

Simpson College

Guidelines for Faculty Search Committee Members

April 8, 2010

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for faculty search committee members as they perform their duties.

Committee Membership and Roles

Appointment: Nominations for the search committee are made by the department through its chair. The members of the search committee are approved by the academic dean. The academic dean may add additional members at her or his discretion, or decline to accept individuals nominated by the department.

Committee Chair: In most faculty searches at Simpson College, the department chair serves as the chair of the search committee. This is not always the case. Sometimes a department chair is on leave during a search, has a potential or real conflict of interest, or other conflict that would preclude her or him from serving as chair of the committee. In some cases, the dean may appoint someone from outside of the department to chair the search. The search committee chair is responsible to make sure all guidelines and processes are followed, to identify and bring to the attention of the dean any irregularities in the search process. The committee chair is also responsible for submitting all appropriate documentation on the search to the Human Resources at the conclusion of the search.

Department Members: Since the departments at Simpson College are relatively small, it is not unusual to include all members of the department on the search committee. The more members on the committee the more difficult it is to get the committee together. Larger departments (5+) should consider selecting no more than three (in addition to the department chair) department members to serve on the search committee.

Non-Departmental Members: Each search will normally have at least one faculty member from outside of the department. The non-departmental department member is nominated by the department, and appointed by the dean. Generally, the non-departmental member will be someone with interest and/or expertise related to the department doing the search. The faculty member(s) from outside of the department should be involved in the crafting of the job description, the review of all applicant files, phone interviews, and all decisions. The non-departmental member represents the faculty as a whole. She or he should ask questions about the necessary qualifications of the candidate, the primary teaching areas, and other qualities the department will look for. The non-departmental faculty member can play an important role in making sure that the search stays on track, and that the final candidates reflect the attributes originally identified in the job description. In the development of the job description for this search, the non-departmental members can encourage the department to think “outside the box” about the role the new faculty member might play in the department and to make sure the department has considered all of the possibilities for the new or replacement faculty members.

Non-departmental members of the search committee should ask questions about how the new person will fit into the department, where the field is going, etc.

Dean's Representative: In some cases, the academic dean may appoint a representative to the search committee.

Division Head: Normally, the division head will be on each search committee within her or his division. The division head should attend all meetings of the search committee, review all of the files, and participate fully in the search. The division head should participate in the development of the job description and help guide the department in reviewing its staffing needs. The division head should also take the lead in providing the department guidance on how the department might expand the diversity of the candidate pool. As a member of the college's administration, the division head is also on the look-out for potential legal issues that might arise during the search.

In determining the composition of the search committee, the department is encouraged to nominate faculty representing the range of professional experience within the department and reflect the diversity of the faculty at large.

Conflict of Interest: No faculty member should serve on a search committee where a real or perceived conflict of interest exists. All potential committee members should review the college's conflict of interest policy on the academic dean's Website. Any committee member with a question about conflict of interest should discuss the issue with the chair of the search committee, or the academic dean.

Expectations for the Search

- Please do not accept appointment to a search committee if you cannot commit the time needed to the search. This means attending committee meetings, reading files, meeting with the candidates, etc.
- Included in the duties of the search committee members is to act as host or ambassador to our campus guests. A candidate is interviewing us, as we are interviewing them. Being a good host means being timely to scheduled meetings, waiting with the candidate until the next person arrives, or walking the candidate to the next scheduled appointment. If you cannot make a scheduled meeting, please contact the search chair or HR to make other arrangements.
- The chair of the committee should begin the search by reviewing the college's conflict of interest policy.
- Except in extraordinary situations, the committee should not meet without all of the members present, including non-departmental members.
- Minutes should be taken at each meeting and circulated to all members.
- All members of the search committee have one vote. Outside the department faculty members should participate actively and not be overly deferential to the hiring department.
- Files should be considered confidential and always be located in a secure place.
- Committee members should refrain from writing comments on the documents.

- Search committee members are encouraged to keep an open mind in reviewing all of the candidates and not make up their minds until all of the evidence (including the on campus interview) has been collected.
- Often the committee will arrive at its top candidates by consensus, but this is not always the case. A formal vote of the committee should conclude all searches.
- Avoid making decisions based on things that are not within the scope of the committee. For example, the committee should not substitute its judgment for the candidate's with regard to the candidate being "overqualified" or if the salary is enough" or if the candidate will "be happy in Iowa." These are determinations the candidate must make if offered the job.
- In each search the committee will come up with a list of 3-5 candidates who meet the criteria for the search. The committee should refrain from ranking the final candidates.
- Once a decision to hire has been made, all members of the committee should support the choice of the group and the process. There is no need for the community to know that the person selected "was not my first choice." This is especially important, once the new faculty member arrives on campus.

Committee members are encouraged to think of the last 5-10 applicants as viable candidates and avoid overweighting the top 1-3. Given the hiring parameters at Simpson College, we generally hire within the top five candidates. Feeling disappointed if we don't get our "top" candidate is not helpful and it also not fair to the person finally hired. Hiring excellent faculty is not an exact science. Plenty of fantastic faculty members at Simpson and elsewhere have not been the "top" candidate. We always have the option of closing a search and starting over, if we do not feel we can hire someone that meets our criteria.

Confidentiality

The work of the committee is confidential. Members should not share information about candidates outside of the committee, this includes family members. Questions about the work of the committee, or its progress should be referred to the chair of the committee. Only the search committee chair is authorized to speak on behalf of the committee. If asked by faculty outside the committee (even by other departmental members) about how the search is going, individual members should be very general in their remarks and refer the questioner to the chair for more information. In no case should a committee member contact a candidate, or contact others at a candidate's home institution to gather information about a candidate, without the approval of the search committee chair. Search committee members should refrain from talking about the search outside of the committee meetings, especially in public venues like hallways, the weight room, the campus dining room, etc. Breaches of confidentiality by search committees will be taken seriously.

Others Involved in the Search Process

Directors, Administrators, and Others: Normally, candidates visiting campus will meet a variety of faculty members and administrators not formally on the search committee. Usually, at least one meeting will be held that will include the LAS Director, the Cornerstone Director, and a member from the MMIC. These individuals serve to provide the candidate information about the program or committee they represent, and also as representatives of the faculty. This is especially

important with regard to tenure-track candidates. The program directors should share information about their individual programs with the candidate, and also gauge the candidate's interest in becoming involved in these campus-wide programs if they are hired. It is important for all tenure-track candidates to understand expectations for future involvement outside the hiring department. As faculty members themselves, the program directors also provide a chance for the candidate to ask questions about the perception of the hiring department, from non-departmental faculty. Although not part of the search committee, it is permissible for program directors and others formally involved in the search process to send their recommendations and/or thoughts about the candidate to the search chair at the conclusion of the interview process for consideration by the committee members as they make the decision.

Questions and Answers

As indicated earlier in this document, the confidentiality of the process and the individuals involved must be respected. Similarly, members of the search committee should understand the legal issues that are present within the context of the search process. Here are some general guidelines about asking questions of candidates:

As a member of a search committee, you represent the institution. Do not ask questions, refer to, or bring up in conversation things like citizenship, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, children, race or ethnic origin, and religious belief.

Do not ask questions about where a candidate might wish to live, or she or he would feel comfortable living in Iowa.

Do share your own positive experiences living in Iowa and working at Simpson College.