

Chapter 2 - Search Committee Responsibilities

Search Committee Confidentiality

All persons engaged in the search process, including the hiring authority, search support staff, members of the committee, and others involved in the screening and evaluation of applicants must ensure that they do not, intentionally or unintentionally, share information about the search with unauthorized individuals or transmit information obtained from unauthorized sources to the search committee.

The following principles of confidentiality should be maintained:

- The names and vitas or resumes of applicants are kept confidential and released only to the hiring authority and HR|AA until the finalist stage. The names and curriculum vitae or resumes of candidates who have been offered and accepted a finalist/on-campus interview are not confidential and may be released to the public.
- The findings of any interview process are confidential and should not be shared with other staff members, departments, etc.
- The specific evaluation instruments and questions to be used in the applicant screening process are confidential as are any evaluation scores, ratings, descriptions or notes about an applicant.
- An applicant's named references may be contacted at any time during the search process without so informing the applicant, unless the committee has indicated in the vacancy announcement that it will contact the applicant before calling references.
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- If a search committee decides it wishes to obtain information about an applicant from someone who is NOT listed on the applicant's list of named references before on-campus interviews, the search committee chair or designee must call the applicant to obtain permission to contact that reference. If a finalist is invited to campus for an interview, the committee may contact references not listed by the candidate if they are supervisors, department heads or other persons who have had a professional relationship with the candidate.
- The hiring authority, the chair of the search committee, and the HR|AA Director are authorized to speak to the public about the status of a search. Other persons wishing to speak to the public about a search must first obtain permission from the search committee chair and/or hiring authority.

Violations of the confidentiality of the screening process, if identified and confirmed, may result in corrective and/or disciplinary action including but not limited to canceling the search and removing a member from the search or screening committee and may not participate in the screening interviews (phone and reference) conducted on the applicant.

Conflicts of Interest

All parties involved in the search process are expected to exercise good judgment in situations where a conflict of interest may be perceived to exist because of close professional relationships such as having served as an applicant's graduate advisor, having co-authored articles or proposals with an applicant, or having previously hired and/or supervised an applicant. In most cases, if a committee member knows an applicant well or has had more than casual dealings with an applicant, the committee member should either resign from the committee or recuse himself or herself from reviewing that applicant's materials.

Executive/Vice President/Vice Provost Responsibilities

- Serves as the Hiring Authority and ensures the hiring process is in compliance with policies/procedures. Signature authority on [Recruitment Authorization Form](#) (RAF).
- Reviews and approves the Search Committee composition to assure diversity is balanced by gender, ethnicity, and other diverse representations. If the Search Committee composition can be diversified by the appointment of additional members, such appointments may be made.
- Reviews and approves [vacancy announcement](#) to ensure that minimum qualifications do not screen out or discourage qualified women, minorities, or members of underrepresented groups.
- Consults with Department Head/Administrator/ Dean and the Office of Human Resources | Affirmative Action when an insufficient number of applications is generated from women and minorities (depending on discipline and availability) to determine if: a) the deadline for applications is to be extended; b) the search is to be cancelled and initiated at a later date; c) the search process is to proceed with the pool of applications received; or, d) consultation with the Provost is needed.
- Ensures that Affirmative Action efforts are considered throughout the search process and in the choice of a candidate to whom an offer of employment is made.
- Approves, or assignees appropriate designee to approve, the list of unranked finalists to be invited for on-campus interviews, as provided by the Search Committee Chairperson.
- Ensures that it is expressed that the offer of employment is conditional on successful completion of a pre-employment background check.
- Signs the official employment contract to the successful candidate in a timely manner. Negotiating factors such as salary, relocation expenses, and start date, are mutually agreed upon with the Department Head/Administrator/ Dean prior to the preparation of the letter. The verbal offer may be delegated to the Department Head/Administrator/Dean or other designee.

