**These characteristics represent the core behaviors and values expected of university employees to be successful in their roles.** **Each performance characteristic should be evaluated based on observable actions demonstrated throughout the review period and rated as either “Successful” or “Unsuccessful.”**

Each characteristic should include a clear definition and a set of behavioral indicators to support meaningful dialogue and consistent evaluation during performance reviews.

## For All Employees

These characteristics apply to all employee roles, regardless of level or function.

**Accountability**

Takes ownership of work, decisions, and outcomes. Accepts responsibility for successes and setbacks and aligns actions with institutional values and expectations.

* Acknowledges personal contributions to outcomes—positive or negative—without shifting blame
* Accepts feedback constructively and applies it to improve future performance
* Makes ethical decisions aligned with institutional standards, even when inconvenient
* Escalates issues or risks proactively rather than ignoring them
* Demonstrates consistency between words and actions (i.e., "walks the talk")
* Takes initiative to resolve problems within one’s scope of influence
* Communicates transparently about challenges, progress, or mistakes

**Adaptability & Resilience**

Demonstrates flexibility and composure in response to changing priorities, challenges, or ambiguity. Maintains a constructive attitude during periods of stress, transition, or disruption.

* Adjusts quickly to new assignments, systems, or expectations without a decline in performance
* Maintains professionalism and focus in high-pressure or uncertain situations
* Responds to feedback or setbacks with a growth mindset
* Shows persistence in the face of obstacles or competing demands
* Supports others during change by remaining open, calm, and solution-oriented

**Collaboration & Team Contribution**

Fosters cooperation, shares knowledge, and works effectively across functions or departments. Builds positive relationships to support collective goals.

* Shares relevant information and resources with colleagues to support shared goals
* Seeks input from others and contributes ideas during team discussions
* Demonstrates respect for diverse roles and perspectives
* Supports group decisions, even when different from personal preferences
* Steps in to help teammates without being asked when workloads shift

**Communication**

Expresses ideas clearly and respectfully in writing and speech. Actively listens to others and ensures shared understanding in person, via email, and in meetings.

* Clearly articulates ideas in meetings, presentations, and written communications
* Tailors communication style and content to the audience (e.g., students, peers, leadership)
* Asks clarifying questions to confirm understanding
* Responds to emails and inquiries in a timely and professional manner
* Maintains open and respectful dialogue, even during disagreement

**Compliance & Ethical Conduct**Adheres to university policies, state and federal regulations, and ethical standards. Protects confidential information and models integrity.

* Follows applicable policies, procedures, and laws consistently
* Maintains confidentiality of sensitive data (e.g., student records, HR information)
* Reports concerns or irregularities through appropriate channels
* Treats all individuals fairly and without favoritism
* Demonstrates honesty and integrity in decision-making and communication

**Digital Fluency / Tech Savvy**Uses appropriate technology tools to accomplish work efficiently and improve service. Learns new systems as needed to remain effective.

* Uses institutional systems and tools (e.g., Microsoft 365, Banner, Blackboard) efficiently
* Embraces new technology and seeks help or training when needed
* Identifies digital tools that enhance productivity or service delivery
* Maintains digital security and data integrity practices
* Adapts workflows to leverage automation or tech-based solutions

**Emotional Intelligence (All Employees)**

Recognizes, understands, and manages one’s own emotions while responding empathetically and appropriately to others. Builds positive relationships and contributes to a respectful, inclusive environment.

* Demonstrates self-awareness by regulating tone, body language, and emotional reactions
* Responds to feedback without defensiveness and uses it constructively
* Shows empathy and understanding in daily interactions with colleagues and students
* Remains calm and composed under stress or during interpersonal conflict
* Practices active listening and reflects on others’ perspectives before reacting
* Maintains respectful communication even in challenging or emotionally charged situations
* Recognizes the emotional climate in group settings and responds appropriately

**Growth Orientation**

Demonstrates a commitment to learning and development. Seeks out opportunities to gain new skills, adapt to change, and apply feedback to improve.

