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An Ounce of Prevention: Conducting Effective Candidate Background Checks

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- 1) Presentation Title: An Ounce of Prevention: Conducting Effective Candidate Background Checks
- 2) Presenter Information-Primary presenter CV/resume or biographical sketch: Jonathan Kremser is the Chair of the Department of Criminal Justice at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania. He has extensive experience within the security industry. He is a Certified Protection Professional (CPP), which is the gold standard in security leadership, requiring proof of knowledge and management skills in seven key domains of security. Through his consulting firm, Forensic Security & Protection LLC, Dr. Kremser provides consultation and training in the area of workplace violence prevention, security compliance requirement consultation, physical security audits, and cyber-bullying prevention to companies, educational institutions, municipalities, and the legal profession. He received his B.S. in Criminal Justice from Kutztown University, an MA in Applied Criminology from the University of Ottawa, and an MA and Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from Rutgers.
- 3) Disciplines: Higher Education Leadership; Higher Education Administration
- 4) Presentation Theme: Operating the Department
- 5) Presentation Type: best practice presentation (45 minutes)
- 6) Abstract: This session will address the often-overlooked component of the faculty search: effective background screening of short-listed applicants. Case studies of insufficient background checks will be discussed, and practical resources will be provided to participants that will help them avoid the endless energy draining task of managing conflict.
- 7) Keywords: Hiring; department management; applicant screening; faculty searches
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- 9) Presentation Documents: Description of the Session (300-500 words)

A seemingly infinite number of workshops at academic chairs conferences address the challenges of managing conflict, dealing with difficult colleagues, and other similar themes. This presentation will focus on risk mitigation through proper applicant screening, which will reduce or eliminate the time and energy consuming tasks of managing problem employees after they have joined the faculty.

In many colleges and universities, checking an applicant's background is a rushed process. The responsibility of conducting a background check often falls upon either the department chair or search committee chair, who may, at the most, make a cursory phone call to a favorable reference provided by the applicant, or at the very least, rely upon the recommendation letters written on the applicant's behalf.

Chair's and search committee members should take a more serious, proactive, preventive approach to hiring applicants for faculty positions. Many of the common interpersonal conflicts that arise, in addition to the more serious legal problems, such as hostile workplace, negligent hiring and negligent retention claims, could have been

prevented by a more thorough focus on background screening before the job offer is made.¹

This seminar will draw from the criminal justice literature to provide participants with practical suggestions within the boundaries of employment law to properly screen the short-listed applicant. It will inform the participants on the often misunderstood reference immunity statutes when contacting an applicant's current or former employer.² It will also cover the use of social media in conducting background checks on prospective new hires.³ The participants will be introduced to case studies based upon the presenter's own experience (using fictional names and locations) to illustrate the importance of effective applicant screening. While we must first acknowledge that (1) no amount of screening is 100 percent effective, and (2) chairs often "inherit" problems, diligence in conducting quality, thorough applicant screening can help avoid many of the future conflicts in the workplace as well as prevent liability.

¹ Nadell, B. (2004). The cut of his jib doesn't jibe: Background checks can protect a company from negligent hiring allegations and promote a safe environment for employees and the public. *Security Management*, 48 (9), 108-114.

² Nixon, B. (2005). How to avoid hiring hazards. *Security Management*, 49

³ Quirke, J. (2012). Social media and the workplace. *Security Management*, 56