

Best Practices for Faculty Search and Screen Committees at Oklahoma State University Spring 2018

Scope

These guidelines are intended for searches where the goal is to recruit a tenure-track faculty member whose assignment will be no more than 50% administration. These practices also may be applicable to searches for non-tenure track faculty.

Search and Screen Committee Composition and Criteria

All members of the search and screen committee should thoroughly understand the requirements of the position to be filled, the needs of the department, Federal and OSU policies regarding equal employment opportunities and diversity, and the mission of OSU which dictate the search and screen process.

- Generally, a search and screen committee will include three to five members. Committee members should be tenured or tenure-track faculty members of the department or of the college. *Ex officio* members (e.g. human resources representatives or staff) may be included, but should not vote on candidates. When these guidelines are used for non-tenure track positions, non-tenure track faculty members of the department or of the college would be included.
- At no time should a member of the committee be a candidate for the position or be closely related to a candidate for the position.
- If a search and screen committee member is a candidate's past or current direct advisor, that member should not continue to serve on the committee. Likewise, if a committee member was previously the graduate student of a candidate, she/he should not continue to serve on the committee. However, faculty who previously served on a candidate's graduate advisory committee are generally acceptable as search and screen committee members.
- Other types of potential conflicts of interest exist. The National Science Foundation's definition of conflict of interest for grant reviewers is a useful guideline to follow in identifying potential conflicts of interest (https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/manuals/gpm05_131/gpm5.jsp).
- If potential conflicts of interest arise during the search and screen process, the affected committee member should disclose the relationship to the rest of the committee members and to the unit head or other relevant administrator.
- The unit head will determine what action, if any, the affected committee member should take (e.g. recusing himself/herself from deliberations on a particular candidate or resigning from the committee).

Equal Opportunity and Diversity

The following statement should be included in the official job announcement to be posted by OSU; however, it is acceptable to include "OSU is an AA/EEO/E-Verify Employer" in descriptions in which there are word-count or length-based limitations.

“Oklahoma State University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity/E-verify employer committed to diversity and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment and will not be discriminated against based on age, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, genetic information, gender identity, national origin, disability, protected veteran status, or other protected category. OSU is a VEVRAA Federal Contractor and desires priority referrals of protected veterans for its openings. OSU will not discharge or in any other manner discriminate against employees or applicants because they have inquired about, discussed, or disclosed their own pay or the pay of another employee or applicant. However, employees who have access to the compensation information of other employees or applicants as a part of their essential job functions cannot disclose the pay of other employees or applicants to individuals who do not otherwise have access to compensation information, unless the disclosure is (a) in response to a formal complaint or charge, (b) in furtherance of an investigation, proceeding, hearing, or action, including an investigation conducted by the employer, or (c) consistent with the contractor’s legal duty to furnish information. 41 CFR 60-1.35(c)”

Role of the Search and Screen Committee

Before conducting a search, either the unit head (or other responsible administrator) will seek faculty members to serve on the search and screen committee and will appoint a committee chair, OR a vote of the departmental faculty will determine committee composition. The search and screen committee should include faculty who are committed to diversity and excellence. The chair of the search and screen committee will review this Best Practices for Faculty Search and Screen Committees at Oklahoma State University document and participate in a relevant recruitment training to ensure that all OSU procedures are followed by the committee in their interactions with candidates.

The role of the search and screen committee may include, but is not limited to:

- Developing the position description and announcement;
- Advertising the position;
- Actively recruiting a qualified and diverse pool of candidates;
- Evaluating applications to identify candidates for further consideration, and documenting the rationale for their selection;
- Participating in preliminary and on-campus interviews;
- Collecting post-interview feedback from department faculty (and other groups such as staff, if appropriate);
- Submitting an assessment of the suitability of each candidate interviewed for the position to the unit head (or other responsible administrator).

