

SEARCH AND APPOINTMENT GUIDELINES FOR TENURE TRACK FACULTY, SCHOOL DIRECTOR, AND DEPARTMENT HEAD SEARCHES

PURPOSE

Recruiting talented faculty is one of the most important decisions we make here in the College of Arts & Architecture at Penn State. The people we hire determine who and what we are. These procedural guidelines are organized chronologically to assist our search committees in successfully navigating the search, selection, and hiring process. Searches by their very nature are complex and time-consuming. This procedural guideline is designed to take you step-by-step through the process. A copy of these procedural guidelines should be provided to the search chair, search committee, and the staff assistant providing administrative support to the search chair. If you have any questions throughout the process, do not hesitate to contact the College Human Resource Strategic Partner, Jerry Henry, gkh2@psu.edu.

REQUEST FOR SEARCH

The unit head submits to the dean a request to search for a tenure-track position using the [Permission to Search form](#). This request should include a rationale for the position. In addition, the unit head should submit to the dean a recommendation for the composition of the search committee. It is important to remember that search committees are advisory in nature and do not make final decisions.

This step is not applicable for a *school director or department head search*.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

The dean, in consultation with the unit, appoints the search committee chair and the search committee. The committee should be made up of a diverse group of individuals related to appointment type (faculty & staff), student status (graduate/undergraduate), outside cognate disciplines, gender, race/ethnicity, along with other appropriate dimensions of diversity. In some cases, professional staff representation in addition to administrative staff, may be appropriate. To ensure diverse representation on each committee, individuals from outside the department and college should be sought, especially when there is limited diversity within the department or school. [The status of diversity appointments in a unit will be made available to the search committee.](#)

For *school director or department head* searches, the search will be chaired by a “peer” position of another unit. This may be a peer within the college, though a selection may be made from other units that have a tangential disciplinary relationship. If someone from a related disciplinary connection does not chair the search, it is often helpful to include someone from a cognate area on the search committee; unit relationships often benefit by interdisciplinary, intercollege connections during the search process. A departmental staff individual should be a member of the search committee

MEETING OF SEARCH COMMITTEE (first meeting)

For both faculty searches and unit head/director searches, the **hiring administrator and every member of the search committee must attend or view online the most recent search committee briefing from the Affirmative Action Office. It is recommended that time be set aside for the first meeting for all members to watch this together.** Subsequent to reviewing the AAO briefing, the first meeting of the search committee should cover the dean’s charge; discussion about principles of inclusion and diversity; appropriate HR procedures; and the process to be implemented for the search. These topics are usually covered by the dean, the unit head, and/or the college human resource strategic partner. It is important that the staff assistant providing administrative support to the search committee attend this first meeting.

Every department is encouraged to have at least one faculty member who attends the Equity Action Resource Team Training. This requires advance planning and registration as these are face-to-face training sessions with limited seating. It is recommended that volunteers be sought and this becomes an important aspect of the Scholarship of Service.

For *school director or department head*, the dean’s office will provide administrative staff to support the search committee, unless there is some need to call on administrative staff from other areas.

POSITION ANNOUNCEMENT

Usually, the search committee will make any final revisions to the position announcement, though there may be occasions where timing requires that the position be posted before the search committee meets. All position announcements are forwarded to the dean for final approval. **A sample position template will be available.** Once, the position announcement is approved the search committee chair will work with the assigned administrative assistant to complete the Request to Post form in WorkLion so it can be posted in the Electronic Job Management System (EJMS).

RECRUITMENT ANNOUNCEMENT

The position announcement must be placed in a print professional journal that reaches a national audience for a thirty (30) day period. A copy of the ad from the print professional journal should be placed in the search file. Additional advertisements desired by the search committee, school, and or department may be placed by the department/school or by HR Shared Services. Any charges incurred will be borne by the employing school or department.

All announcements should include the following as requirements: “Evidence of a commitment to working collegially is required. Evidence of a commitment to working with individuals from diverse backgrounds is required.” In addition, for any announcements or external announcements sent out by the School/Department, the following must appear at the bottom of the announcement or advertisement, “To review the Annual Security Report which contains information about crime statistics and other safety matters and policies, please go to <http://police.psu.edu/annual-security-reports>, which will explain how to request a paper copy of the Annual Security Report.”

APPLICANT TRACKING

All applicants must apply through EJMS. The search chair will notify each applicant in writing if additional information is required from them.

SCREENING PROCESS

The search committee should prepare a screening instrument, which provides evaluation metrics based on the criteria from the position announcement. **A sample instrument will be available.** The search committee should use this instrument in the screening of all applicants to determine which applicants do not meet the minimum qualifications. The college's HR office can assist with this task, if necessary. Those applicants whose candidacy will not be pursued should be closed off in EJMS. The search chair should forward this list to the college HR office so they may close off these applicants.

When screening cover letters and vitas for consideration, the search committee should keep the following in mind:

- The screening process should be completed in a timely manner.
- Objective documentation should be kept to assist the search committee member in recalling a candidate's submitted information.
- No comments should be written on the candidate's application materials.
- Personal notes should be taken down on a separate sheet of paper.

