

Recruiting Academics to the University

15 August 2009

President Zimmer has challenged the University to build a scholarly community comprising a mix of individuals who through their own diverse experiences, backgrounds, and viewpoints contribute to our intellectual culture. This document describes both required and recommended steps for conducting successful searches and for using the Academic Career Opportunities Website. Department chairs, department and school administrators, and search committee members should familiarize themselves with this information, which is intended both to help units attract large and diverse applicant pools for every open academic position at the University, and to allow the department, dean, and provost to monitor the search and evaluation processes that preceded a recommendation to make an academic appointment.

Attracting and recruiting outstanding academics, particularly from underrepresented groups, requires extra effort to develop the applicant pool for every open position. African American or Black, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native are underrepresented group designations. In many fields women constitute an underrepresented group. Additional effort in the humanities and social sciences may be required to recruit Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islanders into applicant pools.

Fundamental Principle: The most effective way to identify top talent is to be continually on the lookout for excellent candidates regardless of a unit's short-term hiring needs. At the junior level, graduate students and postdocs come onto the market each year, not just in years when we want to search for them. Conducting a successful search requires preparations that begin well before the start of the official search. (The Survey of Earned Doctorates tabulates PhD recipients by field, and is useful for estimating the size and composition of the national pool of people with academic training. Summaries of the Survey are provided by the Provost's Office to the offices of all the deans.)

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1. Think broadly about department/school hiring priorities

The more narrowly defined the field of interest, the more limited and homogeneous the pool of applicants. Departments and schools are encouraged to search in the broadest subfield areas possible to increase the diversity of their pools. When discussing hiring priorities, faculty should consider which subfields, if any, are more likely to yield the broadest pool of qualified candidates and, when appropriate, enumerate in position descriptions those fields that may attract a more diverse pool.

2. Create an effective search committee

Chairs and deans should select members of a search committee with an eye towards including faculty members with experience in identifying candidates from a variety of backgrounds. Diversity within the search committee often helps the committee see the importance of developing broad applicant pools and demonstrates to applicants the University's commitment to recruiting academics from a variety of backgrounds. Search committees should select one member to take specific responsibility for ensuring that diversity concerns are considered at every stage of the process and that these guidelines are followed.

3. Establish clear selection criteria

The entire recruiting process benefits from forging an early consensus on the specific criteria that will govern the search committee's selection. For instance: What are the qualities committee members will be looking for in an applicant's research? What are the expectations with respect to publication? What evidence of teaching excellence will the committee be looking for? Are there particular markers of quality that will move an applicant to the short list? Some search committees are adopting a grid for use in reviewing applicants. A grid lists the agreed-upon criteria and allows search committee members to rate applicants on each criterion. A disciplined approach to evaluation such as this can help search committees keep in view the different strengths that applicants inevitably will have, which may be overlooked if applicants are initially evaluated relying on a sense of their relative global merit.

4. Determine what application materials will be required, and until what date you are accepting them

The position description must state in detail what materials an individual needs to submit in order to apply, and how the materials can be submitted. In every instance the instructions must indicate that a CV is to be uploaded into the Academic Career Opportunities website. If a cover letter is asked for, it, too, must be uploaded. Materials submitted online can be available to all search committee members (and other designated representatives) electronically through the secure Academic Career Opportunities website. Departments/schools may require that other materials be submitted by email, by post, by uploading, or any combination.

A jobseeker using the Academic Career Opportunities website does not become an "applicant" (or a member of the applicant pool) unless and until the jobseeker has submitted all required application materials by the deadline. Jobseekers from whom all

requested materials (including reference letters) have not been received by the deadline are not bona fide applicants and may not be considered for positions.

Since postings for faculty positions may remain open for no more than two years (one year for other academic positions), two years (or one year) from the posting date is the deadline for accepting materials, unless you set an earlier deadline. In any case, you must include the deadline date in your posting. This has not always been required in the past.

Setting a short deadline for application materials may constrain the size of the applicant pool. Search committees should consider at the outset whether to set a shorter deadline, or to allow the applicant pool to grow after the selection process begins. By using such language as the “Screening of applications will continue until the position is filled. No applications accepted after [posting date + 1 or 2 years],” the committee can allow new jobseekers to apply until there are no positions to fill, the hiring process is complete, and the posting is removed from the Web. However, leaving the posting open to accept new applicants after the committee starts to meet will obligate the committee to consider and track all applicants until the posting is removed from the Web, thereby closing the door to new applicants.

