

Best Practices for Faculty Recruitment: A Guide for Search Committees

I. Importance of the Process

- Searches have a lasting impact on the future of the university by influencing who is hired; searches provide an opportunity to bring people with unique skills and diversity to the university.
- Searches result in lasting impressions on all candidates, especially those who are interviewed, but not hired.
- The following is from *Diversifying the Faculty: A Guidebook for Search Committees*, by Caroline Turner:

“A former president of a public university noted that “while the goal of the search is, of course, to attract outstanding individuals....there are broader implications to the search project as well.....There are few activities in which we engage that have more powerful public impact than searches. Every search committee leaves in its wake literally hundreds of candidates whose impression of...[the university] will be based largely on the courtesy, timeliness, and professionalism of our communications. Furthermore, the way searches are conducted speaks volumes about our individual and institutional values.”

II. Overview of the Searching Process

A. Appointment of the search committee (by the dean or department chair)

1. Includes persons with:
 - i. expertise in the area of the search,
 - ii. different perspectives,
 - iii. commitment to diversity.
2. Has designated staff support
3. Can include alumni, clinicians, students, persons from other departments/ schools
4. As a result of the Knight case settlement, there should be African American representation on all search committees for tenured or tenure track faculty, to the extent practical and educationally sound.

B. Role of the Committee

1. The committee serves to recruit candidates, review applicants, coordinate interviews for candidates, and make a final recommendation to the department chair and/or dean.

2. Prior to the beginning of the search, the chair of the search committee should consult with the dean/department chair as to the content and format of the final report.
3. Examples of formats include:
 - i. a list of all acceptable candidates, ranked or unranked
 - ii. the top 2, 3 or 5 candidates
 - iii. a list of strengths or weaknesses of all finalists
4. Rather than a final written report, the dean/chair can meet with the search committee to receive their report.

C. Responsibilities of the search committee chair (SCC)

1. Schedules and chairs meetings of the search committee.
2. Communicates with candidates, the dean/dept chair, faculty.
3. With candidates – acknowledge all applications and letters in writing; keep candidates informed of their status, and notify candidates who have not been selected. For interviews, it is recommended that the invitation to visit come from the chair, and then the person providing staff support can make all arrangements.
4. With the faculty in the unit – develop a way to keep faculty informed of the progress of the search, without compromising confidentiality.
5. With the dean/department chair – develop a way to keep the dean/dept chair informed of the progress of the search; share names of potential candidates allowing the dean/chair an opportunity to provide feedback.
6. Consults with the dean/dept chair on the budget allocated to the search; coordinate activities to stay within budget.

D. Suggested activities for the first meeting of the search committee

1. Ask the dean/dept chair to charge the committee to include a description of the qualifications/characteristics of the person to be hired, and to consider:
 - i. How the person to be hired will help the unit to accomplish its needs and goals?
 - ii. What knowledge/skills are needed in teaching, research, ability to function as a part of a team, and leadership potential?
 - iii. How will the position change over time and what are the skills that will be needed to meet future demands?
2. Develop a clear description of minimum qualifications/required experiences; other specific requirements and/or areas of specialty. Consider "experience working with/teaching diverse groups," as one of the criteria.
3. Develop criteria for evaluating candidates (a process for rating applications). The standards and means for evaluating candidates should be established prior to receiving candidate information to avoid unintentional favoritism or discrimination.

4. Develop and obtain approval of ads. Determine which professional networks, web sites and publications will be used for marketing (to obtain national exposure).
5. Discuss confidentiality.
 - i. The specifics of the search should not be discussed with anyone outside of the search committee until finalists are announced.
 - ii. All information regarding candidates should be kept confidential forever, not just until the search is over.
6. Discuss communication.
 - i. All communication with candidates or potential candidates is handled by the chair of the committee— unless he/she delegates specific tasks to a member(s).
 - ii. All questions/comments regarding the search are directed to the chair of the committee. If a member is asked a question, he/she should refer the person to the chair of the search committee.
7. Discuss how the committee will recruit female and minority candidates.