NARROWING THE CANDIDATE POOL

Typically, SKYPE, ZOOM, or telephone interviews will be used for the first round of interviews to narrow the pool of candidates. This should be the case even for internal candidates as well. Interview questions should be the same for each candidate; sample lists will be made available for adaptation by the search committee on the college website. Once a smaller pool of candidates is identified, they should be notified that they have made an additional cut and that the committee plans to start reference checks. This will ensure that candidates have a chance to notify all references and make requests for those not to call until they are assured they will be invited for a campus visit.

REFERENCE CHECKS

Reference checks should be conducted by the search committee for those candidates who surface as in the top group to consider for in-person interviews. All candidates who are finalists should be notified that further reference checks will be done, and that some may be done off their submitted list. A set of questions for reference checks will be prepared by the search committee so that similar questions are asked of each reference, though often there are particular areas for discussion that surface during phone call interviews with references. Follow-up questions may be asked. **Sample reference questions will be made available.** The search committee chair may enlist the assistance of search committee members in conducting reference checks. All reference check results should be reported back to the search committee chair.

LIST OF CERTIFIED CANDIDATES TO SCHOOL DIRECTOR OR DEPARTMENT HEAD (for faculty searches)

By “certifying names,” the search committee attests that applicants are both qualified and acceptable to continue as candidates based on the available data. This list, with committee comments, is forwarded to the School Director/Department Head by the chair of the search committee. **The status of diversity appointments in a unit will be made available to the search committee.** If the unit is underrepresented in relation to women and/or minorities, the committee is required to submit the Short List Approval Form (available at http://www.psu.edu/dept/aaoffice/pdf/Short_List.doc) the Affirmative Action Office prior to inviting candidates for an interview.

LIST OF CERTIFIED CANDIDATES TO THE DEAN

The unit head makes independent assessments of the eligibility, strengths and weaknesses of candidates. If the committee’s list of certified candidates does not include adequate representation of diversity applicants, the unit head should review the entire pool (and may conduct additional reference checks) prior to recommending to the dean. Lack of adequate representation of diversity may require extending the search and engaging in more concerted efforts to seek qualified candidates from a wider pool. The list of certified candidates is forwarded to the dean, indicating those candidates recommended for in-person interviews. The reference check forms for these individuals will be supplied to the dean.

In the event of a *school director or department head* search, the search committee chair will usually present the list of certified candidates to the dean including the reference check forms. Subsequent to campus visits, the dean will conduct additional reference checks.

The work of the search committee for *school director or department head* positions is usually considered complete once finalists are invited to campus. The college’s practice is to bring the search committee’s work to a close after the assembly of the final candidate lists for a senior administrator. Every faculty, staff, and student should feel that their voice does matter in the final selection and should be engaged in meeting the candidates and providing individual feedback on unit head searches.

CAMPUS VISITS BY CANDIDATES

Invitations to visit the campus are issued by the dean of the college through the unit head where the position exists. For *school director or department head* candidate campus visits, the invitation to visit are issued by the dean of the college, either directly or by the search committee chair.

When arranging interview visits, explore the candidates’ need for reasonable accommodations for disabilities. **Ask (only): “Will you need any special accommodations for your interview/visit?”** If the candidate answers yes, explain to them that our HR office will be in touch with them. In addition, all candidates should be asked if there are any groups that they would like to meet with while they are on campus.

Candidates invited to campus and all participants in the interview process should receive a detailed itinerary of the visit. This itinerary should include all relevant information, i.e., travel information,

accommodation information, and the names and titles of individuals whom the candidate will be meeting. **A sample itinerary will be made available.** Interviews with the dean should be scheduled as near the end of the interview as possible.

For *school director or department head* searches, typical itineraries for on-campus visits include the following list of groups or individuals:

- Dean (When possible, the dean should have two interview slots: one early, one late in the interview process. If possible, one of these should occur in a more relaxed setting.)
- Associate Deans
- Select Donors
- Unit/School Staff
- Unit/School Faculty
- Director of Development
- Students (usually a lunch)
- Tour of College facilities
- College Human Resources
- Unit's Faculty Advisory council
- College Academic Leadership Council
- Current Unit Head/Director
- Real estate tour
- An open presentation with Q&A (this should be scheduled towards the beginning of the candidates visit)

Note: Resources to cover expenses of candidates' travel and lodging are drawn from the school/department budget. The school or department shall cover expenses for meals and incidentals and ensure that all facilities for meetings, lodging, etc. are accessible. For *school director or department head* searches, expenses of candidates' travel and lodging are drawn from the college including all expenses for meals and incidentals.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND CAMPUS VISITS

For faculty searches, as part of their interview, all candidates will meet with the search committee while on campus. The search committee will develop interview questions. The interview questions must be based upon job related duties and the position announcement. Special care must be taken to ensure that all candidates are treated equally. All candidates should be asked the same questions in each interview. **Any reference to race, religion, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, and, disability or status as a Vietnam Era Veteran or other non-job related criterion must be avoided.**

