interview questions guide

Candidate Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Required Questions

**Introduction   
\*MUST ASK ALL\***

* Please tell us why you decided to apply for this position and why you are (considering) leaving your current employer?
* In five minutes or fewer, summarize your previous work experience, telling us about your primary tasks and technology used.
  + If candidate did not share reason for leaving, either on the application or in conversation, ask about their reasons for leaving previous jobs.
  + If candidate gives vague or “new opportunity” answer, ask follow-up question.
  + If candidate has an employment gap, ask about it.

**Diversity Question Options   
\*MUST ASK AT LEAST 1\***

* Tell us about a time you had to adapt to a wide variety of people by accepting or understanding their perspectives.
* Diversity, equity and inclusion are important to the college. Tell us about a time you adapted your style in order to work effectively with those who were different from you.
* Give us an example of a time when a person’s cultural background affected your approach to a work situation.

**Job Specific   
\*MUST ASK APPROPRIATE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER CANDIDATE CAN SUCCESSFULLY PERFORM THE JOB \* (Questions will vary, examples can be found in this document)**

* Knowledge
* Skills
* Abilities

**Technical Skills   
\*MUST ASK ALL THAT APPLY\***

* Rate your level of expertise (beginner, intermediate, or advanced) in each of these programs and give specific examples of how you have used each of them, and the most advanced functions you have utilized.
  + - * + Word
        + Excel
        + Google Docs
        + Database Management (if applicable)
        + WordPress (if applicable)
        + Any others

**Closing   
\*MUST ASK ALL\***

* We’ve asked several questions in an effort to know you as a candidate. Is there anything we haven’t asked about or anything you would like to emphasize about yourself that really makes you stand out as a candidate for this job?
* What would you like to ask us?
* Discuss next steps and timeline

# Additional Question Options

**Position Specific**

* What educational qualifications make you a strong candidate for the XX position?
* What experiences have you had that make you a strong candidate for the XX position?
* St. Olaf has a distinctive mission even among selective residential liberal arts colleges. How do you see the XX position in relation to the college’s mission?
* Why do you want to work at St. Olaf?
* What aspect of this posting is most exciting to you, and why?
* What do you think will be indicators of success / signs that you are doing a good job for this position?
* What are your goals for this position?
* Now that you know a little more about this position, what intrigues you the most?

**Concerns**

* What concerns would you have about taking this position?
* What do you hope this job is *not*?
* How will you know in the first three months if you made the right choice?

# Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Questions

**Ability to Deal with Ambiguity**

* Give us an example of a project/task you had to accomplish without sufficient information, guidelines, or direction.
* Tell us about a time when you were presented with an ambiguous task or situation where you needed to act or make a decision. How did you seek clarity?
* Give us an example of a time when there was a decision to be made and procedures were not in place. What was the outcome?

**Analytical Skills**

* Tell us about the most complex or difficult information you had to analyze.
* Tell us about the task or project that you were responsible for that best demonstrates your ability to analyze information.
* Sometimes even though we study the data from all sides, we make errors in interpretation of the data. Tell us about a time that happened to you.

**Attention to Detail**

* Tell us about a project you were involved in that required high attention to detail and accuracy. How did you manage multiple tasks that are in different stages and upcoming deadlines?
* Describe a situation where you didn’t pay as close attention to the details as you should have.
* Tell us about a time when you paid too much attention to the details and not enough to the big picture.

**Communication (oral)**

* Tell us about the most difficult or complex idea, situation, or process you have ever had to explain to someone. How did you explain it? Were you successful?
* Describe a time that you were successful primarily because of your ability to communicate orally.
* Tell us about a sensitive or volatile situation that required very careful communication.

**Communication (written)**

* Give us an example of a time you used written communication to share information that, in hindsight, you realize should have been shared verbally.
* Describe a time you wrote a report that was well received by others.

**Confidentiality**

* Tell us about a time when you were told information that was highly confidential, and you knew that you were one of the only people that knew this information. How did you handle it?

