

SEARCH COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

-- as approved by the University Senate
April 17, 1980
and amended May 14, 1987

I. Purpose of Search Committees*

Search committees are expected to seek out and identify the best qualified nominees available for administrative positions, irrespective of sex, religion, race, national origin, age, or any other criteria violating equal opportunity statutes. One reason for the use of search committees is to assure that all primary constituencies served by the office will have a voice in the identification of nominees. A second is to take advantage of the knowledge that these constituencies have of the necessary qualifications for the position and of potential sources of nominees.

II. University Administrative Positions for which Search Committees Should be Formed

Search committees should be established to fill major University administrative positions which serve multiple student, faculty, civil service, and/or administrative constituencies. Among these positions are those of President**, the various Vice Presidents, the Deputy Vice President and Dean of the Institute of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics, Dean of the Graduate School, Provosts of the coordinate campuses, Vice Provosts for Academic Affairs, Deans of all collegiate units, and the Director of University Libraries. This list does not preclude formation of search committees to fill other administrative positions when the President and the Senate Consultative Committee mutually deem the interest of the University to be served thereby.

The length, range, and mechanics of the search process will depend on the nature of the position, the complexity of its constituencies, and the number and diversity of potential candidates. Committee composition will also vary. The search process for the key academic officers should be most thorough, in recognition of their multiple constituencies. But a more abbreviated approach may be suitable for such positions as Vice President for Institutional Relations, Vice President for Administration and Planning, and Vice President for Finance, in recognition of their unique relationship with the President. The President and the Senate Consultative Committee should work out mutually agreeable search procedures for filling these positions.

III. Formation of Search Committees

Members of search committees and their chairpersons shall be chosen by the President (or the President's agent) after consultation with appropriate Senate, campus, University, or collegial bodies representative of the constituencies clearly affected by the appointment. In the case of the central administrative officials, the appropriate body shall be the Senate Consultative Committee. Reference should be made to college constitutions for any specific requirements of individual colleges for the composition of search committees for Deans.

*The term search committee as used in these guidelines designates any committee constituted for the purpose of performing any or all of the functions of compiling lists of candidates for vacant positions, screening (and eliminating) candidates in accord with agreed-upon selection criteria, and determining the slate of nominees for submission to the President.

**The selection of the University President is the legal responsibility of the Board of Regents. The search committee for this office is drawn from members of the Board. This committee has customarily asked that the Senate Consultative Committee function as an advisory committee, and has delegated to it responsibility for certain aspects of the search. It is hoped that the policies outlined in this statement will govern the work of such an advisory committee.

The number of committee members will vary depending on the complexity of the constituent relationships of the position, but since large committees often find it difficult to organize as working groups, committees should be limited as a general rule to no more than ten members.

Membership on search committees shall not be based upon quotas for any minority group or other protected class. It is the responsibility of each member of all search committees to be aware of and to carry out the affirmative action policies of the University of Minnesota.

If a member of a search committee is nominated to the position being searched, and if the member allows his/her name to remain on the list of active nominees, the member should promptly resign from the committee.

IV. Charge to Search Committees

The President (or the President's agent) shall instruct each member of the committee in writing as to the following:

- A. Approximate date for submission of list of nominees.
- B. Number of nominees.
- C. Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity requirements including these guidelines. The committee should also consult with the Equal Opportunity Officer at the outset of the search.
- D. Arrangements for financial and staff resources (including provisions for travel, long-distance telephone calls, meals, and housing).
- E. Personal responsibility of each member for affirmative action and confidentiality.
- F. Need for keeping minutes of meetings and records of committee decisions.
- G. Any unique concerns with respect to the position.

The committee has the prerogative of discussing with the President (or the President's agent) any of the terms of the charge.

V. Committee Procedures

A. Formulating the Position Description

The position description, to be prepared by the committee in collaboration with the President (or the President's agent), shall include a full account of the responsibilities of the position and describe the educational background, experience, and competencies desired of the candidates. It should specify those criteria that will be given weight in making the selection and should indicate the information to be provided about each nominee or applicant.

B. Posting the Position

The President (or the President's agent), or the chairperson shall file notification of the availability of the position in the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the appropriate publications, taking care that women and members of minority groups and other protected classes are made aware of the vacancy. Members of the committee are urged to inform their respective constituencies as to the position description and the selection criteria. Often, well-qualified candidates will not volunteer their names for such positions. In addition to advertising, therefore, the members of the committee should make every effort to contact knowledgeable sources off and on campus for names of the best

qualified individuals, including women and members of minority groups, and names of institutions at which such potential candidates are most likely to be found.

C. Selection Process

Each committee will establish its own plan for screening and evaluating nominees and applicants. Whatever procedures the committee may elect to employ in arriving at its slate, the entire committee is responsible for the legitimacy of the process. Every member at every stage of the search shall have full access to the names and files of all persons under consideration.

