Search Advisory Committee Handbook

Minnesota North College is committed to equal opportunity and nondiscrimination in employment and education. As a search advisory committee member, you have a role in fulfilling our commitment.

MnSCU Board Policy 1B.1 states that no person shall be discriminated against based on race, sex, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, familial status, or membership or activity in a local commission as defined by law. This applies to all human resources activities on behalf of employees and job applicants, including: recruitment, selection, placement, employee development, promotion, retention, and compensation, leaves of absence, disciplinary action, transfer, demotion, termination, and layoffs. Minnesota North College not tolerate discrimination on the basis of protected class categories in accordance with all state and federal equal opportunity/affirmative action laws, directives, orders, and regulations.

Minnesota North College fully supports the State of Minnesota's affirmative action efforts. We will implement and maintain an affirmative action program that takes aggressive measures to eliminate internal barriers to equal opportunity and that strives to remedy the historical underrepresentation in the employment, retention, and promotion of qualified persons of color, veterans, persons with disabilities, and women. Commitment to equal opportunity through diversity is a continuing goal for us.

It is Minnesota North College policy to actively pursue equal employment practices during all phases of the employment process. This includes a commitment to:

- Actively and aggressively recruit protected group applicants
- Provide affirmative action training for employees serving on selection committees
- Support proactive measures to retain protected group employees

The following vacancies require a search process:

Unlimited full-time staff and faculty (UFT)
Unlimited part-time staff and faculty (UPT)
Temporary full-time faculty (TFT)
Unlimited intermittent staff
Unlimited part-time and full-time seasonal staff

Contents

Page

3 Roles and responsibilities of Search Advisory Committee Chair and Members

5 Hiring process

6 Laws and policies for the search process

10 Unconscious Bias

14 Understanding the job; Assessment tools

15 Recruiting

16 Screening applications

17 Planning the interview

18 Developing interview questions

19 Non-discriminatory interviews

20 Example interview questions

22 Best practice for interviewing

23 Candidate evaluation

24 Social media

25 Appendix 1 – Resources

26 Appendix 2 - Confidentiality Agreement

27 Sample Resume Screening Form

Roles and Responsibilities of Search Advisory Committee Chair and Members

Search advisory committee members serve in an advisory capacity to the chair of the committee and to the hiring supervisor. While search advisory committee members are not responsible for the final hiring decision, they play a key part in the process.

They provide perspective and expertise – additional sets of eyes and ears. They represent different perspectives such as different bargaining units, disciplines, and professional backgrounds. The committee member's work together to recommend a short list of candidates for the position and the hiring authority will make the final hiring decision.

It is expected that every search advisory committee member will:

- Serve as an advocate for the institution and represent the institution in a positive manner
- Promote the position in personal and professional networks
- Ensure a fair and thorough review of all applicants
- Take steps to avoid conscious and unconscious bias during the entire search process
- Attend all interviews (required for continuing membership on the committee)
- Provide input into development of screening forms, interview questions, and other assessments
- Screen applications to identify potential interview candidates
- Interview applicants and recommend a list of candidates to the hiring authority, which may include a comparison of strengths and weaknesses for each candidate
- Ensure that the search process is fair and equitable
- Respect the confidentiality of applicant information, as required by law

The chair will also:

- Act as liaison between search advisory committee members and the hiring authority, Human Resources office, Affirmative Action/Diversity office, and other interested stakeholders
- Support a process that represents the interests of key groups involved in the hiring decision
- Work with Human Resources and/or the hiring authority to identify a diverse group of search advisory committee members
- Schedule and organize the committee meetings
- Facilitate creation of ground rules, decision-making, and group processes
- Create guidance for the interview portion of the search process (for example, assign roles to committee members and communicate with candidates regarding logistics)
- Identify key action steps and assign committee member responsibilities (for example, conducting pre-screening phone calls or meeting a candidate at the airport)

Conflict of Interest

Search advisory committee members should step down from the committee if they believe there might be a conflict of interest or they feel uncomfortable about providing a fair and unbiased viewpoint when screening and interviewing applicants (for example, if one of the applicants is a family member).

Committee members should disclose to the committee any personal or work relationships with any candidates under consideration. Committee chairs and search advisory committee members cannot serve as references for candidates under consideration. In this case, the candidate should be asked for an alternate reference.

Other Roles and Responsibilities

Hiring Authority

1. Actively promote and provide equal access to available jobs, training, and promotional opportunities
2. Work collaboratively with Human Resources and affirmative action staff to recruit and monitor the hiring process
3. Ensure a fair and nondiscriminatory hiring and selection process, including completion of a justification to hire BEFORE an offer is made
4. Employ a diverse workforce and hire a qualified candidate based on the ability to do the job

Human Resources

1. Actively promote equal opportunity and affirmative action by monitoring the hiring process for adverse impact
2. Work collaboratively with the hiring authority and Affirmative Action staff to recruit and monitor the hiring process
3. Ensure proper approval is obtained from the institution's Affirmative Action officer BEFORE an offer is made
4. Ensure the salary offer is approved by appropriate designees BEFORE an offer is made

Affirmative Action Officer

1. Actively promote equal opportunity and affirmative action by conducting training for Human Resources staff and hiring managers
2. Work collaboratively with the hiring authority and Human Resources to recruit and provide coaching through the process where necessary
3. Monitor the hiring process
4. Approve justifications to hire BEFORE the job offer is made

Hiring Process

Below is a step-by-step outline of the committee-based hiring process.