* Participates in professional development, training, or skill-building opportunities
* Applies feedback to improve performance and relationships
* Reflects on challenges as learning opportunities
* Seeks input from others to strengthen performance or understanding
* Demonstrates curiosity and a willingness to learn beyond immediate job duties

**Innovation & Continuous Improvement**

Identifies opportunities to improve systems, services, or outcomes. Offers creative solutions and supports changes that enhance quality, efficiency, or experience.

* Identifies inefficiencies and suggests realistic process improvements
* Proposes new ideas or approaches aligned with unit or institutional goals
* Pilots or adopts improved methods, tools, or resources
* Evaluates outcomes and learns from successes and failures
* Encourages a culture of experimentation, reflection, and adaptation

**Interpersonal Influence**

Builds rapport and uses emotional intelligence, communication skills, and relationship awareness to shape outcomes and gain support. Adapts approach to engage others, resolve differences, and move ideas forward constructively.

* Builds positive relationships across levels, functions, and backgrounds
* Uses persuasion and diplomacy to gain buy-in without relying on authority
* Adapts tone, style, and messaging to fit the audience and context
* Navigates sensitive conversations tactfully and constructively
* Recognizes and responds to nonverbal cues and emotional dynamics in group settings
* Anticipates objections and tailors messaging to address concerns or motivations
* Gains cooperation through credibility, empathy, and shared interests
* Influences outcomes through listening, aligning priorities, and framing solutions
* Encourages collaborative decision-making by engaging stakeholders early

**Judgment & Decision-Making**

Applies sound reasoning and professional ethics to make informed decisions. Recognizes when to escalate issues and when to act independently.

* Gathers appropriate information before making decisions
* Considers short- and long-term implications when choosing a course of action
* Balances policy, ethics, and practical needs when solving problems
* Seeks guidance when unsure or when high-impact decisions are needed
* Takes responsibility for decisions and their outcomes

**Learning Agility**

Learns quickly from experience and applies insights to new situations. Adjusts approach based on feedback and changing contexts.

* Adapts behavior based on lessons learned from past successes or failures
* Seeks out new and challenging assignments
* Tries new approaches, even in uncertain conditions; flexibility in thinking and behavior
* Applies knowledge gained in one situation to different contexts
* Navigates ambiguity without full information

**Physical Safety and Risk Awareness**

Promotes and maintains a safe physical work environment by following institutional policies, using resources appropriately, and proactively identifying and addressing safety risks.

* Adheres to physical safety protocols related to equipment, facilities, and emergency procedures
* Maintains clean, organized, and hazard-free workspaces
* Uses tools, machinery, and materials according to training and guidelines
* Participates in safety drills, inspections, or compliance checks as required
* Reports accidents, hazards, or unsafe behaviors to appropriate personnel
* Follows guidelines for public health and environmental safety, where applicable
* Ensures personal and campus safety through proper security practices and situational awareness

**Public and Community Engagement**

Represents the university with professionalism, integrity, and responsiveness in interactions with external individuals, organizations, and the broader community. Builds trust and promotes positive relationships that advance the institution’s mission of service, outreach, and partnership.

* Communicates clearly, courteously, and professionally in all public-facing interactions
* Demonstrates respect for community perspectives, especially those of underserved or underrepresented populations
* Responds promptly and helpfully to inquiries or concerns from community members, vendors, or other external stakeholders
* Participates in or supports community outreach efforts, partnerships, or events
* Aligns personal and departmental conduct with the university’s values and reputation in the public eye
* Protects the university’s credibility by addressing concerns thoughtfully and redirecting to appropriate resources when needed
* Builds collaborative relationships with community partners that support mutual goals

**Psychological Safety and Respect**

Creates and contributes to a work environment where individuals feel valued, respected, and safe to express ideas, raise concerns, and engage without fear of negative consequences.