Thus, it is imperative to enter the correct date on a posting in the field, “Posting to be removed from the Web.” The correct date is the deadline by which jobseekers must submit all required materials. On that date, the posting will automatically be removed from the public site and the door closed to jobseekers who may not be hired in any case, because they have missed the deadline.

After a posting is “removed from the Web,” *and* within the applicable Provost-mandated posting time limit (two years for faculty, one year for Other Academic Personnel), units may go down their short list, or reevaluate anyone in the pool and move that person to the short list. However, once the mandated posting time limit is reached, no applicants can be promoted to the short list: only candidates who were short-listed before the posting time limit may be recommended for appointment. And, finally, once a posting is removed from the Web, it may not be put back onto the Web and re-opened to new applications.

5. Draft position descriptions carefully

A well-crafted position description not only helps attract the broadest applicant pool, but also avoids process problems down the road that could needlessly delay the dean’s and provost’s review of a case or, in exceptional circumstances, require re-opening a completed search.

A jobseeker using the Academic Career Opportunities website does not become an “applicant” (or a member of the applicant pool) unless he or she meets the minimum qualifications for the position.

“Minimum qualifications” are those without which a person cannot do the job; typical examples include: terminal degree in a field or subfield, years of prior experience in a similar position, licensure, record of publication in peer-reviewed journals, or record of

funding. The inclusion of minimum qualifications constrains the applicant pool by discouraging applications from unqualified or inappropriate jobseekers. The Academic Career Opportunities website has tools to screen out unqualified jobseekers by including closed-end questions that establish whether or not a jobseeker satisfies stated minimum qualifications. Posting questions can also be used to segment applicants by subfield to facilitate the evaluation of applications. If website questions are used to screen out unqualified applicants, the criteria used to do so must be reflected in the job advertisement.

It is important to understand that search committees may not legally consider *anyone* lacking the stated minimum qualifications, regardless of the jobseeker's promise. If a position description states that a PhD is required, a jobseeker who does not have that degree may not be considered, let alone hired; requiring "a doctoral degree" obligates the committee to consider individuals with a JD or MD. For these reasons, minimum qualifications must be drafted with care, combining minimum and "preferred qualifications" in a way that promotes the unit's and the University's goals. While requiring candidates to hold a PhD. degree will exclude all job seekers who do not have a PhD. degree in hand, widening the degree requirement to "PhD or ABD with dissertation nearing completion" will expand the applicant pool. (Note that if a PhD or ABD is a requirement, a new Assistant Professor must either have the diploma or an official letter attesting to the fact that *all* requirements for the degree have been completed.)

Likewise, identifying specific subfields of interest as a minimum qualification means that all job seekers who do not specialize in one of those subfields will not be allowed to proceed through the applicant system. By contrast, identifying a subfield as "preferred" will expand the applicant pool. When appropriate, specifying as "preferred" those subfields in which there is high minority interest can be effective in diversifying the pool.

6. Create a posting

All academic positions must be posted on the Academic Career Opportunities website and only those job seekers who complete an on-line application can be considered applicants for a position. Departmental staff have been trained to use this website.

All postings for new academic positions must be approved by the respective dean's office before the position is activated on the system and a search commenced. Searches officially begin on the day the posting is activated, the same day as the dean's office approval. The deadline for individuals to complete all the steps to apply must be at least thirty days after the first national advertisement has appeared. (Temporary positions do not require national advertising.) Postings for faculty positions may remain open no longer than two years from the posting date; for other academic personnel (OAP) positions the limit is one year. A department or school wishing to continue a search after the maximum limit has been reached must create a new posting, and begin again.

Final departmental decisions on candidates in the applicant pool can be made no sooner than thirty days after the first national advertisement has appeared.

For information on waiving any requirements, contact the Provost's Office.

7. Publicize the position

After the posting is approved by the unit dean and activated on the system, the position must be advertised in appropriate venues outside the University to generate the broadest applicant pool and to meet our obligations as an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Appropriate advertising venues are, at minimum, those commonly recognized in the field of study and that are likely to reach potential candidates at the appropriate level of seniority for the position. Advertising must be identical with the language of the position description in the posting and must include specific instructions for applying through the Academic Career Opportunities website. In the professional schools where one advertisement may be used to announce open positions in different disciplines, the advertisement must include links to separate postings for each of these disciplines so that jobseekers can select their field of expertise when applying.

