

Synopsis of Recommended Substantive Changes to the University's Search & Selection Guidelines

December 3, 2013

A year ago, a task force of the University Equity Council, led by Chief Diversity Officer Kumea Shorter-Gooden, undertook a revision of the campus guidelines on search and selection. The Task Force solicited feedback from the campus community, reviewed the practices of peer institutions, and considered national “best practices” in faculty and staff search and selection. The Task Force is recommending changes, based on contemporary social, technological and workforce realities, which will create a more flexible and nimble process, while safeguarding and strengthening the University’s commitment to equity and diversity. Substantive changes are proposed in several areas:

- Diversity of Search Committees and Applicant Pools
- Filling Positions in Pay Bands 1 and 2
- Interactions between the Hiring Official and the Search Committee during the Search Process
- Use of the Internet and Social Media
- Use of Search Firms
- Responsibility and Authority Structure

The proposed substantive changes have been reviewed and approved by the Equity Council, the Council of Deans, and the Vice Presidents. However, the current *Procedures & Guidelines for Conducting Searches at the University of Maryland* (2007) continue to be in effect until President Loh approves a new version.

Diversity of Search Committees and Applicant Pools

The University reaffirms the importance of diversity, particularly racial/ethnic and gender diversity, in Search Committees, applicant pools, and finalist lists.

Search Committee Composition

Hiring Officials are expected to convene Search Committees that are diverse, particularly with respect to race/ethnicity and gender. In appointing members, Hiring Officials may also consider other forms of diversity. The objective is to assemble a team of individuals reflecting a broad range of backgrounds, skills, experiences and attributes relevant to the search and the nature of the position.

In completing the Search & Selection Plan, Hiring Officials will be asked to note the race/ethnicity and gender of Search Committee members. In addition, Hiring Officials may include a brief statement as to why the individuals selected for the Search Committee contribute to the diversity objective of the specific search.

Applicant Pool Composition

Search Committees are expected to forward to the Hiring Official a finalist list that is diverse with respect to race/ethnicity and gender. To achieve this, diversity should be considered at all stages in the process (from the initial applicant pool, to the semi-finalist list, and then to the finalist list).

When the semi-finalist pool is not diverse with respect to race/ethnicity and gender (and prior to finalizing the semi-finalist interviews), Search Committee Chairs are expected to consult with the Equity Administrator to consider strategies to diversify the pool. Moreover, prior to finalists being forwarded to the Hiring Official, Equity Administrators must review the finalist pool for diversity.

Filling Positions in Pay Bands 1 and 2

To expedite the search process and streamline the amount of time it takes to fill many positions, exempt positions in Pay Bands 1 and 2 should generally be filled without the use of a Search Committee.

Even when there is no Search Committee, Hiring Officials should consider the inclusion of others in the search process, so that the Hiring Official gets the benefit of feedback from multiple sources and so that prospective candidates have the opportunity to learn about the unit/department from the vantage points of different people.

Prior to the interviews, the Equity Administrator reviews a list of proposed interviewees in order to assure an equitable process and a diverse pool. If the proposed interview pool is not diverse with respect to race/ethnicity and gender, the Hiring Official must document his/her due diligence in recruiting and advancing diverse candidates.

Hiring Officials who are hiring exempt staff in Pay Bands 1 and 2 will be expected to complete Search & Selection Training in order to assure their understanding of the process of hiring without a Search Committee, particularly the equity and diversity considerations.

Search procedures using Search Committees are required for exempt positions in Pay Bands 3, 4 and 5 (and are an option, if desired by the Hiring Official, for Pay Bands 1 and 2).

