

Conducting The Faculty Search: Procedures and Guidelines

Prepared by

College of Arts & Sciences

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The quality of the faculty is among the most important factors in establishing the reputation of the university and its programs. The recruitment and hiring of high quality faculty is the primary goal of the faculty search process. This goal is guided by efforts to ensure fairness in the search process, to select the most qualified applicants, and to bring perspective to the process from various participants. In this effort, the major participants are the Department or Unit (including its students, faculty, and chairperson), the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the Affirmative Action Office. The search draws upon these participants at several stages.

All faculty searches, including postdoctoral fellows, must follow the affirmative action procedures described in this document. Although the length of a search is influenced by many factors, most tenure track searches require at least 6 to 9 months to be carried out. For non-tenure track positions the length of the search may be shortened and the search committees are frequently smaller. Interviews for non-tenure track positions are sometimes conducted by telephone, video conference, or professional meetings.

1. **Search Area.** The department chair must meet with the Dean of Arts & Sciences to identify departmental areas of specialization in which the search may be conducted. It is up to each department to develop a plan consistent with appropriate departmental planning documents. The department faculty should then be involved in choosing a departmental area of specialization within which the search will be conducted.
2. **Search Committee.**
 - a. The search committee serves in an advisory capacity to the department chair and faculty. The committee is responsible for carrying out all aspects of the search as per the procedures specified in this document.
 - b. The committee has a chair, and at least 2 other faculty members. Students may be included as additional members. The makeup of the committee should be diverse (e.g., males, females, minorities). The department chair develops the search committee membership.
 - c. Once established, the committee meets as soon as possible to prepare a plan for the search. The search plan components include:
 - Job description
 - Advertisement text
 - How will recruiting be accomplished?
 - How will minorities, women or other underrepresented groups be recruited?
 - How will applicants be screened?
 - How will records of the search be maintained?
 - Search committee membership

3. **Formal Plan Review.** The search plan must be reviewed and approved by the Dean of Arts and Sciences, 107 Scates Hall, and then by the Affirmative Action Office, 156 Administration Bldg. Suggestions for revising the plan and/or advertisement are made before the ad is released for publication. The search plan and proposed ad text are delivered to the Dean's office attached to the "Faculty Search Approval Checklist" which is available on the Affirmative Action webpage. The web address is: <http://www.memphis.edu/presweb/affirmact/>. Chairs must initial the approval checklist in the left margin next to the box labeled "Approval to Initiate Search."
4. **Submit Job Ads.** The department submits the ad to approved outlets for publication. Outlets typically include newsletters in the specialty area of the search, and specialty list serves. In some instances the search may include employment services during a national convention. Be sure to get advance approval from the department chair for the expenses incurred. If changes are made to the recruiting plan or the approved advertisement, the Affirmative Office should be given a copy of any changes for the search records.
5. **Gather Applications.** A main office secretary may facilitate the process by recording and filing the applications as they are received. A file is created for each applicant and the secretary mails each applicant a "Faculty Employment/Affirmative Action" form (<http://www.memphis.edu/presweb/affirmact/>) that is completed and returned to the secretary. These forms are to be kept in a file **separate from each applicant's materials and are not available to the committee.**

A complete application will include the Faculty Employment/Affirmative Action form, a vita, and other documents needed to assess credentials. Other items, determined by the search committee as relevant and needed for review may include at least 3 letters of recommendation, an application letter, transcripts, and additional materials needed by each unit. The search committee should determine what is needed for a complete application while composing the advertisement and these items should be included in the job advertisement. It is important to have a "Faculty Employment/Affirmative Action" form for as many applicants as possible. These forms will be used in the final stages of the search.

6. **Review of Applications.**
 - a. The committee selects a method by which applicants are reviewed and evaluated, and the method is consistent with the qualifications of applicants specified in the job ad. The review process results in committee recommendations to the entire department faculty at a meeting called by the department chair.
 - b. Applicant folders are made available for faculty review several days ahead of the general faculty meeting.
 - c. The committee usually presents its recommendation(s) in the form of a rank ordering of "acceptable" applicants. The faculty discusses the applicants and votes to extend an interview to a few candidates (usually 3 or 4).
7. **Approval of Applicant Pool**

- a. All application files, with "Faculty Employment/Affirmative Action" forms in a separate folder, are taken to the dean for review and approval. The files of those candidates recommended for interviews are placed to the front and a letter of explanation for the selections is included. Be sure the original of the "Faculty Search Approval Checklist" form is included. The review process should also include specifics as to why the other candidates were not selected for interview. This may be accomplished in any manner that will delineate how candidates were assessed. One method would be to explain the reason for non-selection with a one to two line narrative on each applicant. Another method may include a matrix outlining the assessment of each candidate based on the advertised requirements. These notes may be handwritten and may reflect discussions of credentials in the search committee meeting.
- b. Following approval by the dean, the same set of folders are reviewed and approved by the affirmative action office.
- c. The "Faculty Search Approval Checklist" form must be signed by the chair, the dean, and the affirmative action office director. Make copies of the signed form and retain the original for later use.

