

## Considering Contributions to the University's Mission

Employee hiring processes seek to identify and recruit candidates whose skills and experience best meet the requirements of the position. As part of this process, a hiring unit may choose to consider candidates' potential contributions to the [University's mission](#), including its “enduring commitment to a vibrant and unique residential learning environment marked by the free and collegial exchange of ideas;” “unwavering support of a collaborative, diverse community bound together by distinctive foundational values of honor, integrity, trust, and respect;” and “universal dedication to excellence and affordable access.” This page provides a uniform approach for such inquiries to ensure consistency across searches.

Search committees, hiring officials and managers may evaluate applicants' potential contributions to the University's mission by:

- asking applicants to address potential contributions in their cover letters;
- asking applicants to submit a separate summary of their potential contributions as part of their application; or
- asking candidates about their potential contributions during the interview process.

When information is sought as part of the application packet, whether in the cover letter or as a separate submission, the job posting should include the following language:

*The University's [Mission Statement](#) affirms its*

- *“enduring commitment to a vibrant and unique residential learning environment marked by the free and collegial exchange of ideas;”*
- *“unwavering support of a collaborative, diverse community bound together by distinctive foundational values of honor, integrity, trust, and respect;” and*
- *“universal dedication to excellence and affordable access.”*

*As part of your application, please describe your potential contributions to any aspect of this mission. Please focus upon your work skills and experience. In doing so, you may choose to refer to your personal perspective, but the focus of our consideration is on your potential contributions through skills and experience, rather than personal opinions or beliefs.*

The posting should instruct applicants whether to include this information in their cover letter or as a separate attachment.

Search committees, hiring officials and managers should adhere to the following principles:

- For each search, determine at the outset whether to ask applicants about potential contributions to the University's mission and, if so, whether to do so at the application or interview stage.
- Determine your approach in advance of the job posting and maintain consistency across all applicants.
- Solicit and consider only information about candidates' skills and experience, not their personal beliefs.
- Evaluate potential contributions consistently with your overall process for evaluating candidates, and make clear to applicants that this is only one aspect of a holistic review of their candidacy.

In the interview context, focus questions on candidates' potential contributions as evidenced by their skills and experiences. Questions should be tailored to the requirements of a particular position. Examples of potential questions include:

- This job requires direct communication with a broad array of constituencies. Tell us about your experience communicating with individuals with differing perspectives or life experiences.
- As an academic institution, we value open inquiry and the free and collegial exchange of ideas. How would you promote this environment among students or faculty?
- As a public university with a strong commitment to affordable access, we serve students who reflect the diverse socioeconomic, racial, religious, political, and other characteristics of the Commonwealth and beyond. What strategies might you use to promote success and a sense of belonging for all students?
- Our University has a strong tradition of student self-governance that encourages personal integrity and mutual respect, through a student-run Honor System and Judiciary Committee. How would you support these values within your role?
- We aim to equip students to serve as citizen leaders and professionals within a diverse society and a global economy. How might you help students develop the skills they need to succeed?

For more information, or to schedule a guidance session for your department or search committee, please contact the Employment Equity team at [employmentequity@virginia.edu](mailto:employmentequity@virginia.edu).

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