School of Education

Recruitment, Assessment, and Selection

**Sample Reference Questions**

Below are just a small sample of reference questions that can be used when talking with a candidate’s reference. We would love to continue to expand this resource, please feel free to send additional questions to soemadbo@education.wisc.edu and we’ll continue to add to this resource list.

Setting up the Reference

It is helpful to provide the reference a brief understanding of the position the person has applied and interviewed. This can be done at the time you are setting up the reference check. While you can do a reference check via email, by phone is preferred/recommended so that you are able to ask follow up questions to gain more in depth information.

Information to gather

Name of the reference

Relationship of reference to applicant/candidate

Length of time

**Introductory Questions**

\* How long have you know this person and in what capacity?

**Decision making and problem solving questions**

\* Share a time when this person had to think quickly to resolve a problem to resolve a situation.

\* What has your experience been with this person’s decision making abilities, please provide an example.

**Diversity, inclusion, and/or social justice questions**

\* What is your assessment of the candidate’s demonstrated commitment to social justice and diversity?

**General questions**

\* What five words would you use to describe this person?

\* If this person were to apply for a position with your department, would you “rehire” this individual?

\* What has been your experience with this person and their ability to transition into a new environment? From your perspective what might they need to be success with this type of transition?

\* If you were to recommend areas for growth for this candidate, what professional growth opportunities would you suggest?

\* What would you identify as a strength and area for improvement for this person?

**Supervision questions**

\* Describe their supervision experience, what is their greatest asset and challenge as a supervisor?

\* Can you please speak to the candidate’s skills, and ability, to supervise and develop staff/employees?

**Teamwork, relationship building questions**

\* How does this person work with people that are different than themselves?

\* How do you think this person would do working with students?

\* Can you please share how you have observed the candidate’s ability to connect with staff, students and faculty?

**Work style, organization, administrative questions**

\* How would you describe their timeliness and attendance?

\* Describe their organizational skills/style?

\* How would you describe their work style? Are they able to work autonomously? Take initiative?