

ISU Extension and Outreach Employment Search Guidelines

The Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Employment Search Guidelines were adapted from the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost's Guidelines for Administrative Searches. The intent is to create a living document that provides information and suggestions for persons responsible for hiring new employees within Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, as well as for members of search committees charged with making hiring recommendations. This reflects successful practices and procedures drawn from experience with searches conducted within ISU and ISU Extension and Outreach. This document serves to guide ISU Extension and Outreach in actions that promote and use recruiting and hiring practices designed to increase under-represented populations, and to ensure diversity efforts in ISU Extension and Outreach.

The ISU Extension and Outreach Employment Search Guidelines will serve as the guidelines for all Professional and Scientific level P36 and lower positions within ISU Extension and Outreach. The Employment Search Guidelines will need to be used in conjunction with the ISU Extension and Outreach Hiring and Search Committee Process.

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Role of the Search Committee

While the final selection is the responsibility of the hiring officer/supervisor to whom that position reports, the search committee's involvement in all stages of the process is important in assuring the University community that every effort was made to produce a strong and diverse pool of candidates, and that the person ultimately selected for the position was the best person available. The committee must understand, however, that it is a **search** committee, not a **selection** committee; the final selection will be made by the hiring officer/supervisor, not by the committee.

A search committee ordinarily performs the following tasks:

- It makes sure that a broad range of qualified applicants apply for the position and are considered for it.
- It screens the applicants to assess their ability to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the position.
- It recommends to the hiring officer/supervisor those candidates to be invited for campus interviews.
- It organizes and participates in the interviews of the finalists.
- It conveys to the hiring officer/supervisor an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the finalists.

Forming the Search Committee

Composition

In forming the search committee, the hiring officer/supervisor should try to make it as representative as possible of the groups that have a significant interest in the position to be filled. For some searches, it also will be important to include representatives from outside the University. In addition, representation should reflect, to the greatest extent possible, diversity of ethnic group, race, gender, and thought throughout the organization and any representatives who will sit on the committee from outside the University.

Size

The importance of having a committee that is fully representative must, however, be balanced against the need to limit the committee to a size that allows the members to work together effectively as a group. A committee of five to six members is probably ideal, and more than eight can make it

difficult for everyone to participate. Moreover, as the size of the committee grows, so does the difficulty in finding times when everyone can meet.

Selection Process

The various constituencies should be given the opportunity to nominate persons to represent them on the committee, but the hiring officer/supervisor should make the final selection. This allows the latitude to form a committee that is diverse with respect to gender, race, ethnic group, and any other characteristics important to that particular search. The hiring officer/supervisor also should consider the potential ability of individual search committee members to identify likely candidates and persuade them to apply for the position.

Committee Chair

The committee's chair should be appointed by the hiring officer/supervisor, not chosen by the committee itself. The chair should not be selected from among the persons who will be representing specific constituencies on the committee. In fact, it may be desirable for the chair to come from outside the area for which the new employee will report, thus allowing him or her to play a more neutral role. The chair should, however, be someone who is familiar enough with the unit's programs to be able to discuss the unit knowledgeably with potential candidates. It's generally a good idea to select the chair before the committee membership has been settled, to give the chair an opportunity to contribute to its composition.

Organizing the Search

Charge to the Committee

Once the committee is formed, the hiring officer/supervisor should arrange to meet with it to give the committee its charge and to respond to any questions the members may have. The charge should address the following points:

- The nature of the position and the qualities that the hiring officer/supervisor believes are critical to perform successfully in it
- The date by which the hiring officer/supervisor hopes to make the final selection
- The role the committee is expected to play at each step of the process
- The minimum and maximum number of "finalists" to be recommended by the committee for campus visits
- The role that the hiring officer/supervisor expects to play during the search process

Affirmative Search

Special attention should be paid to impressing on the committee members the importance of conducting an **affirmative** search with respect to insuring that the pool of candidates is as diverse as possible. Although the hiring officer/supervisor has presumably included members of protected classes on the committee, it should not be assumed that affirmative action is solely the responsibility of those individuals; indeed, **all committee members are responsible for ensuring that the search process is as affirmative as possible.**

Confidentiality

The importance of maintaining **confidentiality** also should be stressed, especially in regard to the names of candidates and the status of their candidacy. The committee chair should be sure that the committee complies with state open meetings and open records laws, and should consult with the university's legal office if in doubt. Beyond that, however, the committee should agree at the onset to which person within the committee be the spokesperson to all outside requests. Generally this would be within the realm of the chair duties, but the committee can deem another person to this role if desired. The chair, or other designated representative, should be the only one to speak for the committee, and any inquiries concerning the committee's work should be referred to that person.