**Courage**

* Describe a time you had to make a decision that you knew would be unpopular.
* Tell us about a time you felt you needed to be assertive in order to get what you felt you or your team deserved or needed.

**Creativity**

* Describe a time when you came up with a creative solution/idea/project/report to a work problem you had been dealing with for some time.
* Give us an example of how you have been creative in completing your responsibilities.

**Diversity – Additional Questions**

* Tell us the steps you have taken to create a work environment where differences are valued, encouraged, and supported.
* Tell us about a time you took action to make someone to feel comfortable in an environment that was obviously uncomfortable with his or her presence.
* Tell us about a time you avoided forming an opinion of someone based on their outward appearance.
* Describe a time when, in a work environment, you made an intentional effort to get to know someone from another culture.
* Describe a situation when you had to give feedback to someone who was not accepting of others.
* Describe the way you handled a specific problem involving others with differing values, ideas, and beliefs in your current/previous job.

**Engagement**

* Think about the most exciting and energizing aspect of your current or most recent position. What did you specifically enjoy about it? Why?
* Tell us about a collaborative effort you headed (were involved in) between your organization and the community.
* Tell us about a way that you have championed the concept of corporate citizenship/stewardship within your team/department/organization.

**Financial**

* Tell us about your experience working with budgets.

**Flexibility**

* Tell us about a time when you had to stop working on a project/idea/assignment and start working on a completely different one. What did you do? How did that work out?
* Tell us about a time when you changed or modified your priorities to meet another person’s or group’s expectations.

**Independent**

* How do you feel about working independently? Give us an example which demonstrates this.

**Initiative**

* Give us an example of a time you went above or beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
* Describe a time when you took the initiative to do something that needed to be done, even though it wasn’t really your responsibility. What circumstances prompted you to act?
* We all have periods of downtime at work. Tell us about a downtime you had, why you had it, and what you did with that time.
* Tell us about a time when you went the extra mile. Why did you exert the effort? What was the outcome?
* Tell us about something new or different that you did in your department that improved customer service, productivity, quality, teamwork, or performance.

**Interpersonal Skills / Relationships**

* At times, we must all deal with difficult people. This can be a challenge when it is someone with whom we need to develop a cooperative relationship. Tell us about a time you were successful in developing a cooperative relationship with a difficult person at work.
* At times, we are all required to deal with difficult people. An even more demanding factor is to be of service to a difficult person. Describe a time you were successful dealing with a difficult customer.
* Give us an example of a situation where you misread another person and ended up making the situation worse instead of better, at least initially.
* Give us an example of a time an employee came to you and was anxious about something. How did you handle the situation? What was the result?
* Tell us about a time when you had to handle a difficult customer, whether internal or external. How did you bring that situation to resolution?
* Give us an example of a time you effectively used your people skills to solve a customer problem.
* Give us an example of something you have done to either develop or strengthen customer relationships.
* Describe for us something you did to establish a “customer first” mentality in your department or team.
* Tell us about a time you were able to establish a rapport with a person that others referred to as “difficult.”
* Tell us about a recent success you had with an especially difficult employee or coworker.
* Describe for us a situation when you had to build and maintain a new relationship in order to accomplish a business goal.
* Describe a time you were able to provide a peer or supervisor with recognition for the work they performed.
* Describe a time you had to give candid feedback to one of your peers.

