

IOWA

The image features the Iowa State Capitol building, a grand neoclassical structure with a prominent dome and a portico supported by columns. An American flag flies from a tall pole in front of the building. The foreground is filled with a lush field of yellow Black-eyed Susans. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

PATH TO DISTINCTION
BEST PRACTICES GUIDANCE FOR
FACULTY SEARCH COMMITTEES

Office of the Executive Vice President & Provost

This material is provided by the University of Iowa Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost and has been adapted from numerous faculty search publications.

The document is available electronically on the University of Iowa Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost website: provost.uiowa.edu/path-distinction.

For questions and/or suggestions, please contact faculty@uiowa.edu.

PATH TO DISTINCTION

BEST PRACTICES GUIDANCE FOR FACULTY SEARCH COMMITTEES

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Faculty Recruitment Model.....	4
Before the Search.....	8
Launch Search	9
Publicize Position & Build the Applicant Pool	11
Evaluating Candidates.....	13
Secure Finalists.....	15
After the Search	16
Appendix A: References	17

Introduction

The most important consideration in faculty hiring is academic excellence. The University of Iowa (UI) strategic plan's focus on student and faculty success can best be achieved by attracting faculty who are top experts in their fields, who are able to convey their expertise to students, and who bring perspectives that challenge students to think independently about their world.

It is crucial to showcase what the institution can offer to a prospective faculty member. How we manage our search process says much about who we are as an institution in a competitive academic market for top talent. The goal for each search should be to ensure candidates feel welcome and are excited about opportunities available at Iowa, regardless of whether they ultimately are offered the job.

This document is provided by the University of Iowa Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost and has been adapted from numerous faculty search publications, which are cited below. It is intended to serve as a referenced resource for faculty search committees to discuss faculty recruitment strategies in advance of and during a search. It is designed to provide best-practice strategies that support the university's commitment to enhancing excellence by attracting faculty who will excel at research, teaching and clinical care and who will contribute to a vibrant community of learners. The document provides evidence-based strategies, with citation to the relevant research, to assist committee members in increasing their knowledge of best search practices and to facilitate discussions at the departmental and collegiate levels to ensure that we are attracting the best possible candidates. This document may be used in concert with search committee training, as a companion after reading selected articles or viewing a selected video, or as a tool for the committee chair to facilitate discussion as the committee begins its work. The Path to Distinction toolkit contains many of the evaluation tools and sample language described here to enhance the search process.

Faculty search committee members are also encouraged to review the Office of Civil Rights Compliance (OCRC) [Recruitment Manual](#) in advance of beginning a search to become familiar with the UI's search process, and equal employment opportunity/affirmative action (EEO/AA) guidelines along with best practices. Relevant [university policies](#) can also be found in OCRC's online Recruitment Manual. OCRC staff are available to provide consultations and resources to the hiring departments on Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)/Affirmative Action (AA) requirements.

The Office of the Provost invites units to share their successful strategies so that they can be widely distributed as tools and best practices with others on campus. Please send suggestions to faculty@uiowa.edu.

Faculty Recruitment Model



The faculty recruitment process is ongoing and starts before a department has permission to fill a specific faculty line. The University of Iowa faculty recruitment model shown above represents the various stages of a search process, beginning before the search with the college/department leadership setting the tone about the criticality of faculty who bring expertise, add to the intellectual diversity, and enhance a welcoming environment on campus for other faculty, staff and students. The model envisions several stages once a search is approved. At each stage, there are decision points and action steps. For example, during the Launch Search stage, the Departmental Executive Officer (DEO) will appoint a search committee and ensure that the members are properly prepared for their role, and the DEO will assist with articulating the evaluation criteria.