Although a posting is required for every academic opening, national advertising is not required for positions that are not "regular" jobs. To be "regular," the job must be at 50% effort or more, and for a term of at least twelve months.

Openings may also be publicized on departmental/school sites and the like, in which case they must direct people only to the Academic Career Opportunities site. Unit channels cannot substitute for the public posting and advertising process.

In addition to advertisements, announcements, and other efforts to publicize the position in appropriate professional association newsletters or journals, search committees are encouraged to advertise or promote the position to organizations dedicated to advancing the interests of women or minorities in academia generally or in specific fields, including websites of various professional organizations for women and minorities.

8. Seek potential applicants routinely and actively

Thoughtful, targeted, and continuing outreach beyond advertising is essential to our efforts to recruit the most talented academics to the University. Search committees and department representatives should use every opportunity to communicate the unique teaching and research opportunities available at the University generally and to encourage interest in specific open positions. Broad outreach efforts should be supplemented by personal communications to promising students who might consider an academic career.

As search committee members contact colleagues about an open position, they should make specific inquiries about promising candidates from diverse backgrounds. Outreach efforts can also benefit from internal resources, including advice from faculty affiliated with the University's Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture and Center for Gender Studies.

Outstanding candidates, particularly women and underrepresented minorities, are always in demand. To remain competitive for junior hires, the outreach process must begin early, cultivating promising students even before they enter the academic job market. We encourage search committees to review the voluntary, anonymous EEO information summary for the posting from time to time in order to gauge the success of their outreach efforts.

9. Monitor the evaluation process

Although every department and school will tailor the recruiting and hiring process to meet its specific needs, certain decision points are typical. These decisions either to advance an applicant or to remove an applicant from further consideration must be noted in the Academic Career Opportunities website : Does not meet minimum qualifications, short list, interviewed, selected, not selected, offer accepted, offer declined.

For directions on tracking applicants in the Academic Career Opportunities website, departmental staff have been trained to use this website.

10. Evaluate applicants and create a short list

The selection process should evaluate each applicant in an objective fashion, using the specific selection criteria developed in advance by the search committee. To ensure that the particular strengths of each applicant are accurately considered and the strongest candidates are advanced and proposed for appointment, search committee members should refer consistently to the selection criteria.

Effective selection practices lead to a gradual winnowing of the applicant pool, typically to a short list, then to interviewees, and finally to one or more candidates to whom offers are made. A “search narrative” is required with every recommendation that explains why the selected applicant was thought to be, after application of the criteria, the best qualified compared to the other short-listed and interviewed applicants. Search committees may wish to adopt an evaluation grid to aid their consideration.

11. Interview best qualified candidates

Search committees are strongly encouraged to interview a number of applicants as part of the search process. Such interviews may be conducted by telephone or video conferencing, via email, or face-to-face, but search committees should strive to apply interview practices consistently to all candidates unless an individual candidate’s personal circumstances require otherwise.

Care should be taken in all interviews to avoid even the appearance of improper bias for or against any candidate; a guide to interviewing practices is available [here](#).

12. Submit the appointment case

The Academic Career Opportunities website stores most of the documentation about the search process: copies of the advertisements, information on the composition of the search committee, the position description, etc. The website also stores data about the applicants and the selection process, including the search narrative.

The dossier sent to the Provost must include, in addition to all substantive material such as letters of reference, writing samples, CV and cover letter: (1) a printout of the log that the website automatically prepares, (2) a printout of the EEO summary report, and (3) a report printed out from the site that includes the posting itself.

13. Maintain records during and after the recruitment and hiring process

Records of all searches (whether the position is filled or not) must be retained for three (3) years from the date of the last action taken. Such records include copies of all advertisements; the Applicant Log; all materials sent to and received from individuals who qualify as applicants as well as from all jobseekers who request to be considered for the position but were found not to meet minimum qualifications; any reference letters received; and all documentation of the deliberations of the search committee and the unit, including interview notes and any evaluation records.

At three years, all documents related to the search should be shredded.

Address questions about the search process to Stephen Gabel, at 2-0790.

For assistance in the recruitment of minority candidates, contact Kenneth Warren, at 4-3861.

For assistance in the recruitment of women candidates, contact Mary Harvey, 2-8806.

Revision history:

August 19, 2009: An error in the last paragraph of section #4 was corrected.