Staff Search Committee Process and Guidelines

Search committees play a vital role in recruiting, evaluating, and recommending the most qualified candidates for employment by the University. Search committee members are often the first members of the University community that a candidate will meet. Each member has an opportunity to represent the University as a caring, creative, and inclusive community while carrying out the search in accordance with University policies and procedures. This guide is intended to help Search Committees navigate the staff employment process. If you have questions at any time, please contact Talent Acquisition in your Campus HR Department.

The process is divided into four steps:

Step One:	Building the Foundation for the Search
Step Two:	Search Committee Roles & Responsibilities
Step Three:	Applicant Evaluation and Interviewing
Step Four:	Selection and Recommendation

STEP ONE: BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR THE SEARCH

The time you invest here will reap great rewards throughout the process resulting in a focused, efficient and successful search. Along with the hiring manager, a search committee is responsible for reviewing the job description and qualifications and contributing to the recruitment plan to build the most diverse pipeline of qualified applicants.

JOB DESCRIPTION AND REQUIREMENTS

Review the job description or if the search warrants a revised job description, work with Human Resources to create it. Please take the time to review the description to ensure accuracy in the scope of the role, job duties and responsibilities, minimum and preferred qualifications including: Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, Experience, Education, Responsibilities, Values and Overall Impact to the University.

Interview colleagues, customers, direct reports and executive management on what knowledge and skills are required in the role. What will success look like for the candidate in the first year?

While you may not find a candidate who possesses every preferred qualification you have identified, you can find one with the common themes addressed. Define what is required, and what is a preferred qualification, and ensure that the job description reflects these. Determine what can be learned on the job and knowledge is needed upon hire. Will any of our requirements, such as education for example, unintentionally limit our ability to create a diverse candidate pool? Once the minimum requirements are established, only candidates who meet those minimum qualifications will be considered.

ADVERTISING/BUILDING THE PIPELINE

A recruitment plan should include strategies for attracting the most diverse pool of qualified applicants as possible. Work with a recruiter on your campus HR team and talk through the advertising strategy. This discovery session should include:

- discussing all associations, licenses, or professional associations associated with the position for both advertising and sourcing
- creating a strategy to target historically underrepresented candidates including associations, websites, referrals, etc.
- preparing the posting internally and externally on the University website
- creating a few short, attractive sentences along with a tiny URL to be sent to social media for advertisement
- defining a list of institutions or universities from which to network and/or recruit, including Minority Serving Institutions.
- determining how long you should advertise the position before closing
- knowing the marketplace for this talent
- devising an inclusive networking plan to include diverse sources.

STEP TWO: SEARCH COMMITTEE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

FORMING THE SEARCH COMMITTEE:

The hiring manager may appoint search committee members. The structure of a search committee will vary among departments, schools and colleges, and depending upon the position to be filled. The composition of search committee membership is key to a broad and inclusive search, and the committee should:

- Include individuals with different backgrounds, perspectives, and expertise relevant to the position.
- Include individuals with knowledge of the substantive area and the technical expertise to effectively evaluate candidate qualifications.
- Represent a diverse cross-section of the University population, including members with a demonstrated commitment to diversity and awareness of elements that could affect the search process, such as bias and stereotypes.
- Include appropriate stakeholders such as peers of the position, those who would work directly with the candidate, supervisors, and those with similarly situated positions.

While there is no required quantity of members for a search committee, it is recommended to invite 5 to 7 individuals to participate as a best practice. Larger committees can be difficult to manage and schedule. It is also recommended that committees be comprised of an odd number of members to simplify voting procedures.
The hiring manager should clearly communicate the role of the search committee prior to a search begins. Is it the role of the committee to:

- Determine which candidate to hire?
- Interview and recommend finalists to the hiring authority?
- Send a prioritized list to the hiring authority?

The hiring manager or search committee chair should bring the team together and give them a packet of information. Include the following:

1. Job title and description
2. Advertising and recruitment plan
3. Minimum and preferred qualifications for selection
4. What the committee members' responsibilities are to the team:
    a. attend all meetings
    b. participate in all interviews
    c. contribute to discussions
    d. demonstrate our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion understand and promote our commitment to diversity and inclusion throughout the process
5. Why this role is important for the University, and challenges and opportunities waiting for the new hire.
6. The interview process and projected timelines.
7. Review of Mission, Purpose, Vision and Core Values.
8. The importance of consistency in the selection process. All candidates must have the same interview process with the same interviewers. No one can substitute for an interviewer – if an interviewer cannot

make any of the scheduled dates, they must remove themselves from the process. If this is discovered before any interviews have taken place, the committee member can give their seat to another to assume full responsibility of all interviews. The original interviewer cannot have any input in the review or decision process.