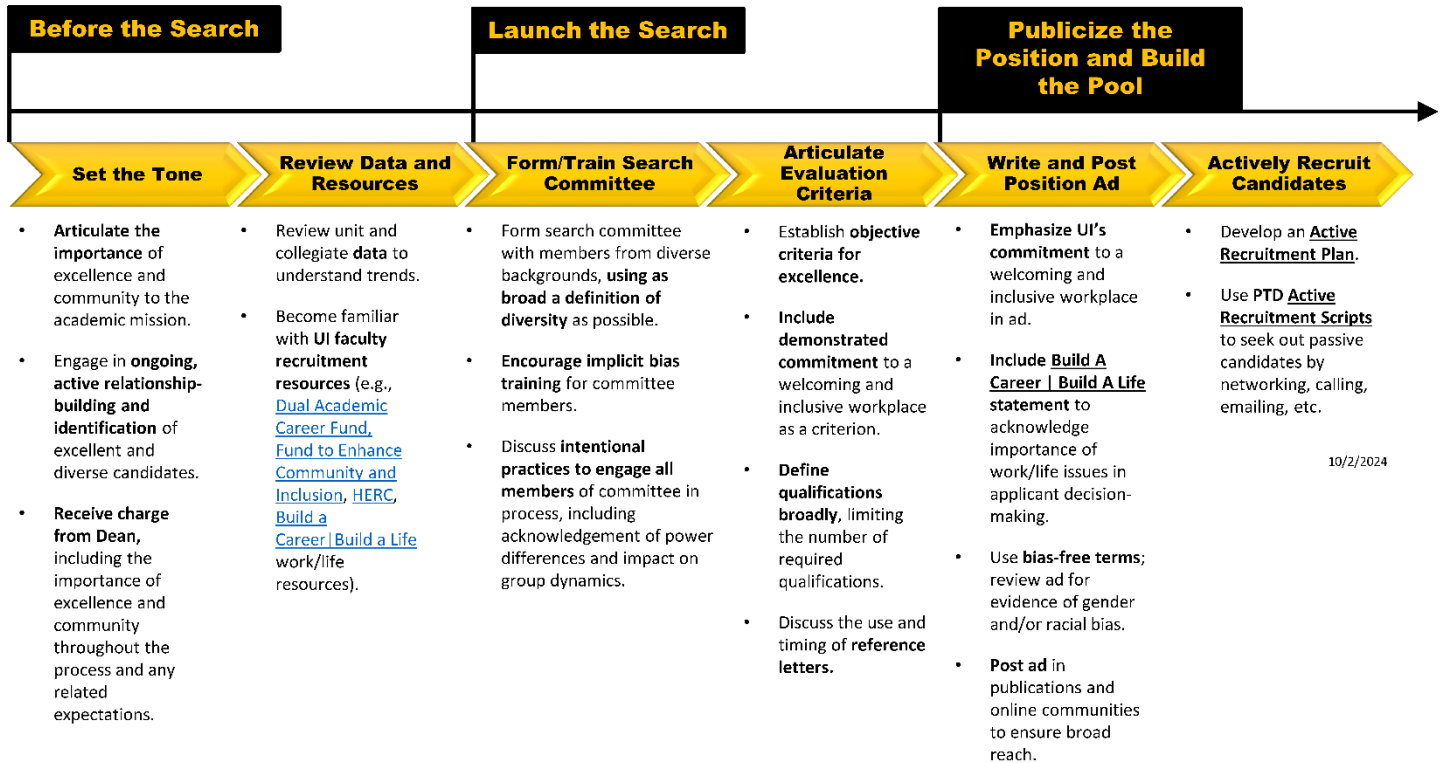
This manual is organized according to the various search stages, with strategies and tools provided for each stage. The strategies are summarized in the search flow diagram below. Please review the relevant section for more detailed information and resources about particular strategies.

Every institution has a unique approach to the faculty search and selection process. In some cases, through ADVANCE grants, institutions such as Harvard, University of Washington and University of Michigan have published their approaches, which are very similar to each other. Looking across peer and AAU institutions, our review of best practices for faculty searches identified the following:

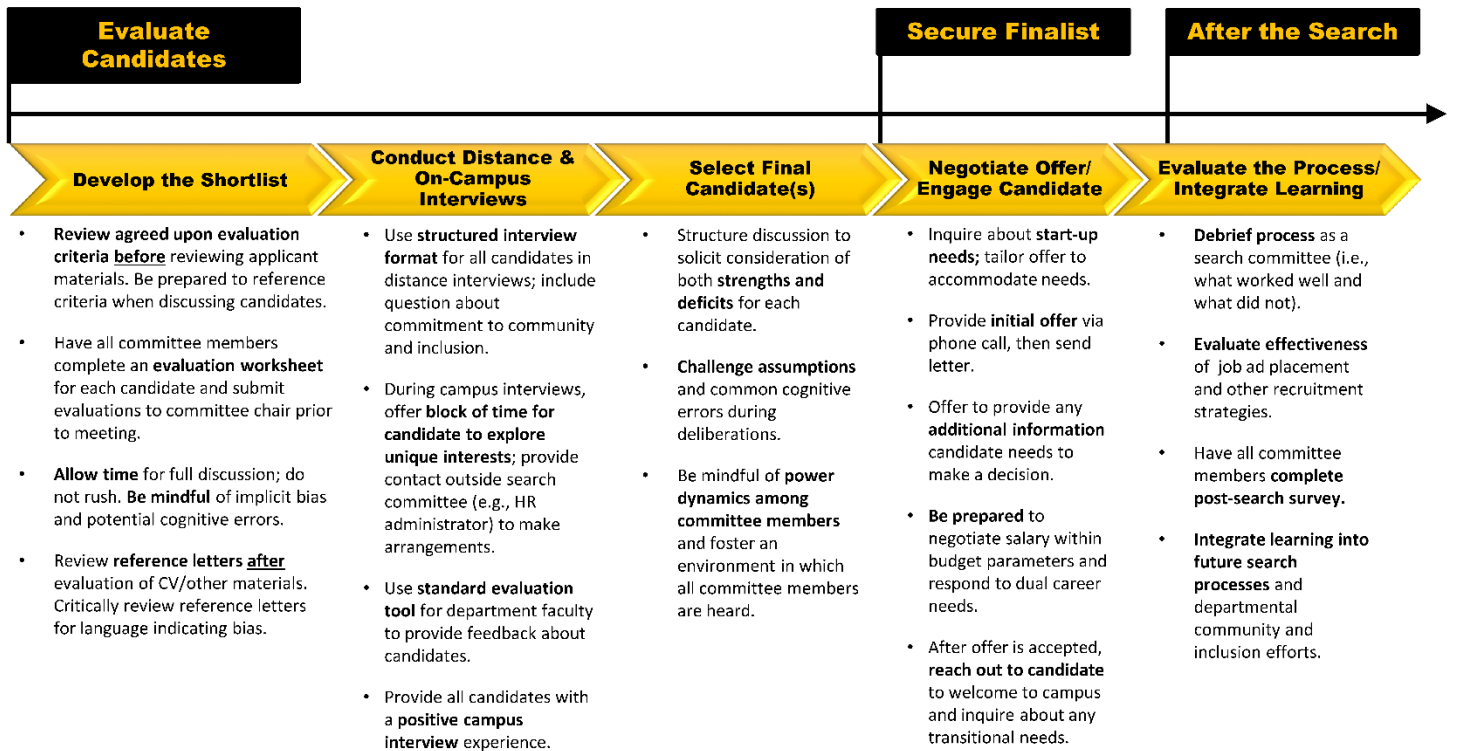
- a. **Training.** All faculty search committees should have training at the outset of the search process, covering the following topics:
 - i. Tools and methods for attracting a highly qualified applicant pool, including those developed during the Path to Distinction project
 - ii. EEO compliance topics

- b. **Committee kick-off.** Even if some search committee members have had similar training in the past, all search committee members should be expected to attend a search process overview/kick-off meeting at the beginning of the search process. This meeting can help to facilitate a shared understanding of the importance of academic excellence, and the specific efforts the committee will take to improve the process and outcomes.
- c. **HR partner.** A local Human Resources professional should partner with each faculty search committee to coordinate and track completion of training, and to coach the committee in implementing tools and best practices throughout the search process, including but not limited to tools from the Path to Distinction program, appropriate interview practices, and inclusion principles. The HR partner should not be a voting member of the committee; however, the HR professional should be an active partner to support and advise the committee throughout the search process including during committee deliberations.
 - i. The HR partner should participate in the search committee training outlined above.
 - ii. The HR partner should also receive training about the faculty search process, Path to Distinction tools and resources, and strategies for working with faculty search committees.
- d. **Diversity.** When possible, faculty search committees should include members from diverse backgrounds, using as broad a definition of diversity as possible. Diversity should include considerations of differences such as: age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, political beliefs, race, religion, status as a U.S. veteran, and/or intellectual viewpoint. Committees may wish to include members from outside the hiring department and/or college to facilitate greater diversity among the committee, particularly when there is also a connection to the search based on the individual's academic/research expertise. Alternatively, faculty candidates may be interviewed by a broad representation of current faculty including individuals with diverse backgrounds.
- e. **Feedback.** Search committees should solicit feedback from those who participate in candidate interviews, using a standardized feedback instrument such as the tool available from the Path to Distinction project.
- f. **Deans** should articulate their full support for the importance of achieving academic excellence by creating a welcoming approach and by incorporating procedures that enhance the equitable treatment of candidates during the faculty search process. Deans are in the best position to set expectations related to faculty search procedures in their colleges and to hold search committees accountable to those expectations.