Document the Process

A file should be prepared for each search containing all documentation about the search, from advertisement to selection rationale. Also included should be the candidate's application materials, if applicable, plus copies of all correspondence with the candidate. To insure confidentiality, multiple copies of the files should ordinarily not be made. The files should be maintained in a central location, where they can be made available to the search committee members for their review. (It may be necessary to consider providing copies to off-campus search committee members who are unable to review the files on campus, but this should only be done as a last resort because of the risk to confidentiality.)

Conducting the Search

Advertising the Position

The committee is expected to identify outlets for advertising the announcement, including outlets specific and appropriate to the discipline as well as those that show promise of reaching women and minorities and other national audiences likely to be interested in such a position. ISU Extension and Outreach Human Resources and the University's Office of Equal Opportunity can provide

information on strategies and approaches for reaching potential applicants. A professional and scientific position at this level must be advertised a minimum of 15 days. Positions unique to Extension and Outreach also should advertise with the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) and the Journal of Extension (JOE). ISU Extension and Outreach Organizational Advancement can be helpful in designing the announcement for publication to ensure that it is consistent with the University's "image."

The search committee members should understand that they are responsible for doing more than simply screening applications that are received; they are responsible for conducting an active search for strong candidates. Some of the potentially best candidates aren't looking to change jobs, and they therefore may not respond to a printed announcement or a form letter. It's the responsibility of the search committee members to make contacts with their colleagues at other universities to locate potential candidates, as well as to encourage persons whom they know personally to apply.

Screening the Candidates

Screening Form

To prepare for its initial screening of the candidates, the committee must first agree on how the preferred qualifications will be used for the evaluation. These must, of course, be consistent with the qualifications stated in the position announcement, but can be weighted at different levels according to an agreed upon system by the search committee. In order to ensure that all committee members are adhering to the same set of criteria as they review the applications, the committee should create a form to be used in the review process.

Retention of Notes

Each committee member should retain his or her notes on the individual candidates until the search process is completed and the appointment is made. When making notes, committee members should concentrate on qualifications and experience. Notes pertaining to personal aspects of the candidate's dress, manner, or other personal items are inappropriate in the context of notes related to the screening committee and hiring.

Initial Screening

The purpose of the initial screening is to consider all candidates who meet the minimum advertised requirements and select those that the committee is interested in pursuing further. Advertised requirements that have been designated as "desirable" or "preferred" should only be applied to

applicants who first meet the minimum requirements. The screening of applicants against job-related desirable or preferred characteristics should be documented thoroughly for each candidate. The candidates who survive the initial screening should be those that the committee believes have the potential to be selected for the position. Those eliminated at this point should not include anyone who might be brought back into the pool later.

Semi-Finalists Selected

The committee's second task is to determine which of the candidates generate enough interest on the part of the committee members to warrant further exploration. Although there is no firm number to be targeted, it should be such as to be manageable during the next phase of the review -- the interviews.

Selecting the Finalists

The committee's third task is to review the information obtained from screening the application materials and, if possible, to agree on those candidates to be recommended to the hiring officer/supervisor for interviews.

Selection Procedure

The committee must decide whom to recommend as finalists. In most cases the committee members will agree that they now have sufficient information on which to base a recommendation, but sometimes additional information may be needed. The committee may decide to conduct telephone interviews prior to making their recommendation for face-to-face interviews.

Recommendation to Hiring Officer/Supervisor

Once the committee has agreed on its recommendation to the hiring officer/supervisor, the recommendation is forwarded by the committee chair. The chair's communication should include an explanation of the reasons for the recommendation, as well as an evaluation of other candidates who had some support within the committee but who are not being recommended as finalists. The committee should bear in mind that it is recommending with respect to finalists, not selecting them. The hiring officer/supervisor makes the final decision as to whom to invite for campus visits. In doing so, he or she may not include all of the persons recommended by the committee, and may decide to add to the group someone whose support in the committee was less strong.

