

The University of Michigan-Flint

Search Advisory Committee Guidelines for Staff Positions



Human Resources

January 2019 Updated March 2020

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Introduction

At the University of Michigan-Flint, we define quality staff performance by the standard of service we provide to the campus community. For this reason, recruiting, hiring and retaining our outstanding workforce is one of our supervisors' most important functions. We have developed this handbook to guide our supervisors through the process of conducting careful and thorough searches; and to ensure our hiring practices align with the mission and vision of the campus.

Employment searches should always be designed to attract qualified candidates with diverse backgrounds. We must also take into account federal and state nondiscrimination laws and federal affirmative action regulations. These laws and regulations require the university to conduct fair and equitable candidate searches. This handbook is designed to elicit the most diverse pool of qualified candidates by providing assessment tools that meet these standards and maintain compliance with the university's non-discrimination policy.

The following processes and procedures are meant for university supervisors only, and are not intended to convey or otherwise imply any rights to job applicants.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Our campus operations are strengthened by the diversity of our staff, and diversity is an integral component of a workforce that can anticipate and effectively respond to the incredible variety of needs of our organization and its faculty, staff and students. The University of Michigan Standard Practice Guide 201.35, *Non-Discrimination*, states:

The University of Michigan, as an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination and affirmative action. The University of Michigan is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status in employment, educational programs and activities, and admission.

Questions related to this policy at the Flint campus can be directed to the Institutional Equity Specialist, University Human Resources, UM-Flint, 213 UPAV, 810-237-6517.

UM-Flint Mission Statement

The University of Michigan-Flint is a comprehensive urban university of diverse learners and scholars committed to advancing our local and global communities. In the University of Michigan tradition, we value excellence in teaching, learning, and scholarship; student centeredness; and engaged citizenship. Through personal attention and dedicated faculty and staff, our students become leaders and best in their fields, professions and communities.

UM-Flint Vision Statement

Engaging Minds, Preparing Leaders through Academic Excellence, Student Centeredness, and Engaged Citizenship.

Selecting a Search Advisory Committee

At the Flint Campus, it is recommended that every posting use a search advisory committee. Best practices indicate that a search advisory committee should be between three and seven members, with a designated chairperson. Hiring managers should collaborate with Human Resources and work with the appropriate Director/Dean and Vice Chancellor to determine the best composition for each search advisory committee. Search advisory committees should be diverse, include members who have different perspectives and expertise, and show a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Vice Chancellor may request a Human Resources representative be a member of the search advisory committee.

Search Advisory Committee Charge

Clear communication is key to an effective review of the applicant pool. The hiring manager will clearly indicate the search advisory committee's duties and goals. The designated chair, in, in collaboration with the hiring manager, must ensure each member of the search advisory committee has a thorough understanding of:

- The position requirements and how those requirements translate to selection criteria. (see "[Selection Criteria](#)" section below).
- The present and future needs of the department and how the position will fit into those needs.
- A timeline for review of applicant materials, meetings, interviews and the selected candidate's desired start date. While timing is subject to change based on availability of the search advisory committee and the selected candidate, a basic outline is recommended.
- The search committee members should be available to interview all candidates to ensure consistency and an equitable interview experience for each candidate.
- The type of questions that can be asked, and how to relate them to essential job functions and the University of Michigan core competencies (reference Appendix A).
- How the hiring manager wants to receive summary information regarding the finalists.

- The confidential nature of all search committee conversations and documents.
- The file retention period of all documents involved in the posting-to-hire process, including interview notes. (see "[File Retention](#)" section below).

Throughout the hiring process, the hiring manager will work with the search advisory committee and the HR representative to ensure proper processes are followed.

Below are just a few of the many biases we are subjected to while interviewing. Our recommendation to you is to ask open ended questions, take notes during interviews, ask each candidate the same questions, and be self-aware of the judgments you place onto others. It is also recommended that all members of a search advisory committee attend unconscious bias training at the university.

Stereotyping Bias – Forming an opinion of someone based on gender, religion, race, appearance, or any other type of characteristic.

First Impression Bias –Making judgements about an interviewee based on their first impression being positive or negative.

“Similar to Me” Effect –Thinking highly of someone who has a similar mind set or personality to the interviewer.

Negative Emphasis Bias –When the interviewer receives a small amount of negative information and uses it to base their entire hiring decision off of it. We tend to weight negative information heavier than positive information.

Halo and Horn Effect –The Halo Effect is when the interviewer lets one positive fact about the candidate overshadow everything else they say or do. The Horn Effect is the opposite and allows a weak fact to influence everything else.

Cultural Noise –The interviewer’s ability to distinguish between a candidate’s socially acceptable answer rather than revealing their true opinion.

Contrast Effect—When a stronger candidate interviews after a weaker candidate, they may appear more qualified than they are because of the contrast between the two.