* Demonstrates respect for differing perspectives, identities, and experiences
* Encourages open dialogue, input, and constructive feedback across levels and roles
* Responds professionally to questions, mistakes, or disagreements without assigning blame
* Acts with emotional intelligence and empathy in interactions with colleagues, students, and the public
* Maintains confidentiality and handles sensitive topics with discretion
* Intervenes or reports behaviors that create a hostile, disrespectful, or exclusionary environment
* Supports inclusive practices that foster trust and belonging

**Reliability**Consistently delivers high-quality work as promised. Demonstrates dependability by meeting deadlines, honoring commitments, and supporting team stability.

* Completes tasks accurately and on time with minimal need for follow-up
* Honors deadlines and commitments, even during competing demands
* Communicates proactively when timelines or responsibilities need adjustment
* Maintains consistent performance across varying levels of supervision or workload
* Shows up on time and is prepared for meetings and responsibilities
* Supports team continuity by maintaining documentation, sharing knowledge, or filling in when needed
* Can be counted on to follow procedures and uphold expectations reliably

**Service Excellence**

Provides high-quality support and follows through with professionalism. Maintains responsiveness and courtesy in interactions with internal and external stakeholders.

* Responds promptly and courteously to student, faculty, or staff requests
* Follows up to ensure issues are resolved to satisfaction
* Maintains a positive and solution-oriented demeanor, even under pressure
* Proactively identifies service gaps or barriers and addresses them
* Represents the university with professionalism in all external interactions

**Student/Client-Centered Orientation** (for student- or client-facing roles)

Acts in the best interest of students or service recipients. Anticipates needs, provides timely support, and prioritizes a positive, respectful experience.

* Demonstrates empathy and active listening in student or client interactions
* Anticipates student needs and offers proactive support or guidance
* Refers students to the appropriate resource when issues are outside of scope
* Balances institutional policy with student advocacy in decision-making
* Fosters an environment that is welcoming, respectful, and accessible

**Sustainability & Stewardship**  
Demonstrates responsible use of institutional resources and supports environmentally conscious practices when applicable.

* Uses materials, energy, and space in a resource-conscious manner
* Suggests or supports sustainable practices in daily work
* Considers the long-term impact of decisions on budgets and resources
* Maintains accurate records and documentation for accountability
* Encourages responsible and ethical use of university resources

**Values Differences**

Respects and appreciates the unique backgrounds, perspectives, and contributions of others. Actively seeks to understand and leverage diversity to create a more inclusive, equitable, and effective work and learning environment.

* Welcomes input from individuals with varied identities, experiences, and viewpoints
* Uses inclusive, respectful language in all forms of communication
* Advocates for equitable access to programs, services, and resources
* Demonstrates cultural awareness and adapts approach based on audience or context
* Addresses biased language or behavior when observed, and fosters a culture of belonging
* Encourages diverse perspectives in team discussions, planning, and decision-making

## For Supervisors and Leaders

**Accountability & Results Orientation**

Takes ownership for individual and team performance. Consistently delivers high-quality results by following through on commitments, overcoming obstacles, and aligning work with departmental and university goals.

* Follows through on assigned responsibilities and holds others accountable for doing the same
* Tracks progress toward goals and proactively adjusts plans when needed to stay on target
* Delivers expected outcomes on time, even under pressure or amid competing demands
* Sets clear expectations for performance and provides feedback when standards are not met
* Aligns daily work and team efforts with strategic priorities of the unit and institution
* Addresses performance gaps directly and constructively
* Takes responsibility for outcomes—both successes and setbacks—and uses them as learning opportunities

**Balances Stakeholders**

Anticipates, considers, and responds to the needs and expectations of multiple internal and external stakeholders. Makes decisions that balance competing interests while supporting the broader goals of the department, college, and university.

* Identifies key stakeholders impacted by decisions, including students, faculty, staff, leadership, and external partners
* Seeks input from relevant individuals or groups before making decisions
* Communicates transparently about trade-offs, priorities, and rationale behind decisions
* Manages expectations and aligns stakeholder interests with institutional goals
* Navigates conflicts or competing demands diplomatically, seeking solutions that serve shared priorities
* Builds credibility by demonstrating fairness, consistency, and responsiveness across stakeholder groups
* Prioritizes actions that promote long-term trust and partnership over short-term wins

**Builds Trust and Credibility**Earns and maintains the trust of colleagues, direct reports, and university stakeholders through honesty, transparency, and accountability. Acts consistently and reliably, aligning actions with stated values and commitments.