This Guidance and accompanying Toolkit provide the basis for many of the recommendations noted above to enhance the faculty search process.



10/2/2024



10/2/2024

Before the Search

Set the Tone

As noted above, several institutions have developed guides to identify and support best practices for faculty searches. These include Harvard (1), University of Washington (2) and University of Michigan (3). Their approaches are similar to each other and include the following recommendations:

- Explore strategic questions such as the following, before beginning a search:
 - What new fields are emerging in this discipline?
 - Where do we want our department to be in 10 or 20 years?
 - What perspectives and experiences are we missing?
 - How will this position contribute to our goals of enhancing academic excellence and community?
- Recognize that the department executive officer (DEO) or chair is a catalyst for change; the DEO helps to set strategic goals for academic excellence and ensures a healthy climate in the unit (4). The DEO plays a critical role in leading *ongoing* departmental dialogue to reinforce the importance of a welcoming and supporting community in achieving excellence. There are numerous resources in the public domain from a variety of institutions that discuss the key role of the department chair in helping to set the tone, the culture, and the aspirations of the unit.
- Reimagine recruitment as an ongoing activity rather than as a one-time “post and pray” effort begun once a search has been authorized. Engage in ongoing scouting activities to “identify and build relationships with potential job candidates, so that the unit is in a good position to attract large pools of applicants for its approved searches” (2).
- Identify and periodically review a broad range of advertising strategies and platforms to identify scholars that can be invited to campus for professional talks. In addition, use current databases to identify potential candidates.
 - Big Ten Academic Alliance Doctoral Directory: btaa.org/students/doctoral-directory/the-doctoral-directory
 - Central Midwest Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC) resume/CV database: contact Adam Potter, adam-potter@uiowa.edu. (UI has an Institutional Membership, member.hercjobs.org/recruitment/jobs)

Review Data & Resources

- Review and discuss department and/or collegiate demographic data and trends for student enrollment and faculty.
- Become familiar with UI faculty recruitment resources including [Build A Career | Build A Life, Path to Distinction tools and resources](#), [HERC](#), [Fund to Enhance Community and Inclusion Fund](#), [Dual Academic Career Fund](#), etc.

Launch Search

Form/Train Search Committee

- Assemble a diverse committee in terms of background, viewpoint, and experience, with an expressed commitment to fostering academic excellence and building community. Research has shown that diverse groups are: a) more innovative, b) incentivize group members to better prepare, c) encourage group members to anticipate alternative viewpoints, and d) expect that reaching consensus will take effort (5).
- Encourage committee members to learn about the potential impact of implicit bias in the search process. Recommend viewing one of the following short videos:
 - American Bar Association (n.d.). [The neuroscience of implicit bias](#) [Video, 21:11 min].
 - [Higher Education Recruitment Consortium \(HERC\) Webinars](#). Upcoming and archived webinars of interest to search committees are available at no charge to the UI community via the university's institutional membership in the Central Midwest HERC. For more information: hercjobs.org/member_resources/Webinars/
 - Kang, J. (2013). [Immaculate perception: Jerry Kang at TEDxSanDiego 2013](#) [Video, 13:58 min].
- Increase the “bias literacy” of search committee members. “[I]mplicit bias is like a habit that can be broken through a combination of awareness of implicit bias, concern about the effects of that bias, and the application of strategies to reduce bias” (6). Intention, attention, and time are needed to learn new responses well enough to compete with the formerly automatically activated responses. Awareness of our individual biases creates a more open atmosphere to consider alternatives to our own preconceived ideas and viewpoints. Such awareness also allows for embracing alternative pathways to excellence.
- Increase the committee’s sense of accountability for engaging in intentional, rigorous processes. Encourage collegiate and/or departmental leadership to charge the committee to seek exceptional candidates while advancing a welcoming and supportive community.
- Discuss how committee members’ rank or position may affect committee deliberations and work to empower all committee members to actively participate and to ask questions that may challenge assumptions.
- Understand whether the charge of the committee is to provide an unranked list of the top three finalists or to rank order the committee’s preference. An unranked list may provide more flexibility to the final negotiator (e.g., Dean).
- If multiple searches are taking place in your department, consider using a single search committee for all positions, to allow the consideration of a broader range of applicants.