Interactions between the Hiring Official and the Search Committee during the Search and Selection Process

The aim of UM's search and selection process is to attract and hire a diverse, qualified workforce. Both the Hiring Official and the Search Committee play important roles in this process. The Hiring Official typically has substantial and in-depth knowledge about the responsibilities of the position and the qualifications and qualities that are necessary in a candidate to serve effectively. The Search Committee brings a broader and more diverse set of perspectives and insights to the process, and contributes to the fairness and equity of the search process by applying uniform and consistent practices to all candidates throughout the process under the guidance of the Equity Administrator. For some positions, particularly at higher levels of the University, the Hiring Official can serve a valuable "marketing" role, helping to sustain and deepen candidates' interests.

A foremost consideration is fairness and equity—that all candidates be given a fair chance to demonstrate their capacity and that no candidates be treated in a way that differentially favors one over another.

Given this, at times it may be appropriate, in a carefully crafted manner, for the Hiring Official to be actively involved with the Search Committee and, in some exceptional instances, directly with candidates.

For example, in consultation with the Equity Administrator, Hiring Officials may review candidates' applications; interact in a structured manner with candidates who have been deemed semi-finalists by the Search Committee for the purpose of providing information about their vision of the unit/department and responding to the candidates' questions; and meet with the Search Committee to address questions from the Search Committee or to get updates on the search process.

Hiring Officials may *not* serve as a member of the Search Committee; meet with candidates or semi-finalists for the purpose of screening/interviewing them in lieu of the Search Committee's screening/interviewing process; or unilaterally add candidates to the semi-finalist or finalist lists.

Use of the Internet and Social Media

Conducting internet research on applicants for employment by entering their names in search engines (such as Google or Bing) and on blogs, social networks and websites (such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) can lead to the discovery of information about applicants not otherwise available in the search and selection process. However, some of that information may be unverifiable, anonymous and/or untrue. In addition, such information may not accurately predict how well an applicant may perform in the job. Finally, information such as race, age, disability status, religious affiliation, or political affiliation may be protected from use under the University's nondiscrimination policies. Because of these concerns:

- The internet and social media may be used to post positions and recruit applicants.
- Applicants will be informed when they apply online that the University may use the internet and social media sites to verify information related to their ability to perform the job.
- Internet searches and/or social media sites should not be used as the only or primary source for information or reference checks.
- Search Committees should not use information found through internet searches and/or social media unless the information is related to the essential functions of the specific job and verified.
- Information pertaining to personal characteristics or traits that are not job-related, such as race, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation, should not be considered in the hiring process.

Use of Search Firms

Departments must obtain the approval of the Major Unit Head (President, Vice President or Dean) and the Director or Associate Director of University Human Resources in order to use a search firm. Search firms must agree by contract to adhere to the University's Search & Selection Guidelines and standards of diversity, equity and confidentiality.

The search firm may be hired to do applicant recruitment, applicant screening, or applicant interviewing in advance of the Search Committee. The Search Committee must be provided access to all applicant materials, and the Search Committee decides which applicants to interview and then conducts interviews (by itself or in conjunction with the search firm). Search firms must have the approval of the Search Committee Chair before releasing any applicants from the search process.

Responsibility and Authority Structure

Each Major Unit Head (President, Vice President or Dean) is responsible for their Division, College or School's adherence to the Search & Selection Guidelines. Major Unit Heads empower Equity Administrators to act on their behalf to assure equity and diversity in the search and selection process. If situations arise where the Hiring Official, Search Committee or Search Chair believe that there are grounds for an exception to any of the approved Search & Selection Guidelines, the Equity Administrator must be consulted for approval. The Equity Administrator may consult with the University Equity Administrator. If there is disagreement on how to proceed, the Major Unit Head or their designee has ultimate decision-making authority.

If the Equity Administrator has concerns about how the Search & Selection Guidelines are being implemented (for example, how equity issues are being handled or the diversity of the applicant, semi-finalist or finalist pools), their responsibility is to discuss these concerns with the Search Chair, Search Committee or Hiring Official. The Equity Administrator may also consult with the University Equity Administrator. Resolution of such problems may include the recommendation to the Hiring Official or the Major Unit Head of the suspension or closing of a search. The Major Unit Head or their designee has ultimate decision-making authority.