* Follows through on promises and commitments, even when inconvenient
* Acknowledges mistakes, takes responsibility, and works to correct them
* Shares information transparently while respecting confidentiality and discretion
* Provides honest, respectful feedback and expects the same in return
* Treats all individuals with fairness, consistency, and respect
* Creates a team climate where trust, openness, and authenticity are valued

**Change Leadership**  
Drives positive change and supports others through transitions. Encourages innovation, models adaptability, and maintains focus and resilience in times of uncertainty or disruption.

* Communicates the purpose, impact, and benefits of change in a clear and motivating way
* Anticipates resistance and proactively engages individuals or teams to build understanding and support
* Encourages open dialogue about concerns, questions, and ideas related to change initiatives
* Demonstrates flexibility in adapting plans, timelines, or approaches as conditions evolve
* Models a constructive mindset when facing ambiguity or challenges and helps others do the same
* Supports experimentation and learning from failure to improve future efforts
* Aligns change efforts with institutional goals and unit priorities
* Recognizes and celebrates progress during change to maintain morale and momentum

**Conflict Resolution & Difficult Conversations**  
Manages conflict constructively and fosters an environment where open, respectful dialogue is encouraged. Addresses issues early, objectively, and with emotional intelligence to maintain trust, accountability, and team cohesion.

* Initiates timely conversations to address concerns or performance issues before they escalate
* Listens actively and respectfully to all perspectives during conflict or disagreement
* Maintains objectivity and emotional composure when discussing sensitive topics
* Focuses discussions on behaviors, facts, and impact rather than assumptions or personal attributes
* Encourages others to speak openly about concerns, misunderstandings, or differing viewpoints
* Guides team members toward shared understanding or resolution while reinforcing institutional values
* Seeks mediation or support from HR or leadership when appropriate
* Documents agreements or action steps following difficult conversations to ensure accountability

**Data-Informed Decision-Making**

Applies critical thinking and evidence-based reasoning to solve problems, inform decisions, and improve outcomes. Uses data and analysis to identify trends, measure impact, and guide strategic action.

* Collects and analyzes relevant data before making decisions or recommendations
* Identifies patterns, trends, or root causes in complex information
* Translates data into meaningful insights for colleagues, leadership, or stakeholders
* Uses quantitative and qualitative evidence to evaluate programs, services, or performance
* Selects appropriate tools (e.g., surveys, dashboards, spreadsheets, reports) to analyze and present findings
* Questions assumptions and tests ideas using evidence or structured reasoning
* Communicates the limitations or implications of data honestly and clearly
* Aligns decisions with institutional priorities based on research and results

**Drives Engagement & Psychological Safety**  
Creates a positive, inclusive climate where individuals feel respected, valued, and safe to contribute fully. Builds trust, fosters emotional and psychological safety, and motivates individuals and teams to do their best work in support of the university’s mission and goals.

* Encourages open dialogue, diverse perspectives, and constructive dissent without fear of retaliation or judgment
* Models humility by acknowledging mistakes and showing vulnerability when appropriate
* Recognizes and values employee contributions regularly and meaningfully
* Creates clear expectations while also inviting autonomy, creativity, and ownership
* Checks in on employee well-being and actively supports work-life balance
* Addresses disrespectful or undermining behavior promptly to preserve trust and inclusion
* Encourages risk-taking and innovation by framing failures as learning opportunities
* Maintains consistent, transparent communication that builds confidence and team connection
* Creates space in meetings for all voices to be heard—especially quieter or marginalized team members
* Demonstrates belief in employee potential and supports development aligned with individual strengths

**Global Thinking**   
Applies global and cross-cultural perspectives to teaching, research, service, or planning. Stays informed about international trends and integrates cultural awareness into decision-making.