9. Remind the committee of the confidentiality expectations. Members of a search committee need to maintain a strict level of confidentiality to protect the privacy of the applicants and to preserve the integrity of the search process. It is each committee member's responsibility not to discuss any details of the search with non-committee members or discussions outside the committee that may skew the larger committee's perspectives (the meeting after the meeting).
10. Decide as a committee how to address late candidates. The committee should determine how long to leave the position posted. The University requires positions be posted a minimum of five (5) business days. If there is a viable pool, it is also recommended to suspend all advertising and close the job posting to avoid continuous interviewing. The early candidates will become disinterested quickly.

Roles and Responsibilities in the Search Process

Search Committee Chair

A Search Committee Chair coordinates the overall efforts and manages communications among Search Committee members as well as between members and other departments involved in the process.

Roles of the Search Chair

Manage a proactive, timely, fair, and legally compliant search

- Work with the committee to establish ground rules
- Promote and practice compliance with applicable laws and policies
- Maintain consistency and fairness
- Maintain confidentiality
- Promote a collegial atmosphere
- Be aware of their own and others' potential biases.

Lead the Committee in all phases of its work

- Create a folder for each interviewer that has the resume, interview guide and any other pertinent candidate information for all candidates. This can also be delivered electronically utilizing MS Teams by creating a team for the search committee.
- May consult on recruiting plans and insure they are diverse and inclusive.
- Develop screening and evaluation criteria
- Manage the scheduling of meetings and interviews
- Present finalists to the Hiring Manager

Maintain positive interaction with candidates to ensure:

- The Committee treats all candidates equally and respectfully.
- Candidates receive accurate communications

- Candidates feel welcomed
- Communication is maintained with candidates, keeping them informed of process and timelines
- Unsuccessful applicants are notified of non-selection in a timely manner

Conduct post-search review

- After the search has concluded, evaluate the process
- Document the search committee's activities and ideas for improvement

Search Committee Members' Responsibilities

- Screen applications using agreed-upon objective screening criteria
- Select individuals to interview and conduct interviews
- Select finalists and possibly conduct additional finalist interviews
- Submit hiring recommendations to the Hiring Manager
- Meet expectations for compliance and fairness, particularly by managing potential unconscious or implicit bias to ensure an inclusive process and equity in decision-making
- Maintain confidentiality

Search Committee members may also assist with recruiting by proactively utilizing personal and department networks to identify potential candidates. It can include activities such as placing advertisements, cultivating contacts with other institutions, attending conferences, maintaining contact with potential future candidates and networking with colleagues in order to net the broadest possible pool of job applicants. Make sure you are networking with diverse colleagues and institutions to avoid homogeneous results.

Search Committee members generally do not make a hiring decision, negotiate salary or employment terms, or conduct detailed background investigations. The Search Committee's participation usually ends with the identification of finalists, which are recommended to the hiring manager.

STEP THREE: APPLICANT EVALUATION AND INTERVIEWING

Interviewing and hiring can be very challenging and we want to make the best hiring decisions.
There are best practices utilizing training, tools, self-reflection, and processes that can assist with confirming skills, knowledge, and abilities to help ensure a fair and equitable process to make the best hiring decision.

APPLICANT EVALUATION AND SCREENING

Committee members may only use the published minimum and preferred qualifications for the position in evaluating applicant materials. Members should agree on the criteria to be used in evaluating each qualification prior to reviewing applicant materials. All applicants must be objectively screened against the same criteria.

There are three levels to the applicant evaluation and interviewing process.

1) Identifying questions in the electronic application for those who do not meet minimum qualifications
2) Phone interviews
3) The Behavioral Based Interview Process

As a Search Committee, discuss as a team who you would like to bring in to participate in the behavioral based interview process. It is recommended that you work with a Recruiter in HR to refine and narrow down the number of resumes reviewed in this meeting based on established objective criteria.

While there is not a standard screening method required, a **Candidate Evaluation Selection Sheet** can assist in this evaluation. During the resume review, notate any questions that arise from the resumes during review session. These questions can be answered via the Recruiter's phone interview or on the day of interview by the candidate. Internal applicants must follow the same process as external applicants.

