

Resource 3-1: Conversation Starters for Informal Interview Settings

In some situations, there is a need to have informal candidate conversations that may take place outside the typical business environment. This could include a brief meeting over coffee, breakfast, lunch and/or dinner, etc. Although these meetings occur outside the professional setting, it is important to maintain a professional demeanor and focus the conversations on job-related information. Below are items to consider when having these conversations, as well as questions that allow you to gather pertinent information on a candidate's professional experiences.

- Make brief introductions.
 - Have all individuals involved in the meeting state their name, job title, department, and length of service at the University.
- Highlight details of the department, the University, Lexington, and the Bluegrass region.
 - Discuss important projects and/or initiatives pertinent to the individual's experience that would promote why he/she would want to join the department and University.
- Ask questions that will lead to insight on the individual's professional knowledge, vision, and motivational desires. Although not using structured interview questions, determine questions to help the conversation run smoothly. Sample questions may include:
 - What is your current project/research/creative activity?
 - What future projects/research/creative activity are you considering?
 - What collaborative opportunities have you participated in with peers outside of your department/college?
 - What classes do you enjoy teaching the most and why?
 - Describe the most rewarding project/research/creative activity in your career thus far. What made it so significant?
 - What challenges do you have in your current position?
 - Tell me about the most important people/mentors in your education and/or work experience. Why were they so important?
- Provide time for the candidate to ask questions.

Information to consider when having an informal conversation with a job candidate

- Refrain from engaging in discussions such as politics, religion, beliefs, etc. These topics should not be discussed because they are not details needed to make a hiring decision and can be perceived as discriminatory.
- Determine who will pay for the meal if applicable.
- Don't ignore personal questions (e.g., How are the school systems in Lexington?). Provide honest feedback, but don't open the door to learn more than is needed.