Best Practices for Hiring Committees

1. **Develop a decision matrix at the same time the job ad is being written.** The decision matrix ideally includes all of the required and preferred qualifications for the position and all or most of these are also included in the job ad. Observation: It is easier to gain agreement on the decision matrix prior to applications arriving.

2. **All decision criteria are listed on the decision matrix.** If new criteria not already listed emerge during decision discussions, the committee discusses whether or not the new criterion is important enough to be included on the matrix. Observation: One of the easy ways for bias to creep into a search is for decision criteria that are not on the matrix to enter the discussion without being identified as new criteria. New decision criteria not on the original matrix such as: sub-discipline; green card status; field experience; or equipment needs/usage; distance can be discussed by the committee to decide whether they are important enough to be added to the matrix, if so what priority do they deserve and if not, dropped from the discussion.

3. **Make multiple efforts to expand the pool of applicants.** After developing the job ad and decision matrix this is the ideal time to plan strategies to improve the diversity of the pool and recruit the best possible applicants for the position. ADVANCE can provide assistance.

4. **Hold Search Committee meetings.** Observation: Search committee discussions conducted primarily by email are less transparent and this process may raise questions. One of the risks is that it is much more difficult to get a sense of a consensus among the committee and can appear that the chair is controlling the process.

5. **Create transparency about processes used to rank candidates or eliminate unacceptable candidates.** Making everyone on the committee aware of how all decisions to eliminate candidates are reached reduces questions. Perceptions of fairness increase when multiple members of the search committee examine each file and contribute to the decision to drop someone from consideration.

6. **Rank all candidates with the required qualifications (or at least the top 10).** Observation: Sometimes top candidates withdraw or are ruled out because they accept other positions or have poor references and lower ranked candidates need to be contacted. It saves significant times to be able to quickly identify the next candidate(s) to be contacted.

7. **Use phone interviews to screen and rank candidates when the list of acceptable candidates is greater than the number that can be brought to campus for interviews.** Ideally more than one committee member participates in each phone interview to provide more than one evaluation of the interview. Observation: Phone interviews give a sense of the candidates’ interest in the position and can reveal important strengths and weaknesses prior to selecting candidates for campus interviews.
8. **SERT members can add value to the process when they serve as recorders or facilitators in the decision making discussion**, allowing committee members to stay fully focused on the candidate data.

9. **A list of interview questions that will be asked of all candidates is developed.** Then individualized follow-up questions are used to learn more about each candidate while they are on campus. Refer to AA/EO’s list of questions for a better understanding of questions that are not acceptable and how to phrase other questions.

10. **Confidentiality.** The best search committees keep applicant information, and identities confidential within the search committee process until interviewees are selected. This demonstrates values of accountability, respect, and diversity. The best committees never reveal the specific content of their hiring deliberations even after finalists are selected. Observation: When confidentiality has not been respected, complaints have been filed and USU’s reputation damaged.

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