Articulate Evaluation Criteria

- Broaden the job description to attract the widest possible range of qualified candidates. Limit “required qualifications” to identify true requirements of a position versus nice-to-haves. For example, studies show that female candidates are more likely to apply for positions when they meet 100% of the requirements whereas male candidates will apply when they meet only 60% (7).

- Establish objective criteria that will be used by all committee members and that ensure academic excellence is the primary goal.
- Scrutinize the criteria being used to ensure they are the appropriate qualifications/benchmarks for the position and do not unintentionally screen out certain groups of candidates or outcomes (8).
- Include a criterion for “experience with or ability to foster a welcoming and respectful workplace environment”.
- Discuss the use and timing of reference letters.
- Use a prompt when requesting letters of reference so as to guide the letter writer to address specific qualifications of the candidates. See the **Path to Distinction Toolkit** for a sample prompt.

Publicize Position & Build the Applicant Pool

Write and Post Ad

- Emphasize the university's and the college's/department's commitment to both excellence and the development of a welcoming community.
- Include **Build A Career | Build A Life** link and statement to acknowledge the importance of dual-career and work/life issues in applicant decision-making. Use language that signals a commitment to dual-career couples and work/life balance. For more information about local work/life resources, including dual-career support, please see: worklife.uiowa.edu.
- Use bias-free terms; screen the position ad for stereotype-priming language (9). Use tools such as the Gender Bias Calculator or the Gender Decoder to detect gendered terminology.
- The UI Office of Civil Rights Compliance (OCRC) requires the following tagline in all [external] ads ([§III-9.6\(b\)\(3\)](#)): "The University of Iowa is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. All qualified applicants are encouraged to apply and will receive consideration for employment free from discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, pregnancy (including childbirth and related conditions), disability, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, service in the U.S. military, sexual orientation, gender identity, or associational preferences." See the [OCRC Recruitment Manual](#) for more information.
- Consider the following questions when writing the job ad:
 - What qualifications must the person have to succeed in this role?
 - What qualifications might enhance their success and impact?
 - Are there people who could succeed in this role but who would not meet our qualifications?
 - Are we reflecting a range of interests, backgrounds, and experiences in our description of the position, unit, and institution? Have we described the position's role, its impact, and how it contributes to fostering academic excellence and community?

Actively Recruit Applicants

- Reach out broadly to applicants individually before and during a search. For example, seek out talented scholars at conferences and invite them to campus to present their research. Consider preparing graduate student recruiters to discuss employment opportunities with peers and/or faculty mentors when attending conferences and other events.
- Consider data about the availability of candidates in your field. For example:
 - NSF Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED) is an annual census conducted since 1957 of all individuals receiving a research doctorate from an accredited U.S. institution in a given academic year, available for specific disciplines: nsf.gov/statistics/srvydoctorates/
- Develop an Active Recruitment Plan to maximize the potential of developing a large and diverse applicant pool, using tools found in [the toolkit](#).
- Use Active Recruitment Scripts to seek out passive candidates through networking, requesting referrals, calling and emailing high potential scholars.

- Actively search for candidates using jobseeker databases and services designed to attract broad applicant pools. The University of Iowa has access to the [Higher Education Recruitment Consortium \(HERC\)](#) jobseeker database and the [Big Ten Academic Alliance Directory](#) of URM postdoc STEM scholars at Big Ten universities. For more information about how to access these resources, contact the Office of the Provost: faculty@uiowa.edu.
- Consider reaching out to candidates who may be currently under-placed and thriving at less well-ranked institutions.
- Actively encourage faculty to use their networks to expand the pool of possible candidates.