III. Language for Ads and Announcements

A. To enhance diversity, develop a broad definition of the position and the desired scholarship and work experience.

B. The traditional summary statement found in position announcements:

“The University of Alabama at Birmingham is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer” is required by federal regulation. To convey a level of commitment beyond that required by law, the following statement can be used: **“Women, minorities, individuals with disabilities and veterans are encouraged to apply.”**

C. The following statements (University of Washington, 2003) have been shown to be effective in attracting candidates committed to diversity:

1. “Candidates should be prepared to describe how their courses have helped, or will help, students to develop intercultural competencies.”
2. “The campus is especially interested in candidates who can contribute to the diversity and excellence of the academic community through their research, teaching and/or service.”
3. “The university is responsive to the needs of dual career couples.”
4. “The university is committed to building a culturally diverse educational environment. Applicants are requested to include in their cover letter information about how they will further this goal.”

D. Faculty can be hired only at the ranks and tenure status (or lower) that is described in the ad. Instead of using specific ranks/tenure status, when appropriate, ads can include such statements as “Rank and tenure status commensurate with qualifications” (or a similar statement) to allow maximum flexibility.

IV. Strategies for attracting a diverse pool of candidates - the goal is a large pool of outstanding candidates that includes female and minority candidates.

- A. Advertise on websites/publications** for professional associations which have a significant number of members from underrepresented groups.
- B. Obtain lists of recent graduates by discipline, gender and minority status.**
- C. Make calls, send emails or letters to a wide range of contacts asking for potential candidates.** Ask specifically for recommendations for female/minority candidates.
- D. Make personal calls to potential candidates to encourage them to apply.**
- E. Think outside the box and recruit from various areas (i.e., industry).**
- F. “Recruit year-round”** by cultivating relationships even if positions are not open with minority and female graduate students and post doctoral fellows so that they will first consider a job in an academic setting and second consider UAB. An active recruitment approach to faculty searches is based on establishing relationships and connections with those who may become applicants for a position at some time in the future. This approach is analogous to those of college and professional athletic teams who do not wait until they have openings to recruit new players.

G. Examples of Online resources:

The Minority and Women Doctoral Directory (www.mwdd.com/index.asp)

CIC Directory of Women in Science and Engineering

(www.cic.uiuc.edu/programs/DirectoryOfWomenInScienceAndEngineering)

NSF, Science and Engineering Doctorate Awards: 2003

(www.nsf.gov/sbe/srs/nsf05300/htmstart.htm)

H. Organizations that maintain online postings of job announcements

AWIS - American Women in Science

American Chemical Society - Women chemists committee

American Physical Society - Roster of women and minorities in physics

Society of Women Engineers

Association of Women in Mathematics

V. Facilitating a fair and thorough review of candidates - see attached information from University of Wisconsin-Madison

A. One technique is to have each search committee member say something positive about the candidate under discussion until there are no more additions to the list. Then have each member state questions to be pursued or potential issues regarding the candidate. This technique provides an opportunity for each member to speak about each candidate, and facilitates a thorough review for each candidate.

B. Possible cognitive errors that search committees often fall into, as defined by JoAnn Moody in her book: *Faculty Diversity: Problems and Solutions*:

1. snap judgment - making a decision without substantive thought
2. elitism - assuming that the best candidates always come from schools that have traditionally been considered "the best", without careful attention to other factors such as CVs, recommendations and the needs of the unit
3. positive and negative stereotypes - assumption of innate competence/incompetence, ability/lack of ability, etc based on race, gender and other personal characteristics
4. seizing a pretext - giving excessive weight to a relatively minor point, in order to justify disqualifying a candidate
5. provincialism - limiting a definition of excellence to those schools/individuals/geographic areas that one knows
6. longing to clone - seeking candidates that would be a mirror image of oneself or one's colleagues instead of carefully assessing which candidate would be best overall for the department

VI. Effective Interview Strategies

- A. When there are a large number of candidates, consider conducting telephone interviews to screen candidates.
- B. For meetings with the search committee, decide what questions will be asked prior to interviews. Decide who on the search committee will ask each question.
- C. When bringing finalists to campus, keep interview schedules consistent as much as possible for types of meetings, those persons participating in meetings.
- D. Ask candidates if they would be interested in finding out about school systems, cultural activities, recreational activities, etc in the Birmingham community.

VII. Assessment of the Search Process

A. After the search is completed, evaluate the process by discussing:

1. strategies used to recruit minority and female candidates
2. what strategies worked, what did not work?

B. How could the search process be improved for future searches?

VIII. Recruitment/retention Resources for UAB and Birmingham

- A. UAB's spouse/partner relocation program
- B. Faculty "family-friendly" policies (part time tenure earning and tenure status, tenure clock extension policy)
- C. UAB Advance's mentoring program
- D. Faculty development opportunities