AFTER CAMPUS VISITS

Immediately following a campus visit, all participants in the interview process should complete an online evaluation form indicating the suitability of the candidate for the position. Faculty are encouraged to use their networks to seek any additional information about candidates when possible. **All feedback received will remain confidential and the sharing of it with the unit head or dean should be treated**

confidentially and professionally. The responses are received by the College of Arts & Architecture planning and analysis consultant who prepares a summary report for each candidate including a list of respondents (specific names are not identified with responses), count and percentage of groupings (faculty, staff, students, etc.), the count and percentage of recommended, not recommended, undecided, and a summary of additional comments. The evaluation form for the last candidate will include the opportunity to rank candidates and provide additional comments; these will be summarized in similar form. All evaluation documents will be retained according to University policy AD35 University Archives and Records Management.

SEARCH COMMITTEE DELIBERATIONS

For faculty searches, the search committee and/or the unit head will review the confidential evaluation report. While steps may be taken to involve the entire department faculty in discussions about each candidate's suitability for the position, caution is urged; parameters should be clearly defined and all should be advised that they are welcome to share opinions with the unit head outside the public discussion. Taking any sort of public vote in a faculty meeting is to be avoided. While opinions may be solicited in an open faculty meeting, many faculty (especially those still in the tenure line or non-tenured) may be hesitant to voice their opinions. Strident opinions may overshadow effective and objective discussion. Each faculty and staff member who interviewed the person should share his or her opinions through the online survey feedback process or directly with the unit head and/or search committee. If the search committee makes a final recommendation to the unit head, an unranked list of all acceptable candidates is preferred. The unit head is expected to conduct additional, probing reference checks on the acceptable finalists and then make the official recommendation for hiring to the dean on behalf of the school or department.

CANDIDATE OFFERS

Selection of a person to fill the vacancy is the ultimate responsibility of the dean who seeks advice and consults with the unit head and others as necessary. Position offers, along with negotiations for salary and rank, are carried out by the unit head in consultation with the dean at the time an offer is extended to a selected applicant. In rare instances where the dean is asked to make an offer that includes immediate tenure at either an associate or full professor, the dean will consult with the unit head (who will have consulted with the unit Promotion and Tenure Committee) and initiate a formal "expedited review" as appropriate. All final offer letters are extended from the dean.

For school director or department head searches, there are several factors that influence the final appointment. Often, the most qualified candidate(s) emerge clearly from the feedback provided by the faculty, administrative peers, staff, and students. Candidates who would likely not be successful and should therefore be eliminated from further consideration after the interview are also similarly identified by both administrators and others who provide feedback. The dean will conduct more substantive reference checks on finalists at this stage using additional networks and resources. Information regarding candidates, which has not been previously shared, is appreciated. Another factor that influences the final appointment is whether the top candidate can be successfully recruited – family considerations, the need for spousal hire, other career opportunities, compensation requests, or other issues may be difficult to overcome. In such cases, the dean may need to move forward with offering the position to a different candidate who wasn't the first choice. In some cases, where it would be difficult to garner the appropriate level of support for a candidate who wasn't the first choice, the

search will be extended or re-opened. An interim appointment is always better than hiring someone who may not be successful.

There can be unanticipated occurrences during any search process and in such circumstances the dean or unit head may reconvene the search committee if more insight and advice is needed before moving forward with a final offer to someone. For instance, should the feedback from faculty, staff, and students not result in a clear decision and ranking of the candidates, it may be appropriate to reconvene the search committee to determine next steps.

CLOSING OFF SEARCHES

After a vacancy has been filled successfully, the chair of the search committee, with HR office assistance, will notify all unsuccessful candidates, in writing, except those who were interviewed, informing them of the selection and thanking them for their interest in Penn State. **A sample letter will be made available.** The unit head or the search committee chair **should call all those who interviewed in person on campus to notify them that another candidate was selected.** After this is complete, an Initiate to Hire form in WorkLion should be completed by the school or department which also serves as the mechanism to close off in EJMS all remaining candidates not hired.

The dean will call all unsuccessful finalists for *school director or department head* searches who participated in on-campus interviews.

RETENTION OF RECORDS

All correspondence relative to the search must be collected by the staff assistant assigned to the search and must be retained within the school or department or the dean's office for a period of three years subsequent to the application deadline date. Any notes taken or emails distributed between the search committee members relative to the candidate(s) must also be collected and retained as part of the official search file. All applicant material collected in EJMS will be retained in EJMS and does not need to be retained within the school or department.

SEARCH PROCESS QUESTIONS

The preceding paragraphs are guidelines that should serve in the search, selection, recruitment, and appointment of tenure track faculty members for the College of Arts And Architecture at Penn State. Any changes or deviations from these suggested procedures should be discussed with the dean and college HR office as early as possible in the search process.

If any procedural questions should arise during the search process, they should be directed to the college HR office for resolution.