Evaluating Candidates

Develop the Shortlist

- Review agreed upon evaluation criteria before reviewing applicant materials; apply criteria consistently to all applicants. Be prepared to reference criteria when discussing candidates.
- Have all committee members complete an **evaluation worksheet** for each candidate and submit evaluations to the committee chair prior to meeting. Using an evaluation rubric when reviewing CVs/résumés encourages objective justifications before discussions at search committee meetings.
- Allow sufficient time to evaluate and discuss each applicant. Reduce time pressure and cognitive distraction when evaluating applications. Research shows that evaluators improved their evaluations when they were able to give adequate time to the process (approximately 15-20 minutes per candidate) (10).
- Understand the Guidelines on the Use of Social Media and Internet Searches in Recruitment. See **Path to Distinction Toolkit**.
- Review **reference letters** after evaluation of CV/other materials.
- When possible, implement blinded review, evaluation, and rating processes (11,12).
- Be able to defend every decision for eliminating or advancing a candidate.
- Use an inclusion strategy rather than exclusion strategy when evaluating CVs. An inclusion strategy identifies which candidates are suitable for consideration, whereas an exclusion strategy decides which should be eliminated.
- Evaluate each candidate's entire application; do not depend too heavily on only one element (e.g., focus too heavily on letters of recommendation, prestige of the degree-granting institution, teaching evaluations, excellent communication skills).
- After the initial review of candidates, reflect on the following questions:
 - Have we identified the best academically qualified candidates?
 - What facts support our decisions to include or exclude a candidate? Where might we be speculating?
 - Do we need to do additional outreach using faculty networks?

Conduct Distance and On-Campus Interviews

- Use a **structured interview format** for all candidates, particularly in distance interviews.
- Consider the sample interview questions provided in the **Path to Distinction Toolkit**.
- Include questions about the candidates' experience in fostering academic excellence as well as a welcoming academic or workplace environment, and do this during both distance interviews and on-campus interviews. Pay attention to which member of the search committee asks the question.
- Ask all interview candidates where they learned about the position opening to determine what sources provided the most promising candidates.
- During campus interviews, offer a **block of time (e.g., two hours) for candidates to explore unique interests**; provide a contact outside the search committee (e.g., HR administrator) to make

arrangements. The UI [Work/Life Resources](#) website can be used as a menu of options to encourage candidates to consider how they might wish to use the time.

- Develop a welcome packet that includes information about UI's strengths as a flagship, AAU institution with comprehensive strengths and an environment in which employees can thrive. Include the "[Build a Career | Build a Life at the University of Iowa](#)" flyer in interviewee packets and/or online correspondence to inform candidates of UI's Work/Life and Dual-Career Resources.
- Use a standard protocol for each campus visit to ensure a consistent review process for each candidate. Develop interview questions in advance of the interview and be as consistent as possible for all candidates (e.g., same person assigned to each question, interviews conducted in a consistent setting, same time allotment). For more information, including tips for interviewing candidates with disabilities, see the Office of Civil Rights Compliance's [Selection Process](#).
- Provide all candidates with a positive campus interview experience. Create a process and atmosphere that welcomes candidates. Every candidate should leave the University of Iowa with positive regard for the institution, whether or not they are the finalist. Communicate the welcome in pre-interview communication, in preparation for on-campus interviews, in communications with applicants who are not selected for interviews, during the interview process, and in offers.
- Pay attention to the climate of the interview process, including nonverbal and verbal communication. (13,14). Become familiar with inadvertent messages in formal and informal conversations that may convey bias. Examples include: mispronunciation of names, "othering" comments (e.g., "That's an interesting accent."), and stereotypical assumptions such as "Why would someone with your background be interested in a position at Iowa?" (15-17).
- Use a **standard evaluation tool** for department faculty to provide feedback about candidates

Select Finalists

- Structure discussion to solicit consideration of both **strengths and deficits** for each candidate.
- Challenge assumptions during deliberations.
- Be mindful of power dynamics among committee members and foster an environment in which all committee members are heard.

Secure Finalists

This stage will be facilitated by the DEO and/or Dean's Office, not the search committee.

