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Considering Best Practices for Conducting a Faculty Search

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The success, stability, and morale of an academic department depend largely on its faculty. In this session, you will reflect upon your own search processes, engaging with the presenters in a multi-dimensional, best-practices approach to successful faculty searches (e.g., legal parameters, applicant recruitment, reference and background checks, interviews, candidate evaluations).

As the legal dimension of hiring new faculty can certainly derail a search, it is prudent to provide compliance training for the search committee. Also, the department Chair can stay abreast of any updates in hiring procedures through occasional interaction with the institution's Human Resources department. Communication with these two departments (HR and Compliance) will provide a framework of guidelines and procedures that take into account posting a position, recruiting diverse applicants (including work authorization for foreign applicants), making reference checks (including important secondary references), and conducting background checks (including confirming past seven years employment, licenses, safety training, or other credentials).

Because of the many nuances in conducting a faculty search, checklists and templates can help ensure thoroughness and consistency in your department's searches. For example, a template reference check guide can help ensure that search committees are addressing essential areas, including collegiality of the applicant. A standard brief online survey to the reference persons which is completed prior to the committee members' conversations can also be developed. In this way, both quantitative and qualitative data are obtained. Reference calls will be more relaxed and thorough if they are set up ahead of time; summaries of the calls can be posted on a secure site for committee members and Chair to access and review. This same site can serve as a repository for applications and other communicate. Interview templates ease the process, from the initial Skype or telephone interview to the on-campus entry and exit interviews. These templates are constructed around the job description, progressing from more general elements of the position during a preliminary interview to more specific elements during the on-campus interview. Other helpful templates include the campus interview itinerary and anticipated candidate questions. Search committee discussions should be thorough and consistent throughout the process.

In general, it is important to predict and manage the details. Make sure that web site content is clear and up-to-date. Invite candidates to review your itinerary and inquire as to whether there are other interests. Post candidate materials on a secure web site for your faculty to access during campus interviews. Have

search committee members escort the candidates to all of their meetings, thus avoiding any inadvertent, but inappropriate, conversation topics prohibited by the compliance office. Following teaching and research presentations, search committee members can distribute and collect standard evaluation forms from students, faculty, staff, and administrators who interacted with the candidate. A list of selection variables can guide final conversations with the search committee by allowing comparison/contrast of candidates. Finally, send courteous and professional regret letters to applicants and archive for two years all search committee notes from reference checks, feedback forms, agendas/minutes, etc.