



Hiring & Interview Insights

Understanding the California Community College Hiring Process

First-Round Questions, Application Screening, and Scoring Transparency

This document is designed to help demystify the first-round interview process. The questions below reflect common themes in California community college hiring processes and are written broadly so they can apply to faculty, classified professionals, and administrators.

Consider how you respond to each question in writing and verbally. After reviewing your responses go to page 2 and consider the rubric criteria and how hiring committees typically assess candidate responses.

Theme: Commitment to Equity and Student Success

California community colleges center equity and student success in all roles. Describe how you have contributed to advancing equity, inclusion, and access in your previous work. What specific strategies did you use, and what impact did they have?

Theme: Collaboration and Shared Governance

Community colleges operate within participatory governance structures. Describe your experience working collaboratively in a shared decision-making environment. How do you balance diverse perspectives while moving work forward?

Theme: Student-Centered Service

In California community colleges, all roles contribute to student learning and support. How does your work—whether instructional or non-instructional—support student success? Provide a specific example.

Theme: Professional Growth and Reflective Practice

Describe a time you received feedback that led you to adjust your practice. What did you learn, and how did it influence your professional growth?

Theme: Cultural Competency and Communication

California community colleges serve highly diverse communities. Share an example of how you effectively communicated or worked across cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic differences. What did you learn from that experience?



What Hiring Committees are Listening For

To help make the hiring process more transparent, here is how hiring committees typically evaluate responses to written applications and first-round questions in California community colleges. This type of scoring system is currently used in the San Diego Community College District.

Each question is scored using a 0, 1, 3, and 4 scale. Number 2 is left off to make a greater distinction between a 1 and 3 scores. Hiring committees look for evidence in your response, not just general statements of belief. They are listening for examples, clarity, and alignment with the mission/vision of the college and department.

Across all questions, panelists typically listen for:

- Specific examples rather than abstract philosophy
- Your individual contribution
- Impact on students, colleagues, or the organization
- Reflection and learning
- Alignment with the California community college mission

Using the sample rubric, go back and self-evaluate your responses. Better still, have someone else score your responses using the rubric and give feedback.

4 – Highly Recommend

A response at this level:

- Provides a clear, specific example.
- Explains what you did and why.
- Describes the impact or outcome.
- Demonstrates strong alignment with student success, equity, collaboration, and professional growth.

These responses are detailed, grounded in experience, and clearly connected to the role.

3 – Recommend

A response at this level:

- Provides a relevant example.
- Explains your actions with reasonable clarity.
- Shows understanding of community college values.
- May have slightly less depth or detail than a “4,” but is solid and aligned.

These responses are strong and aligned, though slightly less detailed than a “4.”

1 – Recommend with Reservations

A response at this level:

- Is general or somewhat vague.
- Lacks clear outcomes or reflection.
- Shows partial understanding but leaves questions about readiness.

There may be relevant experience, but the response lacks depth or specificity.

0 – Do Not Recommend

A response at this level:

- Does not address the question.
- Provides no relevant example.
- Demonstrates misunderstanding of the role or core values.

How Applications Are Reviewed and Scored

Before candidates are invited to interview, applications are screened and scored. This process is guided directly by the job description and any listed desirable qualifications.

What the Screening Committee Reviews

Applications are evaluated based on:

- Required qualifications listed in the posting
- Desirable (preferred) qualifications
- Duties and responsibilities described in the job announcement
- Evidence of relevant experience, education, and skills

Screening committees use a scoring rubric aligned to these areas to ensure fairness and consistency.

What Makes an Application Strong

Strong applications clearly demonstrate real, direct experience in each listed area. Committees do not make assumptions. They score only what is written.


Applicants are more competitive when they:

- Address each required and desirable qualification directly
- Provide specific examples of responsibilities performed
- Describe scope (size of program, number of students, budget, team size, etc.)
- Use language that clearly connects experience to the posted duties

If a qualification is listed but not clearly demonstrated in the application materials, the committee cannot award points for it.

Why Specificity Matters

Screening committees score only what is written in the application. They cannot infer experience based on job titles alone.

 Instead of writing:

“Worked closely with diverse student populations.”

A stronger response would read:

“Served as a counselor in a community college with a student population that was approximately 55% first-generation college students and 40% Pell-eligible. I implemented targeted outreach workshops for probationary students, collaborated with EOPS and CalWORKs staff to coordinate support plans, and developed culturally responsive advising materials in English and Spanish. Over two academic years, probation recovery rates increased by 12% among participating students.”

This example is stronger because it:

- Identifies the population served
- Clarifies the applicant’s individual role
- Describes specific actions taken
- Demonstrates measurable impact

Additional Example (Non-Faculty Position)



Instead of writing:

“Provided support to students and staff in a fast-paced office.”

A stronger response would read:

“Served as the lead administrative assistant in an Admissions and Records office processing approximately 8,000 student transactions per semester. I trained two new staff members on enrollment procedures, developed a step-by-step processing guide to reduce errors, and collaborated with Financial Aid to resolve residency documentation issues for disproportionately impacted students. As a result, processing turnaround time decreased from five business days to three, and incomplete application rates dropped by 15% within one year.”

This example is stronger because it:

- Defines the scope of work
- Clarifies leadership or initiative taken
- Connects duties to student service
- Demonstrates measurable improvement

 *Key Takeaways*

- Applications and interviews are scored using structured rubrics.
- Screening committees score only what is written or stated.
- Specific examples matter more than general philosophy.
- Alignment with equity, collaboration, student success, and professional growth is central in California community colleges.