Forming a Search Committee

A key aspect of conducting a successful search is selecting search committee members that will enhance the effort to attract a highly qualified and diverse pool of applicants.

For faculty, specialized faculty, academic professional, and overtime exempt civil service positions, a search committee is required. It must include a minimum of three individuals and be diverse in terms of demographic characteristics and/or expertise.

For overtime eligible civil service positions, a search committee is optional. If a committee is selected, it must include at least two individuals and be diverse in terms of demographic characteristics and/or expertise.

One member will be assigned as the search chair, while another will be assigned the role of diversity advocate. Alternatively, one person can be both the chair and diversity advocate.

Selecting the Search Chair

- The search chair should be in a position at the same level as or a higher level than the position being filled, to ensure they have an adequate understanding of the level of responsibility required for the position.
- The individual should have the ability to lead a group successfully, include all committee members in discussions, be efficient and stay on task, and communicate effectively, which includes active listening skills.
- The ability to navigate difficult conversations and potential disagreements and guide the committee in coming to a consensus in a productive and professional manner, is essential.

Selecting the Diversity Advocate

- For tenure-track faculty searches, the diversity advocate must be a tenured faculty member.
- For other positions, they should be at the same level or higher of the position being filled.
- This individual must feel comfortable being a leader in promoting diversity and supporting the committee in conducting an equitable and inclusive search process.
- The person selected for this role does not have to be a minority.
Selecting Search Committee Members

- Be certain that all committee members, including the chair and diversity advocate, are not interested in applying for the open position.

- Be intentional in putting together a group of individuals that have broad perspectives and backgrounds, which research shows will lead to better decision making.

- When considering diversity of the committee be mindful of the gender and race/ethnicity composition, while keeping in mind the committee can be diverse in many other ways as well, including age, ability, veteran status, religion, education, etc.

- Be cautious not to overburden individuals who may be asked to participate in many commitments.

- Consider inviting committee members from outside the hiring unit. This might include individuals at the university who are familiar with the roles/responsibilities of the vacancy. For some searches, it may be appropriate to invite an external stakeholder who works in a similar field or who may interact with the selected hire regularly.

- Select committee members who are committed to conducting an open, fair, and equitable search, and who will be welcoming to all applicants regardless of their background.

- Members should understand and be committed to the principles of affirmative action and equal opportunity, including seeking out, soliciting, and recruiting qualified, diverse applicants.

- Make sure committee members have enough time to devote to the process given the expected time frame for the committee.