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Career Advice

What You'll Be Asked

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In [my first essay](#), I discussed general guidelines for preparing for interviews for faculty jobs at community colleges. Now I want to be really practical. These are actual questions asked during interviews for English faculty in the past two years. You won't be asked all of them, but my bet is that every question you might be asked is among these examples.

The colleges wish to remain anonymous, so I have identified them by number only.

Community College #1

1. Briefly describe your background as it pertains to this position.
2. Please describe your approach to teaching, using examples from a sample class.
 - What did you do on the first day of class?
 - What techniques did you use to involve students?
 - How did you provide feedback?
 - What do you do when students have obviously not mastered the content of a particular unit of instruction?
3. Why should students attend your classes?
 - How do you encourage attendance?
 - How have you dealt with students who have poor attendance?
4. In the most recent course that you taught, what did you do to actively involve students?
 - How frequently did you do this?
 - How did students respond?
 - Are you likely to continue this. Why or why not?
5. Describe the evaluation system you used in the most recent course you taught.
 - What was your grading scheme?
 - What kinds of tests and exercises did you assign?
 - How did the tests and exercises reinforce each other?
 - What policies did you follow concerning homework, class attendance, lab reports, etc?

6. Describe how you have used technology in the instructional process.

- How have you used the Internet?
- Have you developed a web page?
- What is your experience with developing web-based courses?
- What is your experience with the use of multimedia in the classroom?

7. Describe your experience with distance learning technology.

8. Describe one of the most successful teaching activities you have conducted.

- What did you do?
- What was your objective?
- Why did you select the method you did?
- How did you know that it was successful?

9. Describe one of the least successful teaching activities you have conducted.

- What did you do?
- What was your objective?
- What went wrong?
- Why?
- How did you know that it did not succeed?

10. Describe a difficult encounter you have had with a student.

- What was the nature of the problem?
- How did you diagnose the problem?
- How did you try to resolve the difficulty?
- What was the outcome?

11. What professional development activity has had the greatest impact on your classroom instruction?

12. What do you consider to be the most important aspects of working with adult students?

13. On what institutional committees have you served?

14. Which institutional committee on which you have served has had the greatest impact on the institution?

- What was the issue?
- What was your role in the final outcome of the committee?
- How frequently did the committee meet?

15. In your previous positions, how have you reacted to student evaluation results that have been critical or positive?

16. What questions do you have for the committee?

Community College #2

1. How do you understand the mission of the community college? How do you see yourself fitting into it?

2. Why do you want to join our faculty?

3. What subject do you enjoy teaching the most? Why? The least? Why?

4. Tell us about your strengths and weaknesses as an instructor. How do you play to your strengths and compensate for your weaknesses as an instructor?
5. Give some examples of your ability to work effectively with a diverse student body. Do you feel the need to adjust your teaching style to accommodate students of different cultural, racial, religious, or otherwise diverse backgrounds?
6. Describe one of your successful classroom experiences. Describe one of your unsuccessful class experiences. What did you learn from each?
7. Describe an office conference experience that you wish you could “take back” because it did not go well. What would you do differently now?
8. Imagine that while grading a paper you suspect plagiarism. How would you handle the situation?
9. Imagine that each semester, after teaching several semesters for the college, you notice that you have students who are completely unprepared for your course and that most of them have had the same one of your colleagues for the prerequisite course. What would you do?

Community College #3

1. What do you view as the role of an English teacher working within the mission of the community college?
2. Why does this college and its mission appeal to you?
3. What experiences have you had in teaching freshmen composition? What would be your preferred freshmen comp class?
4. What experience do you have with underprepared students?
5. What experiences have you had teaching literature? What would be your preferred literature class?
6. How do you feel about technology in the classroom? If you use technology, explain how you do so and why you feel it is useful. If you don't use technology, explain why not.
7. Have you taught any distance learning classes? Have you designed any? How well do you feel such a class works?
8. If I called your references or your current supervisor, what three words would they use to describe your teaching? What three words to describe you as a colleague? What three words to describe your temperament?
9. Describe the most creative work-related project you have completed?
10. What have been your experiences with committee work?
11. Have you been through an accreditation self-study and visitation?

Community College #4

1. Briefly summarize for us your qualifications for teaching English, including the ways you might have used or might use technology in the classroom.
2. How would you explain the mission of the community college, and how should the college be involved in its community?
3. Tell us about your experience with a diverse student body.
4. Give us an example of your most successful work with students.
5. What are your main strengths and weaknesses in teaching? How do you highlight your strengths in the classroom and what steps

are you taking to address the weaknesses?

6. Describe the best and the worst teaching experience you have had. What did you learn from each?

7. Scenario: A student of yours comes by your office at the very end of the semester. He has struggled through the course, making marginal grades while balancing work, family, and school. He has even done some extra credit work you offered him. His average is 67; he needs 70 to pass. He has come by to remind you of how hard he has worked and that if he doesn't pass your class, he will not be able to transfer to the university next semester. Do you give him the points to pass? Why or why not?

8. If I were to ask your current or former colleagues and supervisors to characterize you, what would they say?

9. What do you think are the most important characteristics one must possess to be a successful full-time faculty member? How do you rate yourself in these areas?

10. Why do you want to teach English at this college?

Community College #5

1. What is your philosophy of education and teaching?

2. How does this philosophy fit with a community college mission?

3. What makes you uniquely qualified to teach English here?

4. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher? As a colleague?

5. What specific strategies have you employed to engage students in the class?

6. Describe a particular lesson you thought was especially effective when you taught it? Why did it work so well? Describe a lesson that didn't work. Why not?

7. Describe a particular student interaction that you thought was especially good. Why was it good? Describe a student interaction you thought did not go well. Why?

8. How would your current students describe you? How would your current colleagues describe you? Your current supervisor?

9. What journals do you read and conferences do you attend regularly? Identify a specific idea, teaching strategy, or research topic that you have taken from a journal or conference within the last couple of years. Why was it notable and what did you do with it?

10. Where do you see yourself professionally in five years?

11. How do you see the teaching of literature fitting in the community college curriculum?

12. In 100 years, what literature from 1975–2000 will be anthologized?

13. Do you have any questions for us?

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