Interview Procedures

In addition to recommending which persons should be brought to campus for interviews, the committee should be responsible for advising the hiring officer/supervisor as to the individuals and groups with whom the candidates should meet during their visits. The committee should also be responsible for obtaining feedback from everyone who meets with the candidates or attends a presentation, and for synthesizing this information and making a final set of recommendations to the hiring officer/supervisor after all visits are completed.

Planning the Itinerary

All finalists should follow the same schedule, so that all will be reviewed under the same conditions. This means that any internal candidates should follow the same schedule as the external candidates, except, of course, for trips to and from the airport and tours of the campus and the community.

Arranging and Publicizing the Visits

The hiring officer/supervisor should be responsible for arranging visitation dates with each finalist. The finalists should be informed at the time the visit is arranged if their names and the dates of their visits will be publicized, which means that their candidacy will now become public knowledge. They also should be informed about the general nature of the schedule. Detailed information pertaining to the university and the community, including specific unit information, should be sent to the candidates well in advance of their visits.

Preparing for the Visit

The search committee should meet with the candidate early in the interview schedule. It may be helpful for the members to agree in advance on some key questions to be asked, and perhaps also on which members will ask which questions, to ensure that all candidates are asked the same questions. A useful introductory question for the candidate is, “Why are you interested in this position, and what would you bring to it?” It’s also desirable to allow the candidate a few minutes near the end of the meeting to ask questions of the committee.

Obtaining Information from References

The committee’s fourth task in the process is to obtain information about the remaining candidates from their references. A reference’s comments usually will be more complete and candid, as well as more directly related to the position in question, if they are obtained by personal interview rather than

through a letter. Written references are likely to be generic letters, prepared by the reference for a range of possible positions, with relatively little information about how the candidate fits the specific position under consideration. Furthermore, verbal reference checks are more likely to evoke comments and nuances that may suggest reservations on the part of the reference.

References Check Procedures

In order to ensure that all reference interviews are conducted as uniformly as possible, the committee should develop an interview “protocol” for the callers to follow. An effort should be made to limit the total reference checks to about twenty minutes. Questions should be fairly specific, and examples of behaviors should be sought. For example, instead of asking, “Is this candidate committed to diversity in hiring and promoting staff?” the protocol might ask, “Can you give me an example of an instance in which the candidate has taken an action to promote diversity?”

Generally it is useful to begin the interview by asking the reference how long he or she has known the candidate, and in what capacity. The interviewer then reads a description of the position and the qualifications desired, and ask how well the candidate fits that description. Specific questions can then follow. A couple of questions that are worth asking near the end of the interview are: “Would you hire this person for this position?” and “Is there anyone else whom you believe we should talk with about this person?” A useful final question is, “Is there anything I haven’t asked that you would like to comment on?”

All of the candidates about whom reference checks are to be made should first be called by the committee chair, or other designated committee member, to inform them that they are still under consideration for the position. The chair can thereby confirm that they continue to be interested, as well as inform them that their references will now be called. They also should be told when they can next expect to hear about the status of their candidacy.

As soon as the candidates have agreed to have the reference checks conducted, the chair should inform the committee members that the calls can be made. A caller should make arrangements with each reference for a time at which to conduct a twenty-minute interview. Depending on who answers the phone when the call is placed, this arrangement may be made directly with the reference or with a secretary or a family member. If the reference takes the call, it may be convenient to conduct the interview immediately, but the caller shouldn't assume that to be the case. The interview should be conducted from a printed form, with enough space so that the interviewer can write in the responses quickly and easily. If the committee believes it's necessary to make inquiries of persons beyond

those named by the candidate as references, the candidates should be warned of this in advance and given the opportunity to terminate their candidacy or to request limitations on this inquiry.

Bringing the Search to Closure

Evaluating the Finalists

The search committee's final responsibility is to advise the hiring officer/supervisor regarding the finalists. Within a few days of the last interview, the committee should meet to conduct a final review, based on the information the members have obtained from the interviews.

The committee's objective should be to advise the hiring officer/supervisor as to which of the finalists are acceptable for the position, and their strengths and possible weaknesses. Otherwise, the committee should avoid ranking the finalists, so as to allow the hiring officer/supervisor a reasonable degree of latitude in making the final decision. If, however, it's evident that one candidate is the overwhelming favorite, the hiring officer/supervisor should be informed of this.