* Considers global trends, diverse values, and international challenges in strategy or communication
* Integrates global perspectives into programs, curricula, or institutional initiatives
* Demonstrates cultural humility and adapts approach for international or cross-cultural audiences
* Promotes global citizenship and intercultural understanding through actions or partnerships
* Engages in or supports international collaborations, exchanges, or scholarship

**Emotional Intelligence (Leaders)**

Leads with self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation. Creates a psychologically safe environment where others feel seen, heard, and respected. Builds trust and strengthens team dynamics through emotionally intelligent leadership.

* Models emotional maturity by staying composed and constructive during conflict or pressure
* Recognizes how their emotions and behaviors impact others and adjusts as needed
* Navigates sensitive issues with empathy and discretion
* Encourages open expression of ideas and emotions without fear of judgment
* Builds trust through authentic, transparent, and respectful communication
* Coaches team members through emotionally challenging situations with compassion
* Fosters a team culture where emotional well-being and psychological safety are priorities
* Detects signs of burnout, frustration, or disengagement and responds proactively

**Inclusive & Fair Leadership**

Leads with a commitment to fairness, access, and respect by examining policies, practices, and decisions to ensure they serve all individuals equitably. Supports the success and well-being of diverse employees, students, and community members by fostering an environment of belonging and opportunity.

* Identifies and addresses barriers—structural or cultural—that may hinder access, participation, or advancement
* Considers the impact of decisions on individuals or groups with different roles, backgrounds, or needs
* Ensures transparency and consistency in team expectations, evaluations, and opportunities
* Encourages diverse viewpoints in decision-making and team discussions
* Uses data and feedback to assess whether practices are serving all community members fairly
* Actively supports hiring, retention, and development practices that reflect institutional values of access and fairness
* Creates an environment where all voices feel respected, heard, and supported

**Navigates Complexity and Ambiguity**Demonstrates resilience and composure in uncertain, fast-changing, or complex situations. Makes thoughtful decisions without having all the answers and provides steady leadership to others amid ambiguity.

* Maintains focus and perspective when priorities shift or information is incomplete
* Breaks down complex problems into manageable parts and communicates clearly about next steps
* Avoids overreacting to uncertainty and instead models calm, strategic thinking
* Guides teams through change by creating clarity, offering context, and reinforcing shared goals
* Accepts that some outcomes are unknown and makes timely, informed decisions anyway
* Helps others adapt by framing uncertainty as a challenge, not a threat

**Network Building**Builds and sustains professional relationships across departments, institutions, and sectors. Leverages networks to share knowledge, generate collaboration, and increase institutional impact.

* Establishes and maintains connections with internal and external stakeholders
* Fosters cross-functional and cross-sector collaboration to solve problems or advance initiatives
* Connects others with relevant contacts, expertise, or opportunities
* Participates in professional networks or associations that benefit institutional goals
* Strategically expands partnerships that enhance visibility, innovation, or resource sharing

**Organizational Savvy & Influence**Understands the formal and informal structures, decision-making dynamics, and political landscape of the university. Builds relationships and coalitions to advance priorities, influence outcomes, and navigate complex systems without relying solely on authority.

* Identifies key stakeholders, influencers, and decision-makers across units and uses this awareness to inform strategy
* Builds alliances across academic and administrative units to gain support for ideas and initiatives
* Adapts approach based on audience, organizational norms, and political context
* Advocates for change through persuasion, evidence, and credibility rather than positional power
* Knows when to escalate issues and when to handle them through informal channels
* Reads the organizational climate and adjusts communication or tactics accordingly

**Talent Development & Coaching**Supports the growth and performance of team members through timely feedback, ongoing coaching, and development opportunities. Fosters a culture of continuous learning and individual growth aligned with current role expectations.

* Provides regular, actionable feedback to reinforce strengths and address improvement areas
* Holds development conversations that align individual interests with current role expectations
* Encourages participation in learning, training, or mentoring opportunities
* Assigns work that promotes skill-building and learning on the job
* Recognizes learning progress and celebrates development milestones
* Adjusts coaching style based on employee needs and readiness
* Encourages self-reflection and personal accountability for development
* Models continuous learning by pursuing personal and professional growth

**Political and External Awareness**  
Demonstrates an understanding of the political, economic, and regulatory landscape affecting higher education. Anticipates how external dynamics influence institutional priorities and communicates in ways that maintain public trust and support.