**Leadership**

* How would you describe your leadership style?
* How would your employees describe your leadership style?
* How would you describe the culture in your department/division/ business unit? Why?
* How would your employees describe the culture in your department/division/business unit? Why?
* What would your highest performing employee say about you? What would your most struggling employee say about you?
* Tell us about a time when you had a major objective to achieve under a tight time constraint, lean budget and with fewer people than typically would support the goal? How did you overcome the challenges to achieve the necessary outcome? What was the measurable result(s)?
* Whom have you promoted, and why? Do you have a process for mentoring and developing your employees?
* Some people are more difficult to work with than others. Give an example of how you’ve worked with the most difficult direct report and how that differed from how you worked with the most manageable direct report.
* Tell us about a time you had to confront and handle the negative behavior of someone who reports to you. What was the situation? What did you do? What was the outcome?
* Describe your procedures for keeping track of what is going on in your department.
* Leaders quite often delegate major projects to their direct reports. Tell us about a time that you did that and how you kept informed about the status of the project.
* Give me a specific example of how you have empowered your staff to make independent decisions.
* Describe a time when you failed to treat all your direct reports equally.
* Give us an example of an important goal that you had set for your team and the team’s success in reaching it.
* Describe a time you led a team of people who didn’t always see eye to eye. What did you do? Why did you choose to do that? How did it work out?
* Tell us about a time you led a team that had one or more unproductive/negative members. How did you find out about the unproductive member? What did you do? Why did you choose to do that? How did it work out?
* Give us an example of a time where you needed to get people who have very different work styles to work cooperatively on a project. Were you successful? Why/why not?
* Tell us how you have developed trust and loyalty between you and your direct reports?
* Tell us what you have done on a consistent basis to ensure that your direct reports feel valued for their contributions?
* Describe a time when one of your direct reports was under a great deal of pressure or stress. What did you do in the situation? What was the outcome?
* Give us an example of a time when you disagreed with the views of your direct reports.
* Tell us about a time when you needed to give feedback to an employee with emotional or sensitive problems, and share with us the process you used.

**Learning**

* Tell us about a time you needed to learn something quickly for a new task or project. How did you go about it?
* Walk us through the actions that you have taken to further your own professional development.
* Tell us about a time when you were able to treat a negative experience as a learning opportunity.

**Motivation**

* We all get assignments we really don’t want to do. Give us an example of a time that happened to you and tell us how you motivated yourself to get it done.
* Give us an example of a time of low morale where you were able to motivate another person or group to achieve something that they weren’t really motivated to achieve.

**Negotiation Abilities**

* Tell us about the most important negotiation you have handled in the last couple of years.
* Tell us about a time when you had to convince another staff member or leader, whom you had no direct authority over, to buy into a new idea or project? How did you accomplish this?

**Organizational Skills**

* Tell us about a time you had to handle multiple responsibilities. How did you organize the work?
* Think about the assignments you completed over the past few months. Tell us about the one that required the greatest amount of effort with regard to planning and organizing.
* How do you stay organized?

**Perseverance**

* Tell us about a time you encountered significant resistance or a major setback on a project you were working on, but managed to work through it anyway.
* Tell us about a really tough day that you had recently and what you did to get through it.
* Describe your most challenging project or situation and how you overcame the obstacles.
* Tell us about a time where you felt defeated. How did you respond to the adversity?
* Being successful takes more than luck – it also takes hard work. Tell us about a time when you had to work very hard and make personal sacrifices to help your organization/department/team reach its goals.
* Describe a time when, against all odds, you were able to get a project or task completed within the defined parameters.

**Prioritizing / Time Management**

* Tell us about a time you were particularly effective in prioritizing tasks and completing a project on schedule.
* Tell us about a time you had multiple tasks or projects given to you at the same time and how you decided what to do when.
* Tell us about a time that you willingly took on more work even though you were already busy. How were you able to get everything done?
* Give us a specific example of a time when you did not meet a deadline. How did you handle this?
* Give us an example of a change you saw coming and how you planned for that change.
* Tell us about a time you achieved a great deal in a short amount of time.
* Tell us about a time you had to complete multiple tasks/projects in a tight timeframe.
* Give us an example of a time that your priorities were changed quickly. What did you do? What was the result?

**Presentation Skills**

* Tell us about a presentation you made to a large audience. What was the purpose? How did you prepare it?
* Describe the most creative oral presentation you have had to make.
* Tell us about a time you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone’s opinions.