STEP 1	Search Kickoff
Hiring Authority, HR, AA Officer	Determine vacancy need; develop or review position description and advertising plan; post position; review affirmative action goals; establish search advisory committee
STEP 2	Applicant Review
HR	Screen for incomplete applications and unqualified applicants
STEP 3	Orientation
Committee, Chair, HR, AA Officer	Discuss roles; agree to search timelines; review legal considerations such as confidentiality and data privacy, diversity principles, rights of persons with disabilities; review and understand unconscious bias; develop or review screening forms and interview questions
Step 4	Preliminary Screening
AA Officer	Certify whether applicant pool is sufficiently diverse; review interview questions to ensure that they are appropriately related to position duties
Search Committee	Evaluate application materials; review position description including min and preferred qualifications; select candidates to interview; and determine interview method (i.e. phone interview, zoom, in person, etc…)
Step 5	Interviews
Search Chair or designee	Set up interview schedules with candidates
Search Committee	Conduct interviews and complete rating forms for each candidate
Search Committee	Determine and submit to the hiring authority a list of candidates for further consideration
Search Chair	Collect all written materials generated by the search and forward to HR
Step 6	Reference and/or background checking
HR	Check references, conduct background check (if applicable), and conduct employment verifications
Step 7	Closing the search
Hiring Authority	Consult with Human Resources and Affirmative Action, receive salary offer approvals, then make the offer of employment initially by phone and in writing; complete written justification form if applicable; contact non-selected internal candidates who were interviewed
HR	Notify all other unsuccessful candidates

Laws and Policies for the Search Process

Confidentiality in the search process

As a committee member, you will have access to private personnel data and you have a responsibility for taking all necessary precautions to safeguard the information. Confidentiality is critical to the search process because it will help attract qualified candidates who trust that their information will not be prematurely disclosed.

Confidentiality during the search process is also a legal requirement. The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA) governs "personnel data" on both current employees and job applicants (see Minnesota Statutes sections 13.03 and 13.43). Highlights include:

1. Under the MGDPA, certain personnel data are private, and other information is public. Determination of what is public data will be made by the data privacy official at your institution.
2. The identity of all applicants is private except for those who become finalists as defined by law, i.e., those selected to be interviewed by the hiring authority. Names of applicants who are not finalists must never be released or shared with others, even after the search process is complete.
3. Private data on applicants must not be discussed or shared with anyone outside the search advisory committee.
4. Certain non-identifying information about applicants is public, but must be separated out from information that would identify an applicant. Human Resources officials working with campus data privacy officials will determine what information should be released if it is requested by an applicant or a member of the public.
5. Data privacy violations can create both institutional and personal liability. Minnesota Statutes section 13.09 provides, in part, "Any person who willfully violates the provisions of this chapter or any rules adopted under this chapter is guilty of a misdemeanor. Willful violation of this chapter by any public employee constitutes just cause for suspension without pay or dismissal of the public employee." In addition, the organization could be subject to civil damages for violations of the requirements.

To maintain confidentiality in the search process:

1. Protect data so that others cannot gain access. Ensure that documents are not left in a public place (for example, when printing resumes) and safeguard search-related files including notes, evaluation forms, etc.
2. Avoid discussing information where others might overhear it, such as in hallways, elevators, or open offices.
3. If you are contacted by someone who wishes to discuss a candidate, refer the caller to the Human Resources office. Do not acknowledge whether the person is an applicant, since that is private information.
4. Your search chair will work with human resources officials to approve any information about the search that search advisory committee members are permitted to share with others. It is best to avoid statements about precise numbers of candidates or the exact timetable, since those may change. If you have questions, check with the search chair about what information can be shared.
5. Keep in mind that communication about the search process in general is an important aspect of your role, even though you are limited in providing data about specific applicants.

Note: Each search advisory committee member must complete an Employee Confidentiality Agreement form for each search to be kept with the recruiting file in Human Resources (see Appendix 2). Each member must also view the 15-minute video Maintaining Confidentiality during the Search Process.

Laws and Policies for the Search Process

Data Practices: Taking Notes

Be thoughtful when taking notes in interviews and filling out evaluation forms. Your notes will be returned to the Human Resources office at the end of the process. Candidates generally have the right to see and obtain copies of data about themselves, including reviewers' notes.

Search advisory committees consider only information that is relevant to their charge, such as whether the candidate has the necessary experience, education, and skills for the position, or whether there are potential gaps in the needed qualifications. Your notes should reflect this type of information without extra comments that could be misinterpreted.

- Avoid taking notes about non-job-related personal information the candidate may share with you

- Avoid editorial comments or personal observations that could be perceived as inappropriate for consideration in the search process; for example, a legitimate concern about the candidate's current scholarship could be interpreted as age discrimination if your notes say something like "Graduated in 1974!!"

Remember to protect private data during the entire search process. Consult with Human Resources if questions arise.

Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action

Equal Employment Opportunity refers to federal and state mandates that employment activities, beginning with the hiring process, be conducted in a non-discriminatory manner. These regulations require colleges, universities, and the system office to analyze their workforce regarding the race, sex, disability status, and veteran status of its employees.

Protected classes in employment, including the search process, include: race, sex, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, familial status, and local human rights commission activity.

Affirmative action describes specific actions that eliminate barriers that create inequities such as unfairness, favoritism, and biases. Affirmative Action is one aspect of the federal government's efforts to ensure equal employment opportunity. It was developed because of the need to take proactive steps to begin to reverse historic patterns of employment discrimination against minorities and women.

Underutilization exists when fewer women, minorities, veterans, and persons with disabilities are employed in job groups than would be expected given their availability in the labor pool. Each college, university, and the system office reviews demographic information and creates a new affirmative action plan every two years and identifies any appropriate affirmative action hiring goals based on the workforce analysis.

While all searches should be conducted in a fair manner, if there are goals related to this position, it may require additional recruitment efforts to ensure a diverse pool. Check with your campus Human Resources office or Affirmative Action staff to discuss the details.

Laws and Policies for the Search Process

Diversity

As a system, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities is committed to providing equal employment opportunity for all. Board Policy 1B.2 supports aggressive affirmative action steps and programs intended to remedy the historical underrepresentation of persons of color, women, and persons with disabilities in the workforce.
We want to demonstrate to our students, staff, faculty, and visitors a workforce that reflects the community around us. This will:

- Improve the climate for all learners, especially those from populations traditionally underserved by higher education
- Increase our ability to understand and address the needs of our students, colleagues, and community
- Create a welcoming climate for all students, faculty, and staff
- Prepare our students for life in a diverse world

Search advisory committees are expected to make a concerted effort to seek a diverse candidate pool and forward a diverse group of candidates for final consideration. Equal employment opportunity and affirmative action do ***not*** mean search advisory committees are expected to recommend candidates who are not qualified.
During the search process, all committee members will need to recognize potential bias and take steps to mitigate its effects. This topic will be discussed further later in this handbook.

American with Disabilities Act

ADA Overview

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a wide-ranging civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability. Under the ADA, disability is defined as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity" or is “regarded as having or having a history of a disability.” Minnesota law is slightly different from federal law and defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment that materially limits a major life activity….” Individuals with disabilities have a right to reasonable accommodations needed in order to perform the essential components of a job.

The search advisory committee should focus on whether a candidate can perform the essential components of the job, without considering a possible need for a reasonable accommodation. All candidates should be asked the same questions and/or given the same assessments about how they would perform in the position.

Opportunity to Demonstrate Job Performance

The search process includes obtaining information and/or demonstration from all candidates about how they would perform the job.

- Evaluating the ability to perform the essential job components and technical skills must be done for all candidates equally. Any physical, sensory, or cognitive conditions that are considered essential to the position must be associated with specific position responsibilities. Candidates may not be screened out on the basis of a disability.
- All candidates should be given the same opportunity to demonstrate their job performance, regardless of any need for accommodation.

Laws and Policies for the Search Process

Essential Functions of the Job

Essential functions can be any of the following:

- The main responsibility for which a job exists
- A highly specialized task or one that requires special education or training licensure
- Responsibility that requires a great percentage of time
- Responsibility that has a high level of accountability (consequences are considerable to others or the institution if the function is not performed)

Essential functions and technical skills for a particular job may or may not be listed in the position description. If they are not listed, they should be developed prior to reviewing applications. The search advisory committee chair, hiring authority, and Human Resources officials should work together to identify a plan for obtaining information about the need for reasonable accommodations. (For example, will it be part of the search advisory committee process, part of the final interviews, or a checkbox on an interview form?)

Reasonable Accommodations during the Search Process

Under the ADA, applicants have the right to request a reasonable accommodation to assist them through the search/interview process. If an applicant with a disability requests a reasonable accommodation, notify the Human Resources Office immediately to seek advice on how to handle such a request. Requested accommodations are provided for the interview process unless unreasonable in nature and are paid for by the hiring institution.

Applicants also have the right not to request accommodations. All accommodation requests must be initiated by the applicant. All applicants invited to interview should be offered information about requesting accommodations and whom to contact as part of the scheduling process. It is never appropriate for the search advisory committee to initiate accommodations.

Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities is also subject to the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, as amended by the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002, 38 U.S.C. 4212 (VEVRAA), which requires government contractors to take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment veterans in the following classifications:

- **Disabled veteran**:
  - a veteran of the U.S. military, ground, naval, or air service who is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; or
  - a person who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.
- **Recently separated veteran**: any veteran during the three-year period beginning on the date of such veteran's discharge or release from active duty in the U.S. military, ground, naval, or air service.
- **Active duty wartime or campaign badge veteran**: a veteran who served on active duty in the U.S. military, ground, naval, or air service during a war, or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized under the laws administered by the Department of Defense.
- **Armed forces service medal veteran:** a veteran who, while serving on active duty in the U.S. military, ground, naval, or air service, participated in a United States military operation for which an Armed Forces service medal was awarded pursuant to Executive Order 12985.

All applicants are invited to identify their veteran status as part of the application process. All applicants invited to interview should be offered information about veteran status documentation requirements as part of the interview scheduling process. Work with Human Resources to ensure the committee understands the appropriate procedures.