* Stays informed about legislative, policy, and funding developments relevant to higher education
* Recognizes how local, state, or federal politics may impact institutional operations or reputation
* Considers public perception and political sensitivities in communications and decisions
* Builds and maintains relationships with key external stakeholders (e.g., government, boards, associations)
* Advocates effectively for institutional needs within regulatory or political frameworks
* Uses discretion and professionalism when navigating politically sensitive issues
* Aligns unit-level initiatives with external expectations or mandates when appropriate

**Resourcefulness & Stewardship**Uses institutional resources—people, time, funds, space, and technology—responsibly and efficiently. Makes thoughtful, creative decisions to achieve results while safeguarding long-term sustainability and public trust.

* Maximizes available resources by finding efficient, cost-effective, or alternative solutions
* Makes budget-conscious decisions without compromising quality or service
* Protects university assets through proper handling, maintenance, and security of tools, equipment, and data
* Evaluates return on investment (ROI) when allocating time, funding, or staffing
* Demonstrates care for shared spaces, technology, and supplies to avoid waste
* Avoids duplication of effort by coordinating work, reusing tools, or leveraging existing systems
* Seeks opportunities to reduce environmental impact (e.g., paperless processes, energy conservation)
* Encourages others to act as stewards of public funds, time, and resources
* Tracks and reports use of resources accurately and transparently

**Strategic Thinking & Planning**Thinks long-term, connects day-to-day work to broader institutional goals, and anticipates future trends and needs. Aligns planning, priorities, and resource use with the strategic direction of the unit and the university.

* Sets goals and priorities that support both immediate needs and long-range institutional objectives
* Anticipates challenges, trends, and opportunities that may affect the unit or university
* Develops plans and frameworks that are proactive, scalable, and adaptable over time
* Aligns team initiatives and resources with academic, operational, or strategic plans
* Balances short-term results with long-term sustainability and impact
* Uses data, feedback, and institutional context to inform strategic decisions
* Communicates how individual and team work contributes to broader university goals
* Collaborates with peers and stakeholders to ensure cross-functional alignment
* Adjusts priorities and strategies when institutional direction, funding, or environments shift

**Succession Planning & Workforce Readiness**

Proactively identifies and develops talent to ensure organizational continuity. Aligns workforce planning with strategic goals to prepare individuals and teams for future roles, reduce risk, and support long-term success.

* Identifies high-potential employees and supports their development through stretch assignments, mentoring, and learning opportunities
* Maintains awareness of key positions and creates plans for critical role coverage
* Assesses team capabilities and aligns development with future skill needs
* Encourages cross-training to build team flexibility and reduce single points of failure
* Plans for retirements, attrition, or organizational growth with proactive talent strategies
* Collaborates with HR to track development plans and succession pipelines
* Creates equitable access to advancement and development opportunities
* Builds leadership capacity at multiple levels by delegating with growth in mind

**System Thinking & Institutional Alignment**Understands the complexity of the university as a system and leads with awareness of interdependencies, governance structures, and strategic priorities. Builds alignment across units, campuses, and stakeholders to advance shared institutional goals.

* Recognizes how decisions in one area impact other units, stakeholders, or institutional outcomes
* Aligns team or department objectives with university-wide strategies and mission
* Navigates shared governance structures and collaborates across functional, disciplinary, and campus boundaries
* Builds relationships across the institution to coordinate efforts and gain alignment
* Communicates big-picture thinking in ways that help others understand their role in broader initiatives
* Balances local needs with institutional priorities and guides others to do the same
* Uses formal and informal influence to move ideas forward without relying solely on authority
* Operates effectively in complex or ambiguous situations by focusing on common purpose and shared outcomes

For additional guidance, contact your HR Partner or the Employee Relations Manager.