8. Notification of Applicants and Candidates.

- a. Following the step 7 approvals, each interview candidate is notified and interview dates are established.
- b. Applicants judged to be unacceptable may be notified that the review process has been completed and that they are not among those chosen to be interviewed. Although some departments see this step as a positive search approach when candidates inquire about his/her status in the search, the Affirmative Action Office recommends that until the search is complete, there should be minimal dialog with applicants who do not make the final screening list. Frequently, conversations concerning an applicant's credentials and applicability to the position become unpleasant, adversarial or hostile. To ensure that the University does not have to revisit any unpleasant conversations, contact the Affirmative Action Officer if these situations arise or if you have questions concerning if you should use this step at all.
- c. In the case where an applicant has been placed on "hold," he or she may be so notified at the discretion of the committee.
- d. Be certain that each person interviewed has already completed, or completes on site, the "Faculty Employment/Affirmative Action" form.

9. The Interview Template.

- a. Each interview candidate is contacted and dates established for the visit.
 1. Interviews are often for 1 ½ to 2 days. To reduce airfares, the interview periods are often Saturday through Tuesday, or Wednesday through Sunday.
 2. The department secures a travel authorization (TA) for each candidate's visit. To facilitate this, the candidate's name, complete home address, and social security number are needed.

- b. It helps to have an overall coordinator for each candidate's interview. The search committee chair usually coordinates the interview.
- c. A template is established for each interview. The template includes meetings with:
 1. The Dean of Arts and Sciences (candidate vitae are provided in advance)
 2. The department chair (provide chair the candidate's file on the day of the meeting)
 3. Each departmental research group, and/or with individual faculty members
 4. Graduate students in the area of the search
 5. Other relevant groups in or outside of the department

In addition, the template should include:

- 6. Airport pickup and transportation arrangements
 - 7. Meal arrangements
 - 8. A tour of the campus
 - 9. A real estate agent tour if the candidate wants this.
- d. The template should be posted where faculty and others can sign up for sessions. The candidate's vita should also be made available in case faculty needs to review it in advance of sessions.
 - e. Include on the template the location of each meeting, the name of the research group, and the name(s) of those dining with the candidate.
 - f. A copy of the template (as complete as possible) should be given to the candidate. It is helpful if this could be provided a few days before the visit.
 - g. It is recommended that early in the interview the candidate be provided with a packet which includes the final template, the university graduate bulletin, a current schedule of classes. If appropriate, the packet should include the departmental graduate application booklet which describes programs, research areas, and faculty interests, a graduate program policy handbook, departmental guidelines for tenure and promotion, and a campus map. If desired, information about the community and local schools may also be included.

10. **Candidate Colloquium/Seminar.** This is the session in which many faculty and students come to learn about the candidate. The presentation usually lasts one hour, including questions. The following are suggestions for making this a positive experience:
- a. In consultation with the candidate, decide if the colloquium/seminar will be on the first or second day of the visit.
 - b. Post the title, name of candidate, time, and room for the session in strategic locations at least two days in advance of the session.
 - c. Check with the candidate to determine equipment needs (e.g., overhead projector, power point, etc.) and be sure they are in the room and functioning properly. It is recommended that the candidate check this out in advance of the presentation.
 - d. Send out reminders to the faculty the day before and on the morning of the colloquium

- e. The coordinator of the visit should present a very brief introduction of the candidate including name, academic background, current position, and title of presentation.
 - f. Some units may want additional presentations scheduled to discuss specific research agendas and needs.
11. **Department Chair's Session.** The candidate's meeting with the department chair is often the last session on the template schedule. In this session, the chair may provide specific information about teaching load, salary and benefits, office and research space, startup costs, performance expectations for annual reviews as well as tenure and promotion, and other matters. The overall visit coordinator should instruct the candidate to have some advance understanding of his/her research space and equipment needs, salary, and teaching expectations.
12. **Dean's Session.** A visit is arranged at a time convenient to the dean's schedule (or appropriate associate dean). This is usually a half-hour meeting providing the dean an opportunity to simply meet the candidate, gather some general assessment of the candidate's interests and qualifications, and to provide a perspective on the institution from the college level.
13. **Follow Up.** Visits should be followed up with brief letters to the candidates, thanking them for the visit and letting them know your anticipated timetable for making hiring decisions.
14. **Expense Reimbursement.**
- a. The department secretary obtains a travel authorization number before travel begins.
 - b. Hotel expenses may be direct billed to the department by the hotel.
 - c. Expenses related to travel (e.g., mileage, airfares, taxi, parking) and meals (not paid for by faculty hosts) are submitted by the candidate immediately after the visit.
 - d. Expenses incurred by faculty (usually just meals) are submitted to the department chair for reimbursement. A clear policy needs to be established beforehand on reasonable expenses.
15. **Final Search Committee Review.** Following the final interview, the search committee reconvenes and decides a.) the acceptability or unacceptability of each candidate, and b.) the order of merit of the acceptable candidates that the committee will recommend to the department faculty. Input from graduate students and faculty is discussed at this session. The department chair is responsible for ensuring notes of interviews are maintained in the recruitment file.
16. **Departmental Approval.**
- a. The search committee chair requests the department chair call a meeting to finalize decisions on the position.