Fair and Equal Employment

As you review applications and conduct the interview process, be aware of your responsibility to support the commitment of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities to a fair and equal employment process.

Avoiding Conscious Bias

In some cases, members of a search advisory committee may come to the process with preconceived opinions about the ideal candidate. For example, they may believe that a particular type of credential, age, or gender would make one applicant preferable to another. These ideas may reflect societal norms about race, ethnicity, or even weight and height that would be best suited to the position.

When selecting candidates to interview or recommend for further consideration, raters may select those who match this stereotypical picture of the "right fit" for the position. They may accentuate the positive attributes of some candidates and focus on the negative attributes of others. In addition, they may view the diversity characteristics of candidates as negative. For example, they may question the loyalty of a female candidate because she is also a parent (or of child-bearing age). Or they may raise concerns about how students (or employees) will respond if a person with a disability is hired or promoted.

As a search advisory committee member, you are responsible to avoid this type of conscious bias in your own behavior and actively promote a process that is fair and equal for all applicants. Best practices include:

- Withhold judgment when reviewing applications (for example, saying "a woman would not do well in this position" or "minority candidates never like to live in our area" can negatively impact your ability to develop a broad and well-qualified pool)

- Avoid making assumptions about applicants (for example, don't assume someone is unavailable to work weekend hours or unable to move to your location)

- Develop fair and legal interview questions that will help committee members review applications consistently and reduce the tendency to ask questions that bring out the positive attributes of preferred candidates

- Assess candidates' commitment to equity and diversity as part of the decision-making process (for example, include interview questions that explore their knowledge and experience working with diverse cultures and populations)

Fair and Equal Employment

Unconscious Bias

Human beings are hard-wired to recognize patterns and use generalizations that help us navigate through the world. Our brains work by categorizing people, objects, and events, which allows us to organize and retrieve information we need to navigate the world around us. While this categorizing is necessary and normal, it can cause problems in a search process. Quickly and unconsciously categorizing people and events can lead to assumptions and biases that:

- Prevent us from hiring the best candidates
- Cause real or perceived unfair treatment of some candidates
- Lead to discrimination complaints

Pay attention to these possible sources of unconscious bias in the search process:

1. **Availability bias:** The tendency to make decisions based on immediate information or examples that come to mind. For example, if search advisory committee members hear about a candidate from Georgia who accepted a job and then quit because of the cold weather, they might be more likely to assume that all candidates from the southern U.S. would dislike living in Minnesota.

2. **Confirmation bias:** Paying more attention to information that reinforces previously held beliefs and ignoring evidence to the contrary. For example, a search advisory committee member who believes that women are more intelligent than men might selectively focus on aspects of resumes that highlight the intelligence of female applicants.

3. **Ingroup preference bias:** People tend to divide themselves into groups, and then attribute positive attributes to their own group. Search advisory committee members who perceive commonalities with applicants are more likely to view them favorably.

4. **Recency effect:** Recent events tend to be weighed more heavily than past events or potential future events. For example, candidates who were interviewed early in a search may be evaluated less favorably. A similar bias is the proximity effect, in which candidates interviewed in person are viewed more favorably than those interviewed via distance technology.

Fair and Equal Employment

Unconscious Bias

Since these unconscious biases are part of human nature, search advisory committee activities and processes need to be examined to ensure they are free of stereotypes about capabilities or suitability of particular candidates for particular jobs.

Unconscious bias in the search process can be managed by:

- **Recognizing that we all make generalizations and assumptions.** Don't assume that your process will be objective; rather be aware of biases and develop systems to manage them.

- **Increasing the diversity of search advisory committees.** The more experiences and viewpoints that can be represented on a committee, the greater the opportunity to minimize biases.

- **Seeking a diverse applicant pool.** When women, minorities, or persons with disabilities represent a smaller percentage of the applicant pool, there is a greater tendency to view them negatively. Increased diversity in applicant pools increases a committee's ability to accurately assess each candidate's merits.

- **Developing evaluation tools and rating criteria prior to starting the review process.** Interview questions and skill assessments should be established before looking at the candidate pool. This minimizes any tendency to write questions geared toward candidates that might otherwise be viewed unfavorably. For example, the ability to talk over the telephone should not be added as a criterion because one candidate appears to be deaf. As another example, graduation from a highly regarded university should not be weighted more heavily after the committee learns that two applicants received online degrees from lesser-known schools.

- **Focusing on each applicant as an individual and evaluating the applicant's entire application.** Do not immediately eliminate applicants because of assumptions about their education, past experience, or any other single qualification.

- **Periodically reviewing your processes to ensure you can defend every decision.** Are the evaluation criteria unbiased? Are you applying them consistently?

Fair and Equal Employment

Developing Unbiased Assessment Criteria

Minnesota law and Board of Trustees policy dictate that interview questions, skill assessments, and other search activities must be fair and non-discriminatory.

