

ACCCA Community College

Dean of Instruction

Sample Interview Questions

This document is designed to help demystify the topics included in the interview process for deans within the California Community College (CCC) system. The questions below reflect common themes in CCC hiring processes for dean positions and are written broadly so they can apply to all position types.

Consider how you respond to each question in writing and verbally. After reviewing your responses, return to the original question and evaluate how well you addressed each portion of the question. Next, ask a colleague or mentor to do the same.

1. Fit, Motivation, and Leadership Identity

Questions:

- Please describe how your past educational and professional experiences have prepared you to serve as a Dean of Instruction at ACCCA Community College?
- Why are you interested in this particular position at this particular college?
- How does this position fit into your career path?
- What are the notable leadership characteristics that you would bring to ACCCA Community College, and what are your academic areas of expertise?
- What book is on your bedside table and why does it interest you?

Insight:

These questions collectively assess how well the candidate aligns with the mission, values, and expectations of the California Community Colleges. Panels are looking for intentional career progression, a clearly defined leadership identity, and evidence of ongoing learning and reflection. Strong responses demonstrate both readiness for the role and a genuine connection to the institution and its students.

2. Leadership in a Shared Governance and Equity-Centered System

Questions:

- Participatory governance is a hallmark of the California Community Colleges and is highly valued and well-managed at ACCCA Community College. Please give us your insight as to how participative governance is best used in the decision-making process and illustrate your personal experience.
- We are interested in knowing your allegiance to academic freedom. Please also discuss the California Community Colleges' 10+1 concept.
- Please tell us about an experience that demonstrates the most significant way you have fostered and promoted diversity in your career.
- Your leadership and management styles as the Dean have a profound effect on the culture of the institution. Please discuss the ways in which you would foster and promote an environment of trust, collegiality, and high morale among your faculty members and with all college constituents, using examples from your experience.

Insight:

These questions examine how a candidate leads within the defining structures and values of the CCC system. This includes the ability to operate effectively within shared governance, uphold academic freedom, and actively advance equity. Strong candidates show that they can build trust, navigate complex relationships, and lead in ways that are collaborative, inclusive, and grounded in respect for faculty voice.

3. Institutional Leadership: Operations, Accreditation, and Resources

Questions:

- As you know, ACCCA Community College is on probation with the Accrediting Commission. Please tell us how you would see your role as Dean in having this sanction removed and briefly outline the immediate steps you would take upon coming to our institution.
- What is the accreditation status of your current institution and what specific involvement have you had in making it so?
- Many times, the decisions the Dean must make are not embraced by the faculty in the division. Tell us how you have dealt with faculty opposition to one of your decisions. What was the ultimate outcome? What were the "lessons learned?"

- Collective bargaining is a fact of life for California Community Colleges. Please tell us about your specific experience sitting at the bargaining table and who did you represent?
- ACCCA Community College, like most others, experiences large swings in funding and enrollment from year-to-year. What experience have you had in providing leadership in times of fiscal constraint? What is your specific experience in budget development and budget management? What is your specific experience in enrollment management?

Insight:

These questions focus on the operational and political realities of the dean role in CCCs. Candidates must demonstrate the ability to manage accreditation processes, navigate labor relations, respond to fiscal challenges, and handle conflict with faculty in a thoughtful and strategic way. Strong responses reflect sound judgment, transparency, and the ability to balance compliance, relationships, and institutional priorities.

4. Student Success, Strategy, and Workforce Relevance

Questions:

- What is the largest single obstacle for California Community Colleges' in terms of improving student success? Why? What are you going to do about it?
- (For Vocational/Technical Dean) The Career Technical Training that is performed by the Community Colleges is touted as THE solution to the State's economic crisis. Do you agree or disagree? And how would you contribute to the college's success in this arena?
- (For Vocational/Technical Dean) As you study the future of many industries, which ones do you see as potentially viable for ACCCA Community College?

Insight:

These questions assess a candidate's ability to think strategically about the future of the institution and its students. In the CCC system, this means understanding systemic barriers to student success, advancing equity-focused solutions, and aligning programs with workforce and regional economic needs. Strong candidates connect big-picture thinking with actionable strategies that improve outcomes for diverse student populations.