- b. The department meets and votes on the order by which candidates will be offered the position.
- c. The search chair uses his/her discretion in revealing these decisions to the candidates.

17. Dean, Affirmative Action Officer, Provost, President, and TBR, if applicable Clearance. It is the chair's responsibility to develop a draft offer letter which will be acceptable to the candidate. Before any candidate is officially notified, the University Affirmative Action form, and interview candidates' files (including the Faculty Employment/Affirmative Action forms) are reviewed and approved by the dean and by the affirmative action officer. The "Faculty Employment/Affirmative Action" form for each candidate not to be offered employment must indicate the reason for rejection. The rejection codes appear in the "Affirmative Action Form". The "Faculty Search Approval Checklist" form accompanies the files and is again signed by the dean and the affirmative action officer. The offer letter must be on departmental letterhead and contain an approval line for the dean. Any moving expenses and/or tenure probation reduction requests must be approved at the same time as the draft offer letter. A request for tenure probation reduction requires a memo addressed to the dean, provost, and president with signature lines for all three. The applicants CV must be attached to the memo.

Every offer or modification of an offer must receive prior, written approval from the dean.

Sample Offer Letter

Dear Dr. _____

I am very pleased to offer you a tenure-track appointment as an assistant professor in the Department of _____. The appointment will commence on August 2_, 200_. Your compensation package will include a base salary of \$_____ /year for a nine-month appointment (to be paid in 12 monthly payments, with the first monthly payment at the end of September), a comprehensive benefits package that includes choices for health, retirement, and long and short-term disability, and opportunities for summer employment. The University will allow you to earn up to 25 percent of your academic base salary for summer teaching, contingent upon the instructional needs of the Department and minimal enrollment standards. Up to 33 1/3 of your annual salary may be earned if funding is secured from external funding sources.

Insert startup package here and departmental agreements, if any.

Your contract will be renewed annually for a maximum probationary period of 6 years. At the end of that period, you may apply for tenure and promotion to the rank of associate professor. Tenure and promotion decisions will be based upon your contributions in the areas of teaching, research, and service and will be governed by guidelines that have been established by the Department, College, and University. Tenure and promotion are subject to the approval of the Tennessee Board of Regents.

The foregoing contract terms are contingent upon the approval of the President of the University and the Tennessee Board of Regents. I would, however, appreciate it if you would indicate your willingness to accept the terms of the position as outlined by signing in the space indicated below. You will not be bound to these terms until you accept the form contract offer. Please return the signed document to me no later than _____. Should you accept this offer you will be sent a Faculty Appointment Form and a Disclosure and Authorization Form that should be completed and returned to us at your earliest convenience.

I look forward to your early response and hope to welcome you here in August 200_.

Sincerely,

Chair, Department of _____

I accept these terms of employment.

Dean, College of Arts & Sciences

Signature

Date

18. **TBR Approval.** All hiring recommendations in excess of \$75,000 and/or for administrative positions require final approval by the TN State Board of Regents before an offer can be made to the candidate.
19. **Hiring.** Once all approvals have been received, get the candidate's signature on the offer letter and initiate a hiring packet. The "Appointment Checklist" lists all required materials for the hiring packet. This checklist is located on the provost's webpage: <http://academics.memphis.edu/provost/>.
20. **File Retention.** All search files must be retained in the department for a minimum of three years after the hire date. The Affirmative Action Office recommends that the department place a note on the search materials indicating a specific date when the search materials can be destroyed. Example: These search files may be destroyed after August 21, 2009. This ensures that new staff members do not throw away materials that could be needed for an external audit.

RECAP OF MAJOR STEPS FOR CONDUCTING THE SEARCH

1. ___ Search area selected in consultation with faculty, chair, and dean
2. ___ Search committee established and approved by department chair
3. ___ Search plan developed and approved by dean and affirmative action officer
4. ___ Job ads submitted for publication
5. ___ Applications gathered and reviewed
6. ___ Department faculty select candidates for interviews
7. ___ Applicant pool approved by dean and affirmative action officer
8. ___ Applicants and candidates notified of status (See precautionary notes)
9. ___ Candidates interviewed
10. ___ Department selects order of hiring
11. ___ Tentative offer letter approved by dean and central administration. Submit recommendation materials for hire for approvals through administrative offices.
12. ___ Department chair makes final negotiations

13. ___ Candidate accepts or rejects offer. If TBR was required to approve recommendation and negotiations required changes in salary, start date, or tenure probationary credit, please contact Dean as revisions may have to be approved from TBR.