Sample Interview Questions

Phone Interview Questions

General
• How did you hear about the position?
• Why are you looking for new opportunities?
• What about the position encouraged/caused you to apply?
• For those working at a college: What do you like most about your institution? What would you change about it?
• For those not working at a college: What do you like most about where you’re working? What do you like most about the college(s) you’ve been associated with? What about working at a college do you find appealing?
• Why are you leaving your current job?

Current Situation
• What are your current responsibilities at the job you’re in now?
• What’s the main thrust of your current work?
• What professional goals have you been working toward and how well have you met them?
• What institutional challenges/goals/priorities are you helping to address?

Strategizing
• What role have you played in strategizing your institution’s goals?
• Has that strategy changed during your time?

Managing/Supervising
• How involved are you in managing your operation’s budget?
• How have you adjusted that budget over time?
• How many people do you directly supervise?
• What in your supervising work has been most gratifying or rewarding?
• Can you describe a supervising challenge you’ve faced? How did you address it??
• Tell us about a time you led your team through a significant change?

Perception of Williams
• Assuming you’ve researched Williams, what attracts you to the College?

Sample Interview Questions

Personal Motivation and Traits
• How do you feel about your present workload?
• What motivates you to do your best work?
• Tell me about a time you went “out on a limb” to get the job done?
• Tell me about a project that got you excited?
• Under what conditions do you work best?
• What is your greatest strength/weakness or deficiency?
• Tell me about a work task you enjoy.
• What work tasks do you tend to procrastinate?
• Describe a time when you saw some problem and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it.

Goals
• How does this position align with your career goals?
• Do you set goals for yourself and how do you do that?
• What do you consider to be your most significant professional achievement?
• Tell me what “success” means to you.
• What does “failure” mean to you?

Communication
• Tell me about a work situation you had that required excellent communication skills.
• What was more important on your job, written or oral communication?

Flexibility
• Tell me about the last change which occurred in your office. How did you handle it?
• I’m interested in hearing about the last time you took a risk. What was it and in retrospect, was it the right decision?
• How important is communication and interaction with others on your job? How many departments did you deal with? What problems occurred?
• Tell me about a time when a work emergency caused you to reschedule your work/projects.
• Give me an example of the last time you went above and beyond the call of duty to get the job done.
• In what areas do you typically have the least amount of patience at work?
• Tell us about a time when you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.

Diversity and Inclusion
After drawing attention to our core value of diversity and inclusion, ask questions such as those suggested below.
• Think about how you are committed to and handle diversity and inclusion and what you and the College expect of employees in this area. Practice answering the question for yourself to get a sense of how you would talk to a candidate on this core value.
• How has your background and experience prepared you to be effective in an environment that holds this value?
• Tell me about a time that you adapted your style in order to work effectively with those who were different from you.
• What kinds of experiences have you had in relating with people whose backgrounds are different from your own?
• Can you recall a time when you gave feedback to a colleague who was not accepting of others?
• Can you recall a time when a person's cultural background affected your approach to a work situation?
• Have you ever realized you had said or done something that may have been offensive to a colleague? How did you respond to that realization, and what was the outcome?
• Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to a wide variety of people by accepting/understanding their perspectives.
In your experience, what are the challenges faced by members of historically underrepresented groups in the workplace? What strategies have you used to address these challenges, and how successful were those strategies?

What does it mean for you to have a commitment to diversity? How have you demonstrated that commitment, and how would you see yourself demonstrating it here?

Describe the climate for diversity at your present position. What impact have you had on that climate?

What efforts have you made, or been involved with, to foster multicultural understanding and cultural competence?

Have you encountered concerns about "chilly climate" raised by members of identity groups that have historically experienced discrimination? If so, how have you handled them?

What measures have you taken to make someone feel comfortable when others seemed uncomfortable with his or her presence?

What have you done to further your knowledge/understanding about diversity? How have you demonstrated your learning?

Tell us how you work with people to create or foster diversity in the workplace.