Department Head/Administrator/Dean Responsibilities

- Completes the [Recruitment Authorization Form](#) (RAF) and processes the RAF with one copy of the proposed vacancy announcement and a copy of the proposed newspaper/journal advertisements either “on line” or in hard copy (if developed at this stage). The Department Head/Administrator/Dean is ultimately responsible for the preparation of the vacancy announcement, but may consult with the Search Committee.
- Discusses a budget for advertising, travel, and related expenses with appropriate personnel.
- Insures advertising media and other recruitment efforts are targeted to sites where women, minorities, and underrepresented groups are available (i.e., special interest group newsletters, mailing lists, list serves, peer institutions, etc.).
- Appoints a Search Committee Chairperson. Tenured faculty may be appointed to the Chairperson position for tenure-track faculty positions and some administrative positions (i.e., Dean, Vice Provost, and other positions of similar responsibility). There may be occasions when tenured faculty from other departments may be appointed to the Chairperson position due to limited availability of tenured faculty in small departments.
- Appoints members of the Search Committee.
- Assures that the Search Committee Chairperson schedules an orientation with the Office of Human Resources | Affirmative Action during the first or second meeting.
- If serves as hiring authority for the position, briefly presents any instructions (i.e., Search Committee charge, position requirements, etc.) to committee members during the first committee meeting. The Department Head/Administrator/ Dean may be invited to subsequent meetings by the Search Committee to answer specific questions. The Department Head/Administrator/ Dean disengages himself or herself from the search process following initial instructions and reenters the process after the committee forwards recommendations.
- Informs departmental clerical staff or search support of appropriate procedures for handling and forwarding of applications to the Chairperson.
- Consults with the Executive/Vice President/Vice Provost and the Office of Human Resources | Affirmative Action in a timely manner when: a) the candidate pool surfaces only one qualified candidate; b) problems regarding the

search process are reported (including disagreements over the list of finalists); or, c) other extenuating circumstances warrant intervention.

- May conduct additional reference checks on finalists to be interviewed in addition to those completed by the Search Committee.
- If the Department Head/Administrator/Dean serves as the hiring authority for the position, they approve the list of unranked finalists provided by the Search Committee.
- Any conditions of employment (i.e., moving expenses, contingency agreements, tenure-track effective date, etc.) are confirmed with the Dean/Executive/Vice President/Vice Provost prior to the preparation of the offer letter.
- Confirms that all candidates interviewed are notified the position has been filled as soon as possible after acceptance from the successful candidate.

Search Committee Chairperson Responsibilities

- Assists the Department Head/Administrator/Dean with the selection of Search Committee members if requested.
- Informs the Department Head/Administrator/Dean of the composition of the candidate pool upon accessing this information from the Office of Human Resources | Affirmative Action.
- Schedules an orientation with the Office of Human Resources | Affirmative Action and Search Committee within the first or second meeting to review the search process and prior to reviewing application materials.
- Insures that the Office of Human Resources | Affirmative Action is sent applicant contact information as applications are received, for the office to send EEO data requests.
- Meets immediately with the Department Head/Administrator/Dean any time the search process may be compromised due to interference, disputes, etc.
- Schedules and directs all committee meetings, ensures that copies of application materials are delivered to committee members, and maintains a documented record of all meetings. The Search Summary Narrative can serve as a document of this process.
- Serves as the Search Committee spokesperson, dates/logs applications and ensures candidates are informed of their status as soon as possible. It is recommended that at least three references are requested.
- As candidates are being eliminated from the pool, the committee Chairperson sends follow-up letters/forms to applicants at the appropriate time in order to avoid unnecessary duress for the applicant. *Reminder: Do not send de-selection letters to candidates who may subsequently become viable finalists on the occasion that the successful candidate(s) may decline.*
- Ensures the Search Committee actively participates in the interview process and provides feedback. Provides the interview itinerary to candidates scheduled for interview and invited participants in advance of the interview dates.
- Insures that interested faculty, staff, students, and relevant constituency groups have an opportunity to view the finalists' application letters and resumes (excluding list of references and/or reference letters and personal information).
- Arranges travel accommodations for each candidate to be interviewed on campus and prepares an interview itinerary that identifies committees/community organizations, and names and titles of individuals participating in the on-campus interview. The search support person may arrange as delegated by the Chair. The interview itinerary should be made available to candidates and invited participants prior to scheduled interviews.
- Completes the [Search Summary Narrative](#) for administrative review and presents the Search Committee's assessments of finalists' strengths and weaknesses, based on documentation reviewed, to the hiring authority. In cases when the candidate pool surfaces only one qualified candidate, a written justification to the Department Head/Administrator/Dean and the Office of Human Resources | Affirmative Action may be required.
- Collects all records from Search Committee members and forwards to the appropriate Department or College office for recordkeeping

- Secures and retains Search Committee records (i.e., vitae, Screening Records, RAF, letters of reference, recommendation memorandum) for a minimum of three years from the date of hire.

