Bringing Candidates on Campus

Search committee members are not only evaluating candidates; candidates are also evaluating us! Consider how you can demonstrate to candidates that they will be professionally and personally supported in the position, our institution, and our communities.

It’s important for the Chair of the Search Committee to remain in close contact with the candidates, through timely updates and clear communication. Develop the candidates’ itinerary and send it to candidates several days to a week in advance. Let them know who they are going to meet with, where they are going to be meeting, who is going to be escorting them to and from meetings (where applicable).

If possible, carve out some time that is a “candidate’s choice.” Send an email to candidates highlighting links or resources on our website that may be relevant to their specific interests, and indicate that they may choose how to utilize the available time. For example, a candidate might like to meet a colleague, explore a community resource, or visit a campus location or lab. Candidates review positions through both professional and personal lenses, and we want to show candidates how UWC/UWEX can meet those needs. Remember to treat candidates in an equitable manner, as these types of experiences are considered part of the search and screen process too.

If the candidates are going to be on site all day for interviews consider providing them with a small break (15 minutes) in a room by themselves with an assortment of snacks, juice, soda and water in the middle of the day.
Advertising

- A catchy headline will make your advertisement stand out. Most job boards have hundreds of jobs on them – all vying for the attention of candidates, making yours a little bit more descriptive will help to get your advertisement noticed. (e.g. “Wanted: Idealistic Pragmatist” or “Are you a Web Designer with a Difference?”)
- Write the ad text that makes your department or division stand out in a positive way (e.g. “Do you want to teach at a campus where the class sizes are small and you learn all your students’ names?”). Use creative, inviting, energized language to describe your job.
- Include a diversity statement in your ad. (e.g. “The University of Colleges/University of Wisconsin-Extension values diversity in our faculty, staff and students and we seek a colleague who shares those values”). Research shows that when ads have a diversity statement in them, that 24% of hires are diversity hires. When they do not contain diversity language, 5% of hires are diverse.

Recruitment

- Get the ad out in as many places as you can. Think creatively; get it out to list serves and to schools, etc.
- Personally recruit people into the pool by asking friends and family if they know of qualified candidates, then call that person and encourage him or her to apply.
- Ensure the information in the ad reflects the selection criteria.
- Provide information to prospective applicants and those likely to recommend applicants at meetings of professional organizations within the discipline.
- Ensure confidentiality of applicants (confidentiality may not be available to finalists).
- Encourage a broad, diverse applicant pool by

Screening

- Recruiting all positions both internally and externally.

The paper review stage can frequently be a stage in the process where unconscious bias occurs. One way to mitigate bias is to develop a rubric with which to evaluate candidates’ qualifications. It can also make the review of candidates go much quicker.

Seek more information if necessary. The aim is to find the best person for the job. Be consistent. Document decisions made and the reasons for them.

Generally you want to keep as many people in the pool as long as possible. You want as big of a pool as you can reasonably manage.

Interviewing

Create a dialogue, not an interrogation

Develop a set of questions ahead of time that will be asked of all the candidates, and consider waiting to develop the interview questions until you know who you are going to be interviewing. Then you can develop your questions based around themes in their portfolios. Ensure that all of your questions are nondiscriminatory and job-related.

An hour long interview typically is comprised of 8-10 questions. Make sure there is time for overall conversation and plenty of time at the end if they have questions for you. Your last question should be “what questions do you have for us?”

Ask open ended questions as much as possible, and questions that have more than one right answer. Also ask behavioral based questions (e.g. “tell us about a time when you did ____.”).

It’s important to have as many members of the search and screen committee present as possible for interviews. You do not have to have all of the members of the committee participate in reference calls.

After the Interview: Seal the Deal

Following the interview, the Chair should call the candidates and tell them “thank you so much for coming, I was delighted to meet you, please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have questions. Our last interview is on ‘x’ date and we will be making our decision over the next several weeks.”

Ultimately what we want is for candidates to have such a positive experience about the recruitment process that they would be willing to apply again if they have the
chance, and tell their friends and colleagues that UW Colleges and UW-Extension provided a great experience.