The committee's views and recommendations can be conveyed in writing or in person to the hiring officer/supervisor. In the latter case, the hiring officer/supervisor may prefer to meet with the committee chair alone, or with the entire committee. In any case, the hiring officer/supervisor should at this point discharge the committee and commend the members for a job well done. The final outcome is now in his or her hands.

Resources and Tools

Search Committee General Information

- Search Committee Timetable (example) - <http://www.provost.iastate.edu/help/recruitment/admin-search-guidelines/timetable>
- Administrator's Checklist of Best Practices for a Diverse Search - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R02AdministratorsChecklist.pdf>

Affirmative Search and Advertising Resources

- Sample Memo to Inform Unit/Department/College of Position - <http://www.provost.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/recruitment/Inform.pdf>
- Diversity Recruitment Advertising Sources - http://www.eoc.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/New/Diversity%20Recruitment_1.pdf
- Historically Black Public Colleges and Universities - <http://www.univsource.com/hbcu.htm>
- Native American Colleges and Universities - <http://www.eoc.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/New/NativeAmericanColleges.pdf>
- Hispanic Colleges and Universities - <http://www.eoc.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/New/HispanicColleges.pdf>
- Tips and Suggestions for Broadening the Candidate Pool - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R03BroadeningThePool.pdf>
- Strategies for Recruiting Women Faculty - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R04RecruitingStrategies-NatAcad.pdf>
- Reducing Stereotypic Biases in Hiring - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R06ReducingBias-Cornell.pdf>
- AA/EO Statements – Samples of Wording - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R10ExamplesDiversityStatements-2011.pdf>

Screening Forms

- ISUEO HR Applicant Matrix (Example) -
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/ronlyres/382990FF-67FB-4626-A94C-94A894491E45/173853/MatrixExample.xlsx>
- Applicant Screening – Sample Suggestions -
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/ronlyres/382990FF-67FB-4626-A94C-94A894491E45/173847/ApplicantScreeningSample.docx>
- Initial Screening Sample Forms –
 - <http://www.provost.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/recruitment/ScreenForm.pdf>
 - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R14initialScreeningForm.doc>
 - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R14initialScreeningForm.pdf>
 - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R11Mich%20cand%20eval%20tool.doc>
 - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R12CandidateEvalRubric.doc>

Reference Checks

- Questions for reference checks (samples)
 - <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/ronlyres/382990FF-67FB-4626-A94C-94A894491E45/173850/ReferenceCheck.docx>
 - <http://www.provost.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/recruitment/InterviewForm.pdf>
 - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R17QuestionsForPhoneReferences.pdf>
- Evaluating letters of recommendation
 - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R16ReferenceLetters.pdf>

Interviews

- Tips for the Interview Process - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R18TipsForInterviewProcess.pdf>
- Guidelines for Effective Interviews - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R19GuidelinesForEffectiveInterviews%20.pdf>
- Interview Questions: What to Ask? What Not to Ask? - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R20What%20to-not%20to-Ask.pdf>
- Interview Question Guidelines - <http://www.eoc.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/New/InterviewGuidlines.pdf>
- Sample Interview Questions:
 - Telephone Interview: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/382990FF-67FB-4626-A94C-94A894491E45/173848/InterviewsPhone.docx>
 - On-Site Interview: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/382990FF-67FB-4626-A94C-94A894491E45/173849/InterviewOnSite.docx>
 - Additional Examples - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R21HrinterviewQuestions.pdf>
 - Additional Examples - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R22SampleInterviewQuestions.pdf>

Interview Feedback Forms

- Sample forms for obtaining feedback on finalists –
 - <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/382990FF-67FB-4626-A94C-94A894491E45/117828/assess.doc>
 - <http://www.provost.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/recruitment/Feedback.pdf>
 - <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/NR/rdonlyres/382990FF-67FB-4626-A94C-94A894491E45/117828/assess.doc>
 - <https://www-provost.sws.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/uploads/advance/faculty-searches/R15FinalistFeedbackForm.doc>

For More Information

For more information, contact the Office of the Assistant Vice President, Organizational Development for Extension and Outreach, 1118 Extension 4-H Building, Ames, IA 50011-3630, (515) 294-1517.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Cathann A. Kress, director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University of Science and Technology, Ames, Iowa.