

Best Practices for Search Committees

Search committees have a crucial function in the recruitment, assessment, and the recommendation of the most suitable candidates for university employment. They typically serve as the initial point of contact for candidates, embodying the University's commitment to qualification reviews throughout the search process, adhering to university policies and procedures.

The Office of Human Resources is available to search committee members who have questions or need to discuss specific situations. Please email us at qualifications-review@marshall.edu.

The Charge

Search committees should have this discussion during its first meeting to understand its expectations, tasks, required and preferred qualifications for successful candidates, timeline, budget, selection criteria, and the kind of finalists the hiring authority wishes to consider. The members will have the opportunity to ask clarifying questions to understand the position requirements and the organizational needs.

The committee should present a list of candidates along with a list of their strengths and weaknesses to the hiring authority. The hiring authority makes the final decision based on the committee's advice and organizational needs.

Composition of the Search Committee

The hiring manager has the discretion to appoint either the search committee chair responsible for selecting committee members, or both the chair and the remaining members. The configuration of search committees varies across departments, offices, and colleges, depending on the specific role being filled. A well-rounded and inclusive search committee is essential, and it should:

- Consist of individuals with diverse backgrounds, viewpoints, and skills.
- Encompass individuals with expertise in the relevant field and the proficiency to assess candidates effectively.
- Reflect a broad spectrum of the University community, including members dedicated to promoting diversity.
- Include relevant stakeholders such as colleagues of the prospective hire, supervisors, and peers in similar positions.

Conflicts of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal interests could compromise one's judgement, decisions, or actions in the hiring process.

Should a committee member have a personal relationship or a conflict of interest they are required to:

- Inform the search chair and the committee about the nature of the relationship.
- Withdraw from the committee if unable to provide an impartial and fair evaluation of all candidates.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential throughout the entire search process. Members owe a duty of care to the University and to one another to protect absolutely the freest expression of opinion in committee deliberations without fear that comments will be shared with others outside the committee. Every remark must be taken as privileged. Committee deliberations and decisions are to be held in strict confidence until public disclosure is necessary for the conduct of on-campus interview for final selection. Disclosure must only be on a need-to-know basis.

Recruitment

The Human Resources team will post your position on the university's website and will email the department/ search committee chair (if selected before the posting goes live) with process and hiring instructions. For faculty, non-classified, and exempt positions, the posting will also be listed on the Higher Ed Jobs.com website.

Search committees bear the responsibility of meeting the University's responsibility to exhibit "good faith efforts" in diversifying the applicant pool by actively and assertively seeking candidates for all vacant positions. A comprehensive recruitment strategy should encompass methods for attracting a varied and competent pool of candidates. Every member of the search committee should be actively involved in implementing the recruitment strategy. This includes leveraging professional connections, participating in formal and informal networking, employing unconventional advertising avenues like listservs and online platforms, exchanging information about the position within relevant professional circles, and attending conferences.

Evaluation of Applicants

Committee members must solely rely on the officially stated minimum and preferred qualifications for the position when reviewing application materials. Before assessing applications, members should collaborate to establish and align on the criteria for evaluating each qualification. All applicants must undergo an impartial assessment based on the same set of criteria. Although there isn't a prescribed screening method, a search matrix can be valuable for objectively evaluating applicants' qualifications. The complexity of the matrix can vary depending on the committee's needs to ensure effective evaluation. There's no set requirement on the number of candidates the search committee must interview. Only candidates who meet or surpass the minimum qualifications should be designated as "A" candidates. Selection of interview candidates should be free from considerations of race or gender, with

recruitment goals pertaining to diversity aimed at the candidate pool rather than influencing candidate selection.

Qualifications Review/ Interviews

Prior to scheduling candidate interviews, the search chair is required to submit each candidate in the Applicant Tracking System to Qualifications Review before proceeding with an interview. Qualifications Review committee is responsible for providing affirmative action and equal employment opportunities assurance for each position. They will determine if the position is underutilized. "Underutilized" refers to a circumstance in which fewer female and minorities have been employed. If a position is underutilized, they will review the demographics and may request the inclusion of one or more persons to interview who would remedy the underutilization.

Once approval is granted by the Qualifications Review committee, the search committee may conduct multiple rounds of interviews as necessary to identify the chosen candidate. It is crucial, however, to maintain consistency throughout the interview process. For instance, if the initial round of interviews is conducted via telephone or Teams, all subsequent interviews should follow the same format, irrespective of the geographic location of any candidate (even if one is located in-state or on campus). After the initial round, if the committee transitions to on-campus interviews, all candidates should be interviewed on campus.

All committee members should actively participate in every interview to ensure fair and consistent evaluation of each applicant. Before conducting any interview, all committee members should collectively discuss the objectives of the interview, the key topics or areas to be addressed, and the schedule and arrangements for each candidate. Interview questions must directly relate to the job and be essential for assessing the candidate's qualifications for the position.

Committees should devise a standard set of questions applicable to all candidates, designed to gather sufficient information for evaluating qualifications and facilitating a fair comparison among candidates. To promote fairness, the interview experience should be uniform, providing equal opportunities to each candidate.

All individuals involved in the interview process should be educated about inappropriate topics and questions. Furthermore, it's important to note that questions deemed inappropriate or unlawful during a formal interview are also unacceptable during a casual or informal interview session with an applicant.

Closure of the Recruitment Process and Review of Approval of Hire

The hiring department will complete the appropriate [hiring paperwork](#) and submit to Qualification Review. They will determine if equal employment opportunity was provided and if any affirmative action that was needed has been taken. After Qualifications Review has approved and completed the hiring authorization process, Human Resource Services will

contact the department to notify them that permission has been received to offer to their successful candidate.

- **New Staff Hires:** Classified and Non-classified staff will be onboarded by Human Resources Services. This includes the background check and the PAR.
- **Transfers/Promotions (State Positions):** The new department will be responsible for the PAR.
- **Transfers (from MURC to State):** Human Resource Services will be responsible for the new hire paperwork.
- **Faculty Positions:** Departments will be responsible for the new hire paperwork and notifying us that the background can be sent.
- **MURC Positions:** The department will notify Human Resource Services that the background can be sent and will submit the new hire paperwork to MURC. If you have questions about the MURC process, please contact Coria Kent at (304)696-6320 or kent1@marshall.edu.