In what ways have you integrated multicultural issues as part of your professional development?

What do you see as the most challenging aspects of an increasingly diverse academic community, and what steps have you taken to meet such challenges?

Suppose that you encounter a pervasive belief that diversity and excellence are somehow in conflict. How do you conceptualize the relationship between diversity and excellence? What kinds of leadership efforts would you undertake to encourage a commitment to excellence through diversity?

In what ways do you feel it is appropriate to incorporate topics related to diversity and (your discipline) into the workplace? How would you do this?

Has diversity played a role in shaping your mentoring and advising styles? If so, how?

What is your vision of diversity at an institution such as Williams College?

Describe a specific situation in which you worked with a diverse group of people over a period of time. Based on this experience, what did you learn?

Tell me about a deadline you had to meet. How much notice did you have?

You have worked in a fast-paced environment. How did you like the environment?

What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you?

Tell me about a time you were under a lot of pressure. What was going on, and how did you get through it?

What type of tasks do you have the most difficulty?

What do you do when you’re having trouble with your job?

What do you do when you have a great deal of work to accomplish in a short period?

Describe a time when you were significantly overwhelmed at work. How did you handle it?

Describe a time when you had to interact with a difficult client. What was the situation, and how did you handle it?

What do you do when you’re having trouble with a boss?

If your boss knew you were interviewing, what would he say?

Your supervisor tells you to do something in a way you know is wrong. What do you do?
• If your supervisor unfairly criticized you, what would you do?
• Would you like to have your boss’s job? Why or why not?
• Tell me about a time when your manager was in a rush and didn’t give you enough support?
• I would be interested to hear about an occasion when your work or an idea was criticized, what was criticized, who criticized you, and how did you handle it?
• Describe the best and worst manager you ever had. What qualities did each of them have?
• Describe a time when your manager was in a rush and didn’t give you enough support?
• I would be interested to hear about an occasion when your work or an idea was criticized, what was criticized, who criticized you, and how did you handle it?
• Describe the best and worst manager you ever had. What qualities did each of them have?
• Describe a time when your work or an idea was criticized, what was criticized, who criticized you, and how did you handle it?

Supervisory
• Who reports to you? What are their job functions?
• You have supervised people in the past, what were their titles and what type of supervision did you give them?
• Share an example of how you were able to motivate employees or co-workers.
• How would you characterize your approach to supervising?
• Have you ever fired anyone? What were the circumstances?
• Have you ever hired anyone? Why did you choose them?
• What do you do when you’re having trouble with an employee?
• What type of supervisory training have you completed in the last two years?
• How did you communicate bad news to your staff?
• What makes someone a good supervisor?
• What programs have you put in place to build morale?
• Describe your supervisory style?
• How do you measure success as a supervisor?
• How do you decide who needs what training?
• How do you measure success in training?
• If you are hired, what will you do in your first 30/60/90 days?
• Describe a change you made in your job that you feel is innovative or that you are very proud.
• How do you proceed when you need to make a decision, and no policy exists?
• How would you define “leadership”?
• Describe a time when you were able to influence an outcome positively.
• What have you done to become more effective in your job?
• How do you orient new employees to your department?
• When hiring, what do you look for in a successful candidate?
• How do you handle difficult conversations in the workplace, particularly relating to others’ performance?

Organizational Management
• Describe your management style.
• How do you plan your day?
• Describe the top of your desk.
• Tell me about the last time you failed to complete a project on time.
• What do you do when you’re having trouble solving a problem?
• What do you do when things are slow/hectic?
• What do you do when you have multiple competing priorities?
• Describe one change you made in your last job that was very beneficial.
• Tell me about your typical day. How much time do you spend on the phone? In meetings? Etc.
• Your supervisor left you an assignment, then left for a week. You can’t reach him/her, and you
don’t understand the assignment. What would you do?
• How do you organize and plan for major projects?
• Describe a project that required a high amount of energy over an extended period.
• How do you organize yourself for day-to-day activities?
• Tell me about a task you started but just couldn’t seem to get finished.