The Recruiter, if utilized, will work with you to screen applicants and develop the content for the phone interviews. They can conduct phone interviews with the candidates, provide you with a summary of responses, and attend the search committee meeting to discuss the candidates.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS AND ASSUMPTIONS IN CANDIDATE EVALUATION
The evaluation of applicants should be objective and equitable, based solely on the qualifications in the job description and advertisement, and the quality of the application materials. Research in this area has demonstrated that every person brings a lifetime of experience and cultural history that shapes their perspectives as related to candidate selection. **All search committee members are required to complete annual Search Committee Training, which includes** Unconscious Bias **training found in UNT Bridge prior to engaging in a search.** You can click on the link above to the Unconscious Bias training.

Best practices to counterbalance the effects of inherent bias include:

- Learning about research on biases and assumptions and striving to minimize their influence on the evaluation of candidates.
- Developing criteria for evaluating candidates and applying them consistently to all applicants.

- Spending sufficient time evaluating each applicant.
- Evaluating each candidate's entire application and refraining from depending too heavily on only one element such as the prestige of the degree-granting institution or the letters of recommendation.
- Explaining the decision for rejecting or retaining a candidate based on evidence in the candidate's applicant materials as it relates to the qualifications.
- Periodically evaluating the committee's decisions to consider whether qualified underrepresented groups are included and whether evaluation biases and assumptions are influencing decisions.
- **Recommended:** explore one's own unconscious implicit biases via one of the many Harvard Implicit Association Tests available (ex. skin tone, age, sexuality, gender-career, etc.)

INTERVIEWS

Prior to conducting any interviews, all search committee members should discuss the objectives of the interview, the itinerary and arrangements for each candidate. Committees should develop interview questions for all candidates that will elicit sufficient information to make an evaluation of the candidates' qualifications and allow an equitable comparison of candidates. Recruiters in the HR department are available to assist with development of interview questions. Committees should divide
the questions among the interview team, so everyone participates in asking questions. Provide interview guides that have behavioral based interview questions and a section to take notes. Committee members should be aware of questions that are unlawful and should not be asked during an interview. **Click here for additional information.**

Candidate interviews should be completed in a timely manner.

Types of Interviews:

Phone Interview: This is usually the first extended conversation with the candidate and is usually conducted by a Recruiter in HR. This is the first assessment of candidate through behavioral based questions. The Recruiter will verify skills, knowledge, and experience, explore why job changes were made, assess candidate's interest in the role, and explore salary history and expectations.

MS Teams/Zoom Interview: This can be a cost saving way to interview several candidates quickly and efficiently. However, all candidates must be interviewed in the same manner. If you elect to conduct the interviews virtually, you cannot have local candidates in person and only the remote candidates interviewed virtually. Either all interviews in this phase are via video or all are in person. The purpose of this stage of the interview is to further explore skills, knowledge, and experience through behavioral based interview questions to ensure UNT core values are observed. Make sure to convey to the candidates the culture of our University and why it would be a great place to work for the candidate.

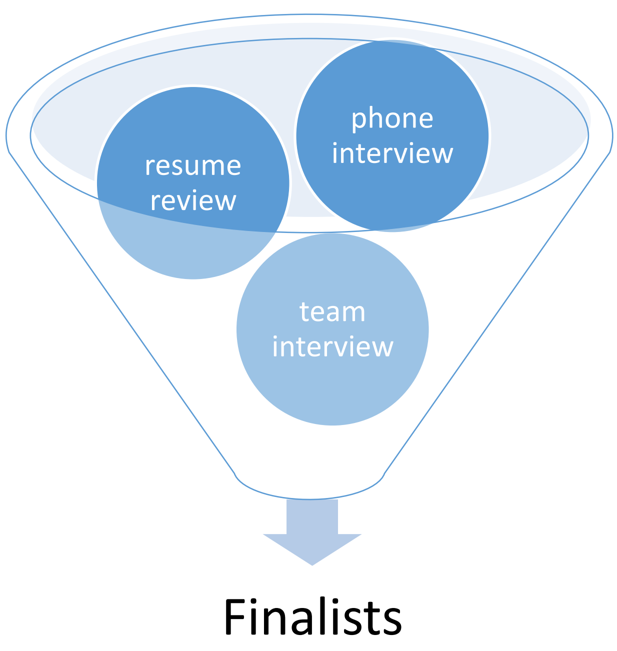
On Site, In Person Interview: This is for your final 2-3 candidates. The purpose is to further explore skills, knowledge, and experience through behavioral-based interview questions to ensure UNT's core values are observed. This should include a campus tour and meetings with colleagues or appropriate affinity groups in addition to formal interviews. This is an opportunity to sell the University and the Denton/Dallas/Fort Worth area to the applicant. A meal interview for the candidate is often included in this stage.

