

# SEARCH AND APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES FOR TENURE-TRACK FACULTY

College of Education  
October 2015

<b>PURPOSE</b>	<p>The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidelines for administrators and faculty members to use in filling tenure-track vacancies in the College of Education. It supersedes a similar document originally dated April 2, 1976, with revisions in October 1990, November 1995, March 1997, November 1999, August 2000, and November 2006.</p>
<b>INITIATION OF SEARCH</b>	<p>The preamble of the Articles of authority establishing the Faculty Council of the College of Education, dated March 1975, calls for consultation between administration and faculty with respect to “recruitment, appointment, and development of faculty.”</p> <p>Department Heads will submit to the Dean a written request to initiate a search for a tenure-line faculty member. This request should also include a rationale for the position, a draft of the position description, and the Department Head’s recommendations for the composition of the search committee. The Human Resource Strategic Partner and the Financial Officer should be copied on the written request. Proposals for positions will be reviewed by the Dean in consultation with the faculty and the results of these reviews will be shared in a timely fashion.</p>
<b>SEARCH TIME-FRAME</b>	<p>It is desirable for searches to begin well in advance of the anticipated start date for the position. It shall be appropriate for Department Heads, Program Coordinators, and search committee chairs (once identified) to circulate information to prospective candidates as early as possible in the search process. Records should be kept of these contacts for affirmative action purposes.</p>
<b>JOB DESCRIPTION</b>	<p>It is the responsibility of the head of the department or other budgetary unit to carefully prepare a job description. The job description for the vacancy is prepared in consultation with the Dean of the College, the faculty members and Program Coordinator of the academic unit. It should indicate clearly the nature of the duties to be performed and the background of education and experience to be sought. The job description should reflect agreed-upon directions and any anticipated changes in the academic program in which the vacancy is to be filled. The description should list a set of minimum essential qualifications and a second set of desirable but not necessarily essential characteristics. The appointed search committee uses the job description to assist in meeting affirmative action requirements, and subsections of it can be used in advertising the position. The search committee should be given the opportunity to offer suggestions and changes to the job description prior to finalization of the description. A suggested format for the description position/vacancy announcement is attached.</p>
<b>APPOINTMENT OF SEARCH COMMITTEES</b>	<p>Search Committees are appointed by the Dean in consultation with the Department Head, except when the vacant position is for a department headship in which case the Dean will consult with members of the department faculty in forming a search committee. The search committee is advisory to the Department Head and the Dean. It is encouraged that a departmental staff member be assigned to attend committee meetings to track progress, manage search procedures and to provide other support as needed.</p>

## **COMPOSITION OF SEARCH COMMITTEES**

Faculty members in the academic program in which a vacancy occurs will hold the majority membership of the search committee unless it is impractical to do so in small programs with new faculty. It is desirable for search committees to include one or more faculty members from outside the department where the position will be located. Care will be exercised to include minority and female faculty in filling search committees.

Whenever possible, the Program Coordinator of an academic program should be included as a voting faculty member of the search committee. The head of the department is automatically a non-voting *ex officio* member of the search committee and is expected to attend the initial meeting of the search committee. The role of the Department Head is to serve at least as a resource person, to provide an interpretation of the job description and make a forecast of future directions of a program. In addition, a student should be selected to serve on the search committee as student input from the graduate academic unit is to be sought actively in the search process.

## **TASK OF SEARCH COMMITTEES**

The task of search committees is to solicit applications for vacancies from as wide a scholarly base as possible, keeping affirmative action and program/department/college goals in mind. All positions are advertised, to the extent practical, in appropriate professional journals and news media. All position advertisements for the Chronicle and major journals are cleared in advance with the Human Resources Strategic Partner for wording. Contact is made with nationally known minority groups, veterans' and women's organizations, community agencies, and colleges for notification of job openings and opportunities. Because there are frequent changes in affirmative action criteria, search committee chairpersons should use the office of the Human Resource Strategic Partner in communicating with the University Employment Division and the Affirmative Action Office. A College of Education Affirmative Action Guidelines Checklist (attached) is available to guide search committee actions. The search committee develops or assists in the development of evaluative criteria used to assess all applicants. Final approval of the evaluation criteria is the responsibility of the Department Head and is shared with the Dean.

## **INITIAL SCREENING**

Once applications are received, the search committee chair should be sure that all applications are complete. The committee then must screen carefully all applicants and select those who are best qualified. Search committee members must review transcripts, where appropriate, and sample articles, request and review letters of recommendation, and share reliable information about individuals included in the initial screening. Direct communication with applicants or individuals selected in the first cut should be undertaken by search committee chairs. (Experience suggests that it is unwise for search committee members or faculty to communicate directly with applicants because it introduces confusion in the minds of applicants about institutional roles in the selection process.) When this information has been discussed, the search committee chair creates a certified list of all acceptable candidates from the initial screening, indicating, where possible, gender and ethnicity of the candidates.

## **LIST OF CERTIFIED CANDIDATES**

By "certifying" names, the search committee attests that these persons appear to be both qualified and acceptable as members of the faculty based on the available data. This list, with committee comments, is forwarded to the Department Head by the chair of the search committee. In instances where there is clearly one superior candidate, a single finalist may be scheduled for an interview.