In conducting these activities, the search and screen committee members should:

- Be mindful of potential biases, and ensure that the search and screen process is fair for all candidates;
- Maintain confidentiality during the search and screen process. All deliberations and information about the screening process should remain confidential, even after the search has concluded;

- Write and/or review the position description and announcement, suggesting revisions as needed to ensure that the description accurately reflects the needs of the department;
- Seek out as diverse a candidate pool as possible by advertising the position in a wide array of publications, professional websites, and other venues;
- Make use of networking opportunities (such as professional conferences or sharing the position description with colleagues) to further assist in actively recruiting the widest possible pool of candidates;
- Review all the candidate files using standard criteria developed by the committee; and
- Treat all candidates professionally and with respect, and ensure they feel welcomed during all stages of the process.

Role of the Search Committee Chair

The search and screen committee chair is responsible for ensuring that the search and screen process is well-organized, follows all rules and laws governing searches, and proceeds in a timely fashion. Among the chair's responsibilities are:

- Ensuring that the search is conducted in compliance with applicable laws and OSU policies;
- Guiding the committee in establishing procedures and ground rules before beginning the search;
- Leading the committee in all phases of its work, beginning with the creation of the position description/advertisement, selection of criteria for the committee to use in evaluation of candidates, and development of a recruitment strategy;
- Promoting a collegial working atmosphere within the committee;
- Creating a timeline for the search and screen process, then scheduling meetings, interviews, and other sessions efficiently to complete the search within that time;
- Maintaining transparency with candidates and the committee about the process and timing of the search;
- Seeking out the best and most diverse candidate pool possible;
- Ensuring that the committee uses fair and consistent criteria in their review of all candidates;
- Contacting (or arranging to have others contact) references for the candidate, and passing on the information received to the committee;
- Delegating routine communications to an appropriate committee member or staff member, if the candidate pool is large (e.g. notifying candidates that applications were received);
- Handling more advanced communications personally (e.g. extending invitations to visit campus);
- Working closely with administrative staff to ensure that campus visits are well-planned, organized, and productive;
- Ensuring that candidates selected for interviews are provided with appropriate information about OSU and local community and feel welcomed when visiting the campus;
- Introducing visiting candidates to the department;
- Notifying all candidates as soon as possible once the search has been concluded and a final decision has been made; and
- At the conclusion of the committee's work, ensuring that documents related to the search and screen process are retained in accordance with OSU recordkeeping policies.

Final Overview of the Search and Screen Process

It is important that the same evaluation criteria be applied to all candidates, in order to conduct a fair and legal search. Adding criteria tailored to fit one candidate during the process is not allowed. The position description and announcement should serve as the basis for the criteria used by the committee to evaluate candidates during the search and screen process. To help make the search and screen process fair and consistent for all, it is recommended that the committee consider developing a tool or rubric to use in evaluating all candidates, and that the committee maintain a list of questions to ask during interviews.

All candidates should have a positive experience when visiting the OSU campus. Candidates should all be given the same information about the local community, as well as information about OSU and the hiring department. Care should be taken to ensure that visits are as similar as possible for all candidates. For example, all candidates should have similar arrangements for travel and lodging. The itinerary for campus visits should be as similar as possible for all candidates, and should be provided to candidates well in advance of their visit to allow them adequate time to prepare.

If questions regarding the search and screen process arise during the course of a faculty search that cannot be resolved within the hiring department/college, contact OSU Human Resources, Institutional Diversity, and/or Academic Affairs for further guidance on the regulations and procedures to follow.

Adapted from UCLA Faculty Search Committee Toolkit: <https://equity.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/FacultySearchToolkit08072015.pdf>

Additional Resources:

- Faculty Recruitment site found on the OSU Institutional Diversity/Equal Opportunity, website: <https://eeo.okstate.edu/faculty-recruitment>
- OSU ADVANCE Resources, website: <http://advanceosu.okstate.edu/>
- National ADVANCE Resources, website: <http://www.portal.advance.vt.edu/>

Best Practices Document Reviewed and Approved by:

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