Search Committee Membership

- The Department Head/Administrator/Dean confers as to who will be represented on the Search Committee. Search Committee members should have a legitimate interest in the selection process. For example, in the selection of a faculty member, it is advantageous to include department tenured faculty. For non-academic administrative positions, persons who will be subordinates, peers, and/or superiors of the person selected may serve on the Search Committee. When a Dean/Executive/Vice President/Vice Provost of a university is sought, it is customary to include subject matter specialists as well as prospective peers and supervisors.
- Every effort should be made to balance the Search Committee with members of underrepresented groups. Search Committee members may include individuals outside the department based on area of expertise to ensure that diverse populations are represented on the committee. Faculty members may serve on Search Committees for academic administrative positions. The committee members may be nominated and elected for this specific purpose.
- On occasion, individuals outside of the university may be appointed to the Search Committee. For examples, a local attorney may be appropriate for selecting a faculty member to teach Business Law.
- A search support person may be assigned to the committee to perform administrative duties related to the search.

Search Committee Member Responsibilities

- Committee members will screen applications and determine if an applicant meets minimum qualifications. The committee chairperson may assign a subcommittee of at least three committee members to conduct the initial screening for searches with a large number of applicants with the approval of HR|AA.
- Agrees to comply with the university's commitment to Affirmative Action program goals and objectives throughout the search process.
- Attends the Human Resources | Affirmative Action orientation meeting prior to screening applications. Search committee members should not begin screening of applications prior to orientation meeting. If unable to attend, the committee member will contact the Search Committee Chairperson for information from the meeting.
- May assist with writing the [vacancy announcement](#) (if requested by the Department Head/Administrator/Dean and/or through the Chairperson).
- Attends all meetings scheduled by the Chairperson to the greatest extent possible. In the event of a scheduling conflict, the Chairperson will be notified.
- Assists in establishing a timetable for the search process.
- Determines the most effective recruitment resources and advertises positions appropriately.
- After the screening date or fixed deadline has passed, the Search Committee members independently screen the applications to assure the required documents are received and evaluates qualifications according to the required and preferred qualifications and other relevant criteria defined in the vacancy announcement.
- Develops interview tools to be utilized in the process.
- Conducts screening interviews to include telephone interviews and reference checks and reports the findings back to Chairperson and Committee.
- Assists the Chairperson with travel accommodations, interviewing schedules, preparation of letters, etc., when requested.
- Participates actively in several sessions on the interview schedule for the same candidate to observe the candidate in different settings.
- Search committee members should remember that committee recommendation(s) is/are advisory. The hiring authority frequently sees the needs of the department, the requirements of a position, or the strengths of a

candidate differently than do members of the search committee. The hiring authority makes the hiring decision based on his or her own analysis as well as on the committee's recommendations.

- In making their recommendations, committees should look for patterns of strengths and weaknesses in a candidate and assess her or his ability to contribute to the needs of the department and the University, rather than relying on effusive praise or negative comments from a single reference.
- Assists the Chairperson with the preparation of an unranked list of the best qualified finalists. ***It is not the committee's responsibility to select the final candidate.***
- Forwards all records and documents to the Committee Chairperson after the search process is completed.

Office of HR|AA Responsibilities

- Monitors the search process for compliance with the university's Affirmative Action program and MSU Policy and Procedures.
- Sends EEO Data requests to applicants and monitors the return of the information.
- Reviews and approves the RAF, proposed vacancy announcement and, if submitted, proposed newspaper and/or journal advertisement(s).
- Posts the positions on the MSU Job Website and posts on appropriate bulletin boards on campus.
- Provides the Search Committee with the number of women and minority applicants in the pool who have self identified.
- Advises the Provost and appropriate offices of any exceptions.
- Conducts Search Committee orientations for all positions.
- Conducts an EEO review of applications when a position is in an underutilized job grouping and the person recommended for appointment is not a member of the underutilized group.
- Serves as contact person for conflict of interest matters and renders recommendations for referrals.