Leadership/Management
• What has been your experience in effecting organizational change and how is organizational
change most successfully managed?
• (Follow up question depending on the answer above.) Describe what your strategy has been (or
would be as an incoming manager for getting to know individuals, their styles, the various
working relationships, the Departments, the work, etc., and how and when you might begin
introducing change.
• What has been your approach to bringing individuals on board who may be resistant to change?
• How do you ensure your staff is clear about which issues warrant your attention, the
information you need, and delineation of authority?
• Because of budgetary constraints, staff workloads are increasing more dramatically than
resources, causing morale issues among the staff who do not feel they have enough time to
provide the level of support expected, and is also an issue for the faculty who have varying
expectations of assistance from staff. What have you done or would you do to improve the
situation?
• How would you prioritize competing responsibilities, if they came into conflict?
• What was the last project you ran? How did it turn out?

Senior Management Evaluation
• Give me an example of a time you had to facilitate progressive change within your organization.
• How do you typically stay in the information loop and monitor your staff’s performance?
• How do you typically confront subordinates when results are unacceptable?
• What kind of mentoring and training style do you have?
• Do you delegate responsibilities, or do you expect your direct reports to come to you for added
responsibilities?
• How would you describe the amount of structure, direction, and feedback that you need to
excel?
• Regarding managing your staff do you “expect” more than you “inspect” or vice versa?
• Tell me about a method you’ve developed for accomplishing a task.
• What could you have done to be more effective at a previous job?
• Tell me about a time you were placed in charge of a group of people.
• What did you like about being in charge?
• What did you not like about being in charge?
Skill-Based Questions
Planning, Analysis, and Organization
- Describe your experience with both short and long-range planning. Include your role, approach and the challenges you faced.
- Describe your experience with facilities and space planning/coordination.
- Describe your experience managing multiple long-term projects while meeting immediate demands. What strategies do you use when faced with more tasks than time to do them?

Liaison, Communication, Negotiation, Problem Solving, Decision Making
- How will you determine what issues to bring to your supervisor, which to delegate to staff and which to resolve yourself?
- Please describe a situation where you resolved complex issues among groups of individual(s) (perhaps faculty) in which opposing alternatives were proposed by equally strong supporters.
- This position requires communication with many different campus units and individuals, inside and outside of the unit. Give examples of strategies you have used to communicate effectively with different levels in an organization.
- Can you give us an example of a difficult interaction or conflict you have had with a supervisor or subordinate and how you might handle a similar situation differently (or the same) in the future?
- Please give us an example of when you have thought outside the box and any challenges it may have presented.

Technical Competencies
- Describe your technical computing competency in terms of which applications you use and also ways in which you’ve introduced new technology or software applications to make your work or the work of others more efficient.
- Please describe your financial management experience.
- What do you see as the role of a manager in ensuring that appropriate fiscal management (stewardship) is occurring within the unit?
- With respect to your writing skills, please describe the types of writing you have done (business correspondence, reports, proposals, etc.), who your audience has been and if you’ve written primarily under your signature or others. (Did you bring samples you can leave with us?)

Position Specific Questions
- It may be that you’ve already provided sufficient information in these next areas by your earlier responses or on your application; however we wanted to give you an opportunity, if you’d like to expand on your experience in either overseeing or personally providing support in the following areas: (List position-specific areas of responsibility, e.g. advising, curriculum and leave planning, academic personnel, development and outreach activities, etc.)
- What’s the biggest takeaway from your current or last job that you’ll bring to this job?

Essential Functions
- The essential functions of this position include the ability to work extended hours to attend functions or meet deadlines, to travel occasionally, to attend meetings in various locations on and off campus, and to work on a computer for extended periods of time. Can you perform these tasks, either with or without accommodation?
Closing

Closing and Next Steps

- Questions or additional comments from the candidate
- Follow up questions from the Selection Committee
- Timeline to conclude interviews and reference checks and make a hiring decision
- Explain who they may be meeting with next