**Problem Solving**

* Give us an example of a time you identified a potential problem and resolved the situation before it became serious.
* Describe a time you failed to anticipate a potential problem and develop preventative measures.
* Tell us about a time you had to solve a problem with no rules, guidelines, or policies in place to guide you.
* Describe the way you handled a specific problem involving others with differing values, ideas, and beliefs in your current/previous job.
* Describe a situation where you had to make a tough decision that normally would have been escalated to your supervisor. How did you handle the decision-making process? What was the result?
* Give us some examples of the kinds of things you have talked to your supervisor about rather than handling them yourself.

**Process / Project Management**

* Tell us about your system for controlling errors in your work.
* Tell us about a suggestion you made to improve the way job processes/operations worked.
* Tell us about a time when you took a complicated, technical process and explained it to people who were not familiar with the process.
* Tell us about a situation where you found a way to get the job done faster and better at a lower cost.
* Tell us about a program you developed or a specific time when you worked to improve a process.
* Tell us about a project or idea—not necessarily your own—that was implemented successfully primarily because of your efforts.
* Tell us about a time when you managed a multi-step process and how you organized this process.
* Describe a time where you had to develop an ongoing process involving several people for a regular event or task. What was your process for developing that process?

**Strategic Planning / Professional Expertise**

* Give us an example of a strategy you developed to achieve a long or short term business need, goal, or objective.
* Tell us about a strategic initiative or opportunity you identified and pursued.
* Tell us about the changes or issues that are being discussed or taking place in your area of expertise. How are these issues or changes affecting the way you do your job?
* Tell us how you keep abreast of the professional/technical aspects of your position.
* Describe a situation where your professional/technical expertise made a significant difference.
* Tell us about a time where your understanding of a (social/organizational/technological) system helped you to be more successful than you would have been otherwise.
* Describe a time where, had you been able to predict a business/industry occurrence, you would have been able to make adjustments so that your company/department/team did not suffer from it.
* Give us an example of a time when you picked up on a business or industry trend or change and made appropriate changes within your company/department/team to respond to, or take advantage of, the opportunity.

**Stress Management / Working under Pressure**

* Tell us about a time when you had too much to do, but not enough resources. How did you handle the pressure?
* Tell us about a project that required you to work well under pressure.
* Describe for us a time when your team was under a fair amount of stress. What did you do to help them through this? Were you successful?
* There are times we each feel overwhelmed with a task or project. Tell us about a time this happened to you.

**Strengths / Areas for Development**

* If we were to ask your current supervisor or coworker, what would they say are your greatest strengths? What would they say are your areas for development?
* As you evaluate your skills and experience in relation to this position, what do you see as one or two of your most important strengths?
* What are some things you feel you have done particularly well or in which you have achieved the greatest success in your previous or current positions?
* Tell us about something you did in your (last/current) position of which you are particularly proud.
* We all feel that we are unique in our accomplishments. Tell us an accomplishment you have had that you feel is unique.
* Tell us the one thing about you as an employee that you hope your current or last supervisor doesn’t tell us during a reference call.
* When you have been told about a problem in your job performance, or discovered it for yourself, what have you typically done? Can you give an example?
* Tell us about a time when one of your weaknesses got the better of you.
* Describe for us a time when you were disappointed in your performance.
* Tell us about a time you made a blunder on the job that cost your company time or money. How did you handle the aftermath?
* In your most recent role, what was your overarching impact? i.e., how did you help the company grow, gain market share, increase client base, improve profitability? What are 2-3 key achievements that led to the overarching impact?
* What was the biggest failure you had in your most recent role? Prior 2-3 roles? How did you respond to the situation? What did you learn?

**Teamwork**

* Tell us about a time when you were part of a team that did not get along or work well together. What happened?
* Give us an example of a time where you were willing to compromise on something relatively important to you in order for the team you were a member of to proceed with a project.
* Tell us about a time you recognized a team member for having made a valuable contribution to the team.
* Tell us about a time you needed to lead an intact project or ad hoc team toward a goal that you, personally, did not completely support or believe in.
* Give us an example of a time you were a team player in a project with your peers.