Interviewing is like entertaining guests in your home. We want everyone to feel welcomed and comfortable during their visit. Provide water/coffee for the candidate and if here for an extended time, a meal as well. We want to sell ourselves and our University to the candidate. Remind the committee members that the candidate is interviewing us as much as we are interviewing them. Be sure to have comfortable surroundings for both the candidate and the interview team. The meeting rooms should be booked in advance to avoid last minute situations.

Create an itinerary for the candidate that has an after-hours contact name and number in case of travel issues or emergency. Make sure the candidate has an escort throughout the day for any logistics or tour. Make sure to thank the candidate at the end of the day and ask for their interest. Please explain how many candidates you are interviewing and when they can expect a decision on next steps.

Meal Interview: Sometimes 2-3 employees may have lunch or dinner with candidates, while informing them of the local area and the University. Remind employees attending meal that they are still interviewing and to keep questions and discussion on a professional, job-focused basis and refrain from asking questions that are unlawful or inappropriate. Provide the candidate locally focused information on the area. The Chamber of Commerce is a good source for such information.

Follow up Interview: This is one of the most important pieces of the interview process! Contact the candidate after the interview day and pose questions to them. What did they think of our facility? What is their level of interest in joining the organization? What concerns do they have about anything? This is an opportunity to address concerns and questions the applicant may have and another opportunity to express how much we want them to join our team. It's another chance to sell UNT to the candidate.



STEP FOUR – SELECTION AND RECOMMENDATION

Once the interviewing phase has been completed, the committee should identify the candidate(s) to be recommended to the hiring manager. The Search Committee should gather for a consensus meeting immediately following the interviews to discuss the candidates while everything is still fresh in memory. Only those who have interviewed all candidates should be in the consensus meeting. During this post-interview evaluation session, all members of the committee should review their notes and comment on candidates. Keep alert for any unconscious biases that could affect the selection process.

Depending on the charge given to the committee, the recommendation may be a ranked or unranked list with an explanation of the candidates' strengths and weaknesses as related to the qualifications of the position. If you have more than one candidate and are charged with ranking the candidates, rank them in order of preference so that any future interviews (if any) can be slotted in appropriately. It is not uncommon to have two candidates equally ranked. You may end up with a #1, two #2s and a close #3. Or you may have two #1s, a #2 and a distant #3. You want to avoid a "win/lose" mentality when evaluating and ranking candidates.

If the Search Committee is charged with providing a list of finalists to the hiring manager, the chair should thank the committee for their work and submit the committee's recommendations to the hiring manager. The hiring manager will complete the remaining steps in the hiring process and should follow up with the Search Committee after the offer has been accepted to inform them of the selection.

If the Search Committee is charged with making the selection, the committee should choose the candidate, and the chair should notify the hiring manager so that the remaining steps in the hiring process can commence.

The committee chair must collect all interview notes and data from the interviewers and keep them in a centralized, secured location. This data should remain on file per the University Records Retention Policies.

Please have the committee refrain from any "informal" reference checking on candidates during the process, including – Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social media searches. This can result in breaches of confidentiality and ethics. References will be checked at the proper time and with authorization and will be checked by the Search Chair or Human Resources. If you know someone who might be a reference, inform the Search Committee Chair.

Important: The Search Committee Chair should ensure that <u>all</u> candidates who participated in the process (from phone interview and forward) that are unsuccessful be notified of their non-selection as soon as a firm decision has been made about their status, even if the process is still underway. Finalists not chosen should be notified as soon as possible after an offer has been officially accepted by a higher-ranked finalist. It is a best practice and encouraged to place a phone call to inform candidates of non-selection and provide appropriate feedback. The Recruiter, if utilized, can decline those at the phone interview stage, but anyone interviewed via video or in person should be declined by the Search Chair. Please contact Human Resources for assistance if necessary. Please follow Texas Records Retention requirements.