

Panel Interview Preparation for Applicants

Berkeley Executive Search

Below you will find information to help you as you prepare for your upcoming interview including details on: 1) Logistics, the 2) Interview Questions - What to Expect, 3) Approaches and Strategies for Preparation and 4) Themes / Core Competencies - What to Expect.

1) Logistics

- For Zoom panel meetings, the link for the meeting will be provided in your confirmation email and/or with your panel interview questions that you will receive 15 minutes prior to the start of the interview.
- Please refer to your confirmation email for details regarding the number of search committee members, their names, and titles. The search committee is comprised of various members of the campus community that will interact with this position. Due to the nature of their various roles and the potential for unanticipated events and occurrences, there is a possibility that some members may not be in attendance. One or more search advisors from the Berkeley Executive Search team may also be in attendance.
- For virtual meetings, please test your Zoom account beforehand to make sure that it is working properly and try to set up your interview space in a quiet place with a stable internet connection.
- Please dress in professional interview attire.
- If possible, we recommend that you schedule time before and after the interview for preparation/buffer.

2) Interview Questions - What to Expect

- Generally, the interview will have 7-9 interview questions in total. Some of those questions may have multiple parts and follow-ups, as well.
 - Interviews will generally consist of a total of about 60 minutes with approximately 50 minutes allotted for the interview portion, for the search committee to ask you questions. The remaining 10 minutes or so will be an opportunity for you to ask questions as well.
 - We want to allow time for you to engage with the committee as the interview is not only a time for the search committee to interview you but also an opportunity for you to interview the committee as well and learn more about who you would be working with.
 - The interview will be conducted in a round robin format with the search committee each taking turns asking the questions.
 - **The interview questions will be sent to you in advance of the interview.** The list of questions should arrive in your email inbox 15 minutes prior to the interview. Keep in mind that these questions may not be the full set of everything that will be asked during the interview as there may be follow up questions for clarification or additional details.
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These follow-ups may not be scripted but rather more organic based on the questions and responses where the committee may want to probe a little more deeply, so be prepared for that.

- **Keep in mind that you will have about 5-6 minutes to address each question, though this is not definitive for each question.** Through all of this we want to make sure that you are aware of how much time you have remaining and are keeping track so that you are able to get through all of the questions while providing thoughtful responses for each. Some you may be able to address in a shorter amount of time than others, while others may require more time for the response. So it is important to be mindful of your time with your responses as you think about how to address these questions and the follow-ups.

One of the things to keep in mind is having a strategy of how to formulate your responses. There are many interview preparation tools and options available. One that we suggest is the **SOAR** method.

3) Approaches and Strategies for Preparation

- You may be familiar with **SOAR**, which refers to:
 - **Situation**
Objective or obstacle
 - Action**
 - Result**
 - Using this method to respond to the interview questions helps you to break down your response into component parts and think about how to best organize your thoughts and examples. The response may be a story but form a flow that sounds very organized to the committee.
 - 1) What was the context, **situation**, problem need or concern
 - 2) What was your **objective, goal, and/or obstacle** that you had to achieve or overcome?
 - 3) What was the **action** you took or that you led others to take, how did you move through it?
Note: When explaining the action that you took, keep in mind that this does not mean what the group did, but what you did. Consider using a balanced approach when using “I” and “we” statements and being mindful of where there was team collaboration, and demonstrating this collegial approach while also acknowledging efforts that you may have led or roles where you demonstrated leadership.
 - 4) How were your **results** received and/or perceived by the various stakeholders, constituents, and executives that you were working with? Your direct leadership and/or direct reports, when applicable? What were the outcomes/results and how did they work out? How were the results measured and what did you learn?
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The **SOAR** approach has been helpful and is one that we are most familiar with, but please use whatever method or approach works best for you in your preparation.

4) Themes / Competencies - What to Expect?

- Please review the job description for the relevant themes and competencies of the role to assist you in your interview preparation. Below are some common core competencies and themes that the questions may include. **Come prepared with examples and scenarios from your experiences that are related to the position and work to weave in relevant core components of the role into your responses.** Keep in mind these various core competencies of the role and think of examples from your experiences that highlight these areas, and be prepared to discuss how you would be able to leverage these areas of knowledge and expertise to be successful in the role.
- Below are some examples of **themes** that we see in many positions, though not necessarily all. This is not an exhaustive list, however some common position and interview question themes may include:
 - Motivation
 - Program Development / Management
 - Subject Matter Expertise / Domain Knowledge / Learning
 - Communication / Collaboration / Political Acumen
 - Management / Leadership
 - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Other things to consider when preparing your responses:

- How might your experiences translate to a large, complex, decentralized matrix organization like UC Berkeley?
- Come prepared with examples and direct experience that you might show in different portions of the portfolio / areas of responsibility and oversight.
- We encourage you to reflect on the various areas of the portfolio / areas of responsibility and oversight and think about your transferable skills in some of these areas and how you may learn and adapt to be effective in the role.

We know this is a lot of information and hope that this document has been a useful resource in helping you prepare for your panel interview. We wish you success in the search process!

Please reach out to your search advisor if you have any questions.