The function of initial screening is to identify and eliminate, early in the search process, nominees and applicants who are clearly unqualified. Unwillingness on the part of nominees with obviously exceptional qualifications should not militate against eventual consideration until it is definitely established that the potential candidate cannot be persuaded to become interested in the position. The list of persons who remain under consideration after the initial screening will be those to whom the committee will be giving careful consideration and about whom the committee may be seeking additional information. Responsibility for requesting such information should be clearly delegated and its form clearly specified. Agreement should be reached as to assurances of confidentiality to be sought and assurances to be given.

When the committee has narrowed its list to those candidates whom it wishes to interview, the chairperson and the President (or the President's agent) should collaborate in making arrangements for the interviews. The committee may wish to develop a set of questions to be directed to each candidate, but committee members should not be limited arbitrarily to such a list.

Although the committee will wish to seek consensus on the slate of nominees to be submitted, a formal vote should be taken by secret ballot and the results recorded. No committee member should divulge, without authorization of the full committee, the results of the voting. Only the names of fully qualified candidates should be included on the final slate. The committee's list of nominations should then be communicated by the chairperson to the President (or the President's agent). The committee or the President may also wish to schedule a meeting for mutual discussion of the slate.

D. Communicating with Nominators and Applicants

All nominations and/or applications should be courteously acknowledged, and so far as possible candidates should be apprised promptly of elimination from consideration. It is particularly important that the persons who have been interviewed be promptly informed when an appointment is made. Files should be kept on each candidate and carbons of all correspondence. Throughout the entire process, insofar as it is possible, candidates should be treated alike. Every precaution should be taken to restrict materials to the eyes of committee members and committee staff.

E. Responsibility of Individual Members for Affirmative Action and Discretion

It is the responsibility of any member of a search committee who recognizes that proper affirmative action procedures are not being followed to communicate this concern immediately and privately to both the chairperson of the committee and the Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action.

If this does not result in a resolution of the difficulty, the committee member should then communicate directly with the President (or the President's agent).

F. Filing Affirmative Action Reports

The President (or the President's agent) (in collaboration with the appropriate equal opportunity officer and the Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action) shall instruct the chairperson of the committee as to what official reports are to be filed. The chairperson shall file the necessary reports promptly and accurately. Before submitting its final slate to the President, it is the committee's responsibility to inform the Equal Opportunity Officer of the make-up of the pool of applicants and of those candidates interviewed.

G. Disposition of Files

Promptly after the position is filled and all affirmative action reports submitted, but not until then, the chairperson shall be responsible for reviewing all applicants' files. After personal data are returned to the applicants or to other sources requesting them, the files shall be disposed of in accordance with current applicable laws and regulations, available to the chairperson in the office of the University Attorney.

VI. General Statement on the Relationship of the President (or the President's agent) and Search Committees

The mutually desired end of filling positions with those persons best qualified to occupy them will be best achieved if channels between the President (or the President's agent) and committees are kept open. Like any other interested person, the President (or the President's agent) may submit nominees at the appropriate time for the consideration of the committee, and at any point in the search may inquire as to the committee's progress. The committee, on the other hand, may ask for suggestions or guidance from the President (or the President's agent) or for a reexamination of the charge. Since the purpose of the search is to attract top talent acceptable both to the search committee and the President (or the President's agent), there should be a close working relationship between the two.

After submitting its final slate, the committee should expect in the case of long delay in filling the position some explanation of the difficulty. When committee nominees are unavailable for appointment, or unacceptable to the President (or the President's agent), the committee may be asked to provide additional nominees. In such a contingency a full explanation of the circumstances requiring reopening of the search process should be rendered to the committee. The committee may decline to participate in any further search.

When a search committee is unable, for whatever reason, to fulfill its charge, the President (or the President's agent) may discharge it.

Since conformity to affirmative action requirements is imperative and the committee's responsibilities in this area are obligatory, the committee chairperson may wish at any point in the search process to seek information from the Equal Opportunity Officer. Doubts about the legality of procedures being followed should be resolved when they arise.

Addendum to Search Committee Guidelines approved by the University Senate May 14, 1987:

Section VI of the April 17, 1980, Senate resolution on search committee guidelines should be supplemented with the following:

The responsible (hiring) officer, or the officer's agent, should meet directly with the search committee at certain key junctures of the search, including but not limited to (a) the selection of a set of candidates to be interviewed and (b) a discussion of all interviewed candidates at the conclusion of the interviews. Individuals to be interviewed will be jointly selected by the search committee and the responsible official. At the close of the interviews, and after further direct consultation with the responsible official, the search committee will consider whether any of the interviewed candidates are unacceptable. The responsible official, who will have been informed on the committee's views of the relative merits of the candidates from the direct consultation, may appoint any interviewed candidate who has been judged acceptable by the committee.