Designate specific times during the evaluation process when committee members will pause to assess the effectiveness, fairness, and implementation of the evaluation criteria. At these times, consider the following questions:

- Are your criteria appropriate for the position?
- Are you consistently relying on the criteria (qualifications) developed for the position?
- Are you inadvertently relying on unwritten or unrecognized criteria?
- Are you inadvertently, but systematically, screening out women or traditionally underrepresented groups, such as minorities, veterans, persons with disabilities, etc.?
- Are women and minority applicants or traditionally underrepresented groups subject to different expectations in areas such as number of publications, name recognition, or personal acquaintance with a member of the committee or department?
- Have the accomplishments, ideas, and findings of women or minority applicants or traditionally underrepresented groups been undervalued?
- Are assumptions about possible family responsibilities and their effect on an applicant's career path negatively influencing the evaluation of an applicant's merit, despite evidence of productivity?
- Are negative assumptions about whether women or minority or traditionally underrepresented applicants will "fit in" to the existing environment influencing the evaluation?
- Did you avoid evaluating applicants on the basis of promise or potential rather than on evidence of accomplishments and productivity?

Section 4 provides more information about designing a fair and effective interview process.

It is imperative to manage conscious and unconscious bias to ensure the interview process provides fair opportunities for everyone.

A Fair and Effective Search Process

Understand the Job

One of the key responsibilities of a search advisory committee is to review applications and select candidates for interviews. Before going on to developing assessment tools or screening applications, committee members must understand the essential functions of the job and the qualifications necessary to perform them, as determined by the hiring authority. Committee members should read and review the position description and the posting for the position.

Minimum Qualifications

Minimum qualifications provide criteria for the initial screening of applicants. All of the posted minimum qualifications must be present in order for an application to be considered.
In most cases Human Resources may pre-screen applications and forward only those that meet the minimum qualifications.

Preferred Qualifications

Preferred qualifications are additional desirable criteria for performing the job. Applicants will be rated regarding the extent to which they meet each of the preferred qualifications.
The search advisory committee will use the essential functions of the job and qualifications necessary to perform the job when establishing fair and effective rating criteria.

Assessment Tools

As a committee, your primary responsibility is to develop an effective process to assess candidates' qualifications and ability to perform the job. Assessment tools should help you gather more job-related information about the candidates than the resume and application provide.

You are seeking information regarding an applicant's experience, education, ability to perform the job, and the leadership qualities they could bring to Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. Keep in mind that all candidates should be assessed in the same way.
Examples of assessment tools:

- Pre-screening application review criteria
- Interviews
- Skill demonstrations (open-session presentations, training presentations)
- Job-related skills tests
- Work samples (portfolios, writing samples)

Assessment tools, including pre-screening criteria and interview questions, should be developed and approved by your Human Resources and/or Equity and Diversity offices before you start reviewing applications. Your institution's Human Resources and/or Equity and Diversity staff may have a set of sample assessment tools and interview questions.

A Fair and Effective Search Process

Recruiting

Good faith efforts to recruit a diverse pool of applicants include an active program which includes a range of activities such as advertising to diverse resources and building partnerships and relationships with underrepresented communities. Action steps Human Resources and the Hiring Manager may utilize could include:

- Post the position for a minimum of seven days (as required by statewide policy) and follow any other posting requirements contained in bargaining agreement language
- Use a variety of recruitment resources to advertise the job opening as broadly as possible to reach the widest audience
- Consider strategic advertising in venues that reach diverse audiences and reach out to individuals and professional organizations that might provide a broad and diverse pool of qualified applicants
- Find work units in your organization that are more diverse and find out where they recruit
- Send the position to employees within your organization to recruit for you; they are often our best resources
- Use professional networks
- Take advantage of system resources such as the Higher Education Recruiting Consortium (HERC) which automatically lists our postings on their recruiting site
- Refer to the Recruitment Resources section at: www.diversity.mnscu.edu/resources/recruitment/index.html

TIPS for Recruiting a Diverse Pool of Applicants

- Post a position for a reasonable amount of time. The length of time will differ depending upon the job, but think about how long it will take to reach job seekers. Our community partners will often help us recruit, and they need ample time to get the word out and assist job seekers. Remember there are active job seekers and passive job seekers. Both types of job seekers are vital, but hiring managers may be passing up great applicants if they only post for a week.

- Monitor whether recruitment efforts are going well and consider a contingency plan if the applicant pool is not diverse. During the recruitment period and perhaps a few days before the posting closes, assess the candidate pool. Is it diverse? Generally speaking, the demographics of the current pool should reflect the demographics of the recruitment area.

A Fair and Effective Search Process

Screening Applications

Once you have decided how you will assess candidates for the essential functions and minimum qualifications of the job, the next step is to rate the applications and select those you want to move forward in the process. Keep these assessment tips in mind:

- Use a standard rating form, such as the example in Appendix 3.
    - In the initial review process, verbal descriptions are preferable to numerical scores on rating forms. The committee should avoid a forced comparison among applicants which might change as the interview process continues and more information is gathered. Such rankings can have a disproportionately negative impact on applicants who might not be the "top" candidates during application screening even though they are highly qualified.

- If the applications have not been screened by HR, the first step is to screen out applications who do not meet minimum qualifications. Once this is completed, the Affirmative Action office should review the remaining pool to determine if further recruitment is necessary.

