

CAREER DEVELOPMENT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROFESSIONALS

THE REFERENCE PROCESS

Identify people who will be candid and positive about both your strengths and weaknesses. You should have a minimum of five individuals on your reference list who know you well enough to give specific answers to questions and who can be contacted regularly without implying that “She’s been hunting for a job for years.” You should include superiors, professional and clerical subordinates, including support staff, community members, and faculty members at both your current and most recent institutions within the last ten years.

It is acceptable to have more individuals in each category if you wish, however do not use people because they are big names unless they know you very well. A nationally known figure may look impressive on your resume. But, if they can’t be reached for comment or do not know you well enough to answer the committee’s questions, they can negatively impact your candidacy.

Also, effective references will share what they believe to be your areas of strength as well as needed growth. Therefore, a good, sound communicator, who knows your work well, is an excellent reference.

If there are issues or positions in your past which might prove to be a problem, for example, you were relieved of a position, had a faculty vote of no confidence, received a less than glowing performance evaluation, or you’re concerned that you may not get a fair review from a necessary reference, please alert the search consultant or committee chair if a consultant is not involved.

Think about what your worst enemy might leak to the press the morning after your selection is announced. If it’s relevant-or if it can be used against you, let the search consultant know about your concerns. He or she can help you to defuse the issue, confidentially, with the college leadership, if necessary, or by contacting additional references to refute the negative impression.

If the issue is one of potential embarrassment to the prospective new employer, the search committee, if informed appropriately, will be able to affirm that they were aware of the issue, had researched it extensively, and determined that you have grown and learned new skills.