Negotiate Offer/Engage Candidate

- Inquire about start-up needs; tailor the offer to accommodate needs.
- Provide initial offer via phone call, then send a letter.
- Offer to provide any additional information the candidate needs to make a decision.
- Be prepared to negotiate salary within budget parameters and respond to dual-career needs.
- After the offer is accepted, reach out to the candidate to welcome them to campus and inquire about any transitional needs.

After the Search

Evaluate the Process/Integrate Learning

- Have the search committee debrief the process and outcomes achieved (i.e., what worked well and what did not). What would the committee recommend for future searches?
- Evaluate effectiveness of job ad placement and other recruitment strategies, based on the recruitment sources that attracted the candidates selected for interview.
- Have all committee members complete the Path to Distinction [post-search survey](#).
- Integrate learning into future search processes and departmental community building efforts.
- Consider the following points:
 - **Recruiting Resources:** Compare resources used with the recruiting resources applicants reported utilizing
 - **Applicant Pool:** Number of applicants
 - **Interview Candidates:** Number of candidates interviewed and demographics
 - **Committee Process:** Composition, processes that worked well (e.g., interview schedule), processes that members might change next time

Appendix A: References

References

1. Harvard University ADVANCE program Best Practices for conducting faculty searches
<https://faculty.harvard.edu/files>
2. University of Washington. (2016). Best practices for faculty searches. Retrieved from
<http://www.washington.edu/diversity/faculty-advancement/handbook/>
3. University of Michigan Handbook for Faculty Searches and Hiring <https://advance.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Handbook-for-Faculty-Searches-and-Hiring.pdf>
4. Chun, E and Evans A. (2015) The Department Chair as Transformative Diversity Leaders: Building inclusive learning environments in higher education Stylus Pub LLC
5. Phillips, K.W. (2014). How diversity makes us smarter. *Scientific American*, 311(4). Retrieved from
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter/>.
6. Devine, P. G., Forscher, P. S., Austin, A. J., & Cox, W. T. L. (2012). Long-term reduction in implicit race bias: A prejudice habit-breaking intervention. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(6), 1267-1278. doi:
<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2012.06.003>.
7. Desvaux, G., Devillard-Hoellinger, S., & Meaney, M. C. (2008). A business case for women.
8. Correll, S.J., (2015). Creating a level playing field: Discussion guide. Retrieved from
<https://stanford.app.box.com/s/xt0voqfemn4z6kyxym6ymz2uejfkzuo7>
9. Leibbrandt, A., & List, J. A. (2012). *Do women avoid salary negotiations? Evidence from a scale natural field experiment*. NBER Working Paper Series. Retrieved from <http://www.nber.org/papers/w18511>
10. Fine, E., & Handelsman, J. (2010). Benefits and challenges of diversity in academic settings. Retrieved from University of Wisconsin-WISELI website: http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/Benefits_Challenges.pdf
11. Fine, E., & Handelsman, J. (2012a). Reviewing applicants: Research on bias and assumptions. Retrieved from University of Wisconsin-WISELI website: http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/BiasBrochure_3rdEd.pdf
12. Fine, E., & Handelsman, J. (2012b). Searching for excellence & diversity@: A guide for search committee members. Retrieved from University of Wisconsin-WISELI website:
<http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/searchguidebooks.php>
11. Goldin, C., & Rouse, C. (2000). Orchestrating impartiality: The impact of “blind” auditions on female musicians. *American Economic Review*, 90(4), 715-741.
12. Banaji, M. R., & Greenwald, A. G. (2013). *Blindspot: Hidden biases of good people*. New York, NY: New Delacorte Press.
13. Falkoff, M. (2018, April 25). Why We Must Stop Relying on Student Ratings of Teaching. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-We-Must-Stop-Relying-on/243213>
14. Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2000). Aversive racism and selection decisions: 1989 and 1999. *Psychological Science*, 11(4), 315-319.
15. Elliott, A. M., Alexander, S. C., Mescher, C. A., Mohan, D., & Barnato, A. E. (2016). Differences in physicians’ verbal and nonverbal communication with Black and White patients at the end of life. 3924, 1-8.
16. Morrell, C., & Parker, C. (2013). Adjusting micromessages to improve equity in STEM. *Diversity & Democracy*, 16(2), 26-27.
17. Rowe, M. P. (1990). Barriers to equality: The power of subtle discrimination to maintain unequal opportunity. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 3(2), 153-163. doi:10.1007/bf01388340