you had as a member of a team?
86. You are preparing PowerPoint slides for the Director’s presentation at an annual meeting. How would you approach PI/Division Heads who are approaching non-compliance by failing to provide you with critical metrics necessary to prepare your report? Two days go by and you still haven’t received the information you need. What do you do?
87. Tell us about your technical proficiency. Which software or web-based applications do you find most useful for communications work? What specific web platforms or content management systems do you use? How would you transfer that experience and knowledge to using WordPress?
88. How have you used analytics in assessing the impact of web-based information? What is your opinion regarding the value of metrics and analytics in building and maintaining websites?
89. Describe your experience with developing and disseminating public information. How do you manage the Director’s advocacy for transparency in communication when dealing with sensitive information and various stakeholders
90. Effective emergency communication must be accessible and accurate. What role do you see social media playing in a traditional emergency communication plan?
91. How would you approach a Core Staff Investigator who has exciting translational research results but does not want to talk with the media or prefers not to explain research in layman’s terms?
92. Effective emergency communication must be current, accessible and accurate. What role do you see social media playing in a traditional emergency communication plan?
93. You have been asked to collate metrics for the NIH Annual Progress Report for two divisions that are known to habitually procrastinate. Your supervisor is asking for daily status reports. Division heads are now evading your phone calls and not responding to emails. What do you tell your supervisor? What are your next steps?
94. You realize you need some focused time to work on narrative text for a pending grant submission. You planned for late afternoon when things are quieter. Suddenly, you don’t have access to the materials on the internal drive due to an unannounced IT server transition. The text is due in your supervisor’s hands by 8:00 am the following morning. What do you do?
95. You are training program assistants to help with posting graphics and video clips on the internal website. An emerging priority has come into the Director’s Office and your supervisor has called all hands on deck for the next two weeks. The original project is necessary for process improvement and the timeline affects three divisions. How do you manage these priorities?
96. Provide an example of a time when you had to teach (or share) particularly sensitive information to an internal audience. How did you handle the information, prepare the audience and follow through?