The Department Head will forward the list of "certified names" to the Dean with his/her comments and/or recommendations. The Dean will review this list and may consult with the Department Head and/or search committee chair about the individuals on this list. The Dean will inform the search chair of those candidates that should be brought to campus for interviews.

The chair of the search committee should inform the Human Resource Strategic Partner of all applicants not included on the certified list that are no longer being considered for the position. The Human Resource Strategic Partner will close off these candidates.

## **CAMPUS VISITS BY CANDIDATES**

Invitations to visit the campus are issued to candidates on behalf of the Dean of the College by the Department Head where the open position exists. Campus visits by candidates are scheduled to assess the characteristics of finalists that are not available from other sources. Resources to cover expenses of candidates' travel and lodging are drawn from the Dean's budget. The department or hiring unit shall cover expenses for meals and incidentals.

The campus visit provides an opportunity to "sell" the candidate on Penn State and to allow faculty to learn more about the candidate. Importantly, each finalist is expected to present a public graduate seminar about their research and should be interviewed by the search committee, the Department Head, the Dean, and other groups of faculty, students, and staff. Thus, the experience is one of mutual exploration regarding a candidate's suitability for the position.

## **INTERVIEWS AND ASSESSMENT**

During the campus visit, it is intended that all program faculty have access to the resume of the candidate and to the candidate in a variety of settings. Abstracts of job descriptions and the resumes of finalists should be distributed, as appropriate, to faculty, students, and staff.

Faculty, students and staff should all be asked to make themselves available to interview the candidates as is appropriate. The Department Head and search chair will prepare an itinerary for the candidates' visits, and copies should be posted for all College faculty, students and staff in the unit and selectively throughout the College. Immediately following the campus visit, all participants in the interview process should return to the search committee chair a completed evaluation form indicating their opinion of the suitability of the candidate for the position. Members of the search committee and the Department Head will review the confidential evaluation forms, and steps should be taken to involve the entire department faculty in discussions about each candidate's suitability for the position. The findings of the search committee, Department Head, and faculty should be focused on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each candidate and are shared with the Dean by the Department Head. The Department Head makes the official statement of findings on behalf of the department.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF SEARCH COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS**

The chairperson of a search committee is responsible for overseeing the operational activities of the search committee, in consultation with search support staff. In addition to the usual duties associated with chairing a search committee, it is the responsibility of the chairperson to keep faculty members of the academic unit informed regarding the progress of a search. The resumes of the candidates certified in the initial screening and as finalists should be made available to all interested faculty, upon request. The chairperson also guides the reference checking, which should be complete before candidates are invited to interview.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEPARTMENT HEADS**

Department Heads take the initiative in composing job descriptions and serve as non-voting *ex officio* members of search committees. The Department Head also makes independent assessments of the eligibility, strengths and weaknesses of the candidates for the position and forwards such assessments along to the Dean. The report of the search committee should accompany the Department Head's assessments. Names on the certified list forwarded by the search committee chairperson and Department Head should include as much relative quality information as possible in order to give the Dean maximum information obtained from the data gathering and deliberations of the search committee. In addition, a statement of the individual strengths and weakness of the potential candidates should be included.

Ultimately, the Department Head is responsible for ensuring that appropriate procedures were used and appropriate reporting is accurately completed during the search process.

**RESPONSIBILITIES  
OF FACULTY,  
STUDENTS AND  
STAFF**

Faculty, students, and staff of the department, or otherwise involved in the search process, have a responsibility to seriously review information about the vacancy and about candidates and make timely recommendations and comments to members of the search committee. In addition, those who meet the candidate have a responsibility to respond honestly to candidate questions, but also to emphasize the positive aspects of the program, department, college, university, and community. The objective should be to help the candidate to understand and, hopefully, want to come to Penn State on a permanent basis.

**RESPONSIBILITIES  
OF THE DEAN**

Selection of a person to fill the vacancy is the responsibility of the Dean who seeks advice and consults with the Department Head and chair of the search committee as necessary. Following consultation with the Department Head, negotiations for salary and rank are carried out by the Dean at the time an offer is extended to a selected applicant. In those instances where the Dean anticipates making an offer of tenure as either an associate or full professor to a candidate, the Dean will consult with the department and College Tenure and Promotion Committee and initiate a formal "expedited review" as appropriate.

After a vacancy has been filled by the acceptance of an offer by a candidate, the chair of the search committee will notify all remaining unsuccessful candidates, including those who were interviewed and those on the certified short list who were not interviewed, informing them of the selection and thanking them of their interest in Penn State. The chair of the search committee will notify the College Human Resource Strategic Partner when this has been done. The Human Resource Strategic Partner will then close the position in the Electronic Job Management System.

**FOLLOW-UP**

Search and selection of a faculty member for a tenure-track position requires certain follow-up procedures. First, all candidates who make campus visits should have travel expense vouchers processed promptly. Second, all unsuccessful applicants are due the courtesy of a timely response. Finally, all applicant data and correspondence relative to the search must be retained within the department for a period of three years subsequent to the applicant deadline date. There is no need to retain any data collected in the Electronic Job Management System.

**EXCEPTIONS**

The preceding paragraphs are guidelines that should serve in the search, selection, recruitment, and appointment of tenure track faculty members for the College of Education at Penn State. Any special changes or modifications in these suggested procedures should be discussed with the Dean or his/her representative as early as possible in the vacancy-filling process.

Attachments  
Office of the Dean  
College of Education