Selection Criteria

Hiring managers must partner with human resources to create selection criteria for all positions requiring Regental approval prior to position posting. Please see the appropriate HR hiring process steps at www.umflint.edu/hr/posting-processes for additional information. For Assistant Vice Chancellor postings and higher, the hiring Cabinet Officer will work with HR to determine selection criteria. It is critical the department consider what skill-set best fits the department’s needs. The department may be best-served by filling the position with a candidate who has the same skill set as the staff member who left, or the department may need to (or will need to within the next few years) acquire additional areas of expertise or

increase skills in certain areas. Merging this thought process with the required qualifications is what guides development of the selection criteria.

The hiring manager and/or search advisory committee should use the selection criteria to determine which applicants best meet the qualifications for the position. Selection criteria should be:

- Established before a position is advertised or posted.
- Clearly defined and relevant to the position.
- Reflective of the job duties.
- Used to evaluate applicants for the position.
- Easy to use when evaluating candidates.
- Understandable and defensible.
- Align with the department's needs.

While it is not necessary to list every skill a candidate must possess in order to be successful in the position, the selection criteria should focus on the major job duties. Further, consider focusing on results rather than desired skills. This approach can be highly effective in candidate assessment. For example: Instead of "ability to use email, Microsoft Office and computer technology in an office environment," consider "Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively and complete documents, reports and fiscal records electronically." Please review the university's organization competencies when developing selection criteria (See appendix A). Organization competencies are defined as the skills, knowledge, abilities and behaviors that support effective stewardship of the University of Michigan's mission, vision, values, and resources. The University of Michigan organization competencies are the clusters of behaviors that employees are expected to exhibit in order to be successful in the organization as a whole, as well as behaviors that reinforce common organizational culture.

It is important to understand that selection criteria cannot include factors such as race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight or veteran status.

In summary, relevant and valid selection criteria are developed and adhered to so that all candidates are assessed on the same basis.

Reviewing Applicants

The search advisory committee must have access to review application materials provided by all applicants, either electronically or by hard copy. Upon request of the hiring manager or search advisory committee, Human Resources may conduct an initial screening of the applicants to identify those who do not meet the required minimum qualifications. The search advisory committee will then receive a list of candidates who meet the required qualifications and those who do not. In all cases, the search advisory committee will have access to view all materials in both lists.

When reviewing applications, keep the following pointers in mind:

- Use the same criteria, applied in the same way, for all applicants.
- Do not discount applicants who do not live in the area or who have a long commute. The applicant should decide whether a move or lengthy commute is acceptable to them.
- Do not discount applicants because they are highly qualified. The search advisory committee does not know an applicant's rationale behind applying for a lower-level job than it appears they are qualified for.
- Keep in mind that all reduction-in-force (RIF) applicants who meet the minimum qualifications must be interviewed. If a RIF applicant does not meet the minimum qualifications of the position, the hiring unit must document its reasoning in the final interview notes.
- Sometimes there are so many applicants who appear promising that it is difficult to decide who to select for further consideration. In such an instance, the hiring manager or search advisory committee may wish to ask the promising applicants to submit additional information before reaching a decision. This is acceptable, provided each candidate is given the same opportunity to provide information. In addition, information submitted by the applicants must be maintained as part of the search record. It is also acceptable to use a screening process like telephone or Skype interviews to reduce the size of the interview pool. The HR representative should be consulted regarding additional pre-interview screening for consistency and compliance with university standard practices.

Once the search advisory committee has selected the applicants they wish to interview, the list is sent to the appropriate HR representative and hiring manager for approval (see the Posting-to-Hire process at www.umflint.edu/hr/posting-process). The HR representative will:

- Review each of the applicant's credentials and determine if they meet the required qualifications. If any of the applicants appear not to meet the required qualifications or there appear to be others in the applicant pool with stronger required qualifications, the HR representative will discuss these concerns with the hiring manager, search advisory committee chair or both.
- Review the demographics of the department and the position in question, consistent with the university's affirmative action and equal opportunity commitment. The search advisory committee does not have access to demographic information of the applicants. If the interview pool does not include candidates who demographically match affirmative action and equal opportunity goals, the HR representative will request the search advisory committee provide additional names for consideration. Should the posting not draw a diverse pool of candidates, the HR representative may recommend extending or reposting the position on more diverse websites to obtain additional applicants.

- Once the HR representative agrees with the interview pool, they will provide approval to conduct interviews.

Developing Interview Questions and Interviewing Candidates

Best practice indicates that candidates should be interviewed in person. However, in order to ensure a manageable number of in-person interviews, telephone or skype interviews may be conducted first. The HR representative will assist the hiring manager and search advisory committee should this need arise. Ultimately, final interviews should be conducted in person. Whether candidates are interviewed by telephone (Skype), in person or both, all candidates should be asked the same questions to allow for comparison, to ensure that job-related information is obtained, and to ensure that each candidate is treated equally and provided the same opportunity.

Search advisory committees need to work with the