- A committee member or a Human Resources staff member may be asked to pre-screen qualified applicants by phone prior to selecting candidates to interview. Examples of pre-screening questions include:
    - Can you perform the essential functions of the job?
    - How do you meet the minimum qualifications listed in the job posting?
    - Does our salary range meet your expectations?
    - Are you able to work at the times and locations required by the position?

- Depending on the size of the pool, it may be necessary to further screen the pool using the preferred qualifications to identify a reasonable number of individuals to interview. The Affirmative Action office should review the interview pool to determine if the candidate pool needs broadening.

- Questions about immigration status and work authorization should be referred to the HR office.

A Fair and Effective Search Process

Planning the Interview

Interviews are typically at the heart of the search process. It is important to design a process that is fair and will identify the individuals that are best suited to be considered for hiring. Keep in mind that the goal is to ensure as diverse a candidate pool as possible and to provide a similar interview experience for all applicants.

- Decide on logistics
    - How many candidates will be invited for interviews (i.e., 2-4 candidates or no more than 6)?
    - How many rounds of interviews will there be?

- Identify potential use of technology during the interview process
    - In some cases, it may be appropriate to make provisions for remote applicants (for example, conducting interviews via Zoom or Teams)
    - If technology options are provided for one candidate, it should be offered to all, including local candidates

- Design the process
    - What activities will occur and at what stage of the process (for example, group interviews, campus tours, meeting students or potential coworkers)? Keep in mind that the names of applicants are not public unless they are finalists.
    - Who will be involved in the interviews, and how? Will candidates meet the hiring authority, departmental leaders, or other key stakeholders?
    - If technology options are included, how will you ensure that candidates and committee members are comfortable with the tools?
    - Interview questions should have been determined prior to this point in the process. Review questions and decide who will ask which question.

- Plan the follow-up
    - Create a form and/or strategy for taking notes
    - Decide when and how the committee will compare notes after each interview

A Fair and Effective Search Process

Developing Interview Questions

A major responsibility of the committee is to design interview questions. The most effective interview questions:

- Are factual or behavior-based
- Are directly related to the qualifications and tied to success in the position
- Have a correct answer
- Are legal

Human Resources may give you a list of questions to choose from.

Factual questions help committee members learn more about a candidate's experience and qualifications. They provide an opportunity to share information beyond what was listed in the resume. Examples include: "Have you ever been recognized for good work?" "What excites you about this position?" "What is a personal strength that others would describe about you?"

Behavior-based questions ask candidates to describe specific experiences they have had rather than asking them how they might handle a theoretical situation.

- For example, "Describe a time when you were leading a project team and a key requirement changed" is more effective than "What would you do if you were leading a project team and the requirements changed?"

Effective interview questions have a ***preferred answer*** that committee members can assess. Agreeing on preferred answers makes it easier to compare responses across candidates.

- For example, if the committee asks about project management skills, they might expect to hear about how the candidate develops project charters, manages stakeholders, and holds people accountable for timelines. A candidate who appears to be unfamiliar with project management tools and terminology would receive a lower rating.

- When asking about customer service experiences, the committee might expect a description of listening carefully and finding a solution that met the customer's needs. When asking about experience giving negative feedback, they might expect a description of good communication techniques that resulted in an action plan to address the negative behavior.

While the same questions should be asked of all candidates, it is appropriate to ask ***follow-up questions*** to help candidates understand what is being asked and to help committee members understand the answer.

A Fair and Effective Search Process

Minnesota law and Board of Trustees policy provide these guidelines to help search advisory committees design fair and non- discriminatory interviews:

Topics that may be discussed

- the job, its duties, and responsibilities
- the organization, its mission, programs, and achievements
- career possibilities, opportunities for growth or advancement
- where the job is located
- job-related travel and mobility requirements
- equipment and facilities available for the job
- the applicant's qualifications, abilities, experience, and education
- the applicant's work habits, e.g., attendance, initiative, ability to interact with people

Topics that may not be discussed

- marital status or plans
- place of birth
- health history
- sexual preference
- arrests
- political, social, or religious views
- transportation arrangements
- spouse's occupation and/or salary
- living arrangements or status regarding public assistance
- number, age, or sex of children; plans for children, pregnancy, child care arrangements
- credit rating, garnishment record, or past denial of fidelity bond
- dates of school attendance/graduation or military service
- physical characteristics such as eye and hair color, height and weight, or facial hair
- questions relating to age, disability, national origin, U.S. citizenship, immigration status, sex, race, color, veteran status, or religion

A Fair and Effective Search Process

Examples of Effective Interview Questions

Search advisory committees are expected to gather the data needed to make well-informed recommendations about the position. Effective interviews often begin with factual questions to help the committee learn more about the candidate. The topics could include:

- ***Former positions*** – "What would a past supervisor say was one of your strengths in that job?" "What has frustrated you about your past positions?"
- ***Motivation*** – "When you are fully motivated and engaged in a job responsibility, what does that look like?" "What makes you excited to come to work in the morning?"
- ***General*** – "What would you need to be successful in this position?" "What makes you a strong candidate for this position?"

Questions should be asked in a manner that does not imply potential discrimination. Remember that **all** candidates should be asked the same questions. It may be necessary to ask follow-up questions to clarify each candidate's answers and learn more about his/her knowledge, skills, and experience. Follow-up questions should be job-related; avoid singling out certain individuals for special scrutiny based on assumptions or stereotypes. The chart below provides examples of appropriate and inappropriate questions.

Don't Ask	Instead Ask
Which is more important to you: a family or a career?	What are your career goals?
What arrangements do you have for taking care of your children?	Are you able to work a flexible schedule when it is required? Are you able to work overtime when it is required?
Jews don't work on Saturdays. You're Jewish, aren't you?	We often work on weekends. Are you able to work on weekends when it is required?
Do you have transportation to work?	We begin the workday at 8:00am. Would you be able to get here on time every day?
You're very overweight. Can you get around OK?	The essential job functions require a lot of moving around, carrying things, climbing up and down stairs. Are you able to perform these functions? **(asked of all candidates)**

In addition to being legal and fair, effective questions provide specific information about how each candidate would perform the job responsibilities. Your specific questions and preferred answers will be based on the work responsibilities and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to perform them.

In addition, the following three items must be gathered as part of the initial interviews:

- Ability to perform the essential functions of this position, with or without accommodation.
    - The committee's role is to determine whether candidates can perform the essential functions. The chair should work with the hiring authority and/or Human Resources to determine a process for asking all candidates about the need for reasonable accommodation.
- Legal ability to work in USA.
    - Consider including this on a reference checking permission form as part of the interview check-in process.
- Ability to work with diverse populations.
    - For examples, go to www.diversity.mnscu.edu/resources/forms and scroll down the page to "Sample Questions."

A Fair and Effective Search Process

The following chart contains examples of work responsibilities, behavior-based interview questions that might address them, and the type of answers a committee might be looking for.

Work Responsibility	Example of Behavior-Based Question	What You Might be Looking For
Problem solving (analytical skills)	Describe a time when you had a problem but neither the resources nor the authority to solve it. What did you do? What was the result? What would you do differently?	Preferred answers show ability to break a problem down into component parts and select an appropriate strategy to resolve it. Problem answers show lack of intent and conceptual ability, such as "things just seem to work out."
Project Management (managing multiple projects)	What tools and strategies have you used to manage multiple projects simultaneously?	Preferred answers show knowledge and application of project management tools, realistic assessment of things that typically go wrong, and ability to learn from mistakes.
Project Management, cont.	Describe a situation where one of your projects suffered a setback due to an unexpected change. How did you keep things on track?	Problem answers show lack of depth in project management knowledge, such as "I've never had a problem."
Communication (meeting needs of diverse stakeholders; listening; communicating with difficult customers)	Describe a situation where you served a diverse group of diverse clients. How did you meet their differing needs? Describe a time when you handled the "customer from hell." What was the situation and how did it turn out? (This question might be appropriate, for example, when filling a bookstore clerk position.)	Preferred answer includes at least one example of how different groups have different needs and how the person addressed it; knowledge of active listening skills, ability to assess stakeholder needs and demonstrate courtesy, respect, and a professional manner. Problem answers indicate lack of understanding about listening skills, and lack of awareness about professional standards.
Working with diverse populations	Students and staff served by this position are multi-generational, and come from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. How have you supported diverse populations in your past positions?	Preferred answers indicate an understanding of issues faced by diverse groups. The committee could follow up to seek specific stories that illustrate how the candidate provided services for different types of clients. Problem answers indicate little or no appreciation for how diversity affects the work.
Supervision (coaching)	Describe a time when you were involved in the development of one or more of your employees. What did you do? What was the result? What did you learn? Tell us about an employee that was not meeting your expectations and how you dealt with the problem. Describe a time when you had an employee whose personal problems were impacting their job and the workplace. What did you do? What was the result? What would you do differently next time?	Preferred answers demonstrate the belief that supervisors should always be coaching employees to support their development. Preferred answers show experience with coaching problem behavior, use of specific tools and strategies, and self-reflection about the process. Problem answers demonstrate a belief that development is only for problem employees, or that it's important but there isn't enough time

A Fair and Effective Search Process

Best Practice for Interviewing

The college or university and the system are also being evaluated by the candidate – the interview is our chance to showcase the position and workplace as desirable. Search advisory committees play an important role in helping candidates decide whether they want to accept the position if it is offered.

Keep these best practices in mind:

- Be prepared – review the candidate's resume and other materials prior to the interview.
- Be courteous – arrive on time, listen respectfully, avoid using electronic devices, and give candidates your full attention.
- Be a listener – let the candidate do the majority of the talking; limit stories about yourself in favor of hearing their stories.
- Pay attention to details that will create a welcoming climate for candidates. For example, explain the parking options, make sure someone greets candidates at the door, and have a host or one of the committee members give them a tour of the workplace.
- Be encouraging – Create a safe environment that lets candidates present their best image. Take time to introduce people participating in the interview and explain the interview process. Help candidates understand your questions if they appear to be having difficulty. And be sure to follow up on interviews once the decision is made. Even candidates that are not selected appreciate receiving acknowledgement of their time and effort in attending the interview.
- If you perceive a candidate to have a disability and are concerned whether they can perform the essential functions of the position, don't initiate an accommodation. Refer to the section above on ADA and consult your Human Resources office for appropriate steps.

A Fair and Effective Search Process

Candidate Evaluation

Following the interviews, the search advisory committee should carefully evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates and develop a list of candidates to refer to the hiring authority for further consideration. In most cases an unranked list is preferable; however, when conducting searches for certain AFSCME or MAPE positions a numerical ranking may be needed. Review the bargaining unit contracts and check with your HR office for details.

In some instances, one or more committee members may be aware of a candidate's professional work. Personal knowledge of a candidate's performance that is directly related to the work responsibilities can be shared. (For example, a committee member may have been on a project team led by a candidate, or may have worked with a candidate to present a paper at a professional conference.) It is not appropriate to share second-hand information.

When evaluating candidates individually and as a group, keep these potential rating errors in mind and take steps to avoid them.

Error	Description
Halo/horns effect	The tendency to rate a person high or low on all factors even though the person was outstanding on only one factor. **Possible actions:** create a form that ranks each factor separately; consider each factor independently from the overall impression of the interview.
Central tendency	The tendency to avoid high and low scores and to rate all or most applicants in the middle. **Possible actions:** create assessment tools that clearly define criteria for meeting or exceeding meeting the qualification; ask members why they chose the rating they did.
Similar to me	The tendency to rate higher those people who look, act, or have a background most like the interviewer. **Possible actions:** seek "contrary evidence" that confirms/challenges initial preconceived ratings.
First impression	Making the hiring decision within the first few minutes of the interview, instead of evaluating all the information from the full interview. **Possible actions:** focus on listening and understanding each applicant's viewpoint; deliberately attempt to avoid making decisions until the process is complete

Other Information and Closing the Search Process

Using Social Media in the Search Process

Search advisory committees are often faced with questions about using social media sites (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter) during the search process.

These sites can be valuable in promoting job openings and recruiting diverse pools. Committee members should work with Human Resources staff to incorporate social media postings as part of a coordinated recruitment strategy.

Individual committee members should not use social media sites for independent background checking or researching candidates. Social media sites may include information on candidates that is inappropriate to consider for a variety of reasons, including information that may not be true. It is best if Human Resources staff conduct such research so that social media information is handled appropriately.

Interview Record Keeping

All search materials, such as ratings, search advisory committee members' notes, and applicant files should be collected by the search chair and returned to the Human Resources Office immediately after the search advisory committee completes their work.

Remember that all materials associated with a search process are subject to disclosure upon appropriate notification and/or subpoena if the search process is challenged.

Notification of Successful Candidate and Unsuccessful Candidates

The hiring authority will make the offer of employment initially by phone and in writing. The hiring authority should contact non-selected internal candidates who were interviewed.

The Human Resources office will notify all other applicants or work with the search advisory committee to do so.

- Candidates who were interviewed should receive a written or verbal message thanking them for their time and informing them that a different candidate was selected.
- Applicants who were not interviewed should receive a brief notification that the position has been filled; failure to take this step leaves a negative impression of the individual institution and of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities as an employer.

Appendix 1: Resources

Office of Diversity and Equity - www.diversity.mnscu.edu/index.html

Minnesota Management and Budget

Monitoring the Hiring Process: Applying Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity throughout the Hiring Process: extranet.mmb.state.mn.us/hr-labor/hr/staff-comp/communication.htm

Hiring and Selection: mn.gov/mmb/employee-relations/hiring-and-selection/

Resources for Academic Searches

Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) – *Diversifying the Faculty: A Guidebook for Search Committees* by Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner

AACU Store: secure.aacu.org/store/detail.aspx?id=DIVFAC
Excerpt (summary of best practices): advance.washington.edu/apps/resources/docs/best-practices-checklist.pdf

Harvard University – Resources for Conducting a Faculty Search
www.faculty.harvard.edu/appointment-policies-and-practices/resources-conducting-faculty-search

University of Minnesota Toolkit: Equity and Diversity in the Search Process:
diversity.umn.edu/eoaa/searchprocesstoolkit

WISELI (Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute) – *Searching for Excellence and Diversity: Recruiting Resources for Search Committees:* wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/recruitingresources.php

Resources on Unconscious Bias

Outsmarting Our Brains: Uncovering hidden biases to harness diversity's true potential (Ernst & Young)
www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Outsmarting-our-brains/$FILE/EY-RBC-Overcoming-hidden-biaises-to-harness-diversity.pdf

State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2015 (Ohio State University, Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity): kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015-kirwan-implicit-bias.pdf

Video (5 min.) and discussion guide: Interrupting bias in the faculty search process (University of Washington)
www.engr.washington.edu/lead/biasfilm/

Employee Confidentiality Agreement

I understand that as an employee of Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and/or a member of a search advisory/screening committee, I will receive information on applicants and employees that is classified as private data under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 13. I hereby agree to keep such information private and not disclose the names of applicants or any other information about an applicant or employee, unless authorized to do so.

I acknowledge that failure to comply with this agreement could subject me to discipline and/or the institution to legal claims under applicable privacy laws.

_____

Employee Printed Name

_____ _____

Signature *Date*

Appendix 3: Sample Resume Screening Form

Resume Review

Candidate Name: _____

Rated by: _____

Minimum Quals	Strengths	Weaknesses

Notes:

Preferred Quals	Not Addressed	Falls Short	Meets	Exceeds

Comments/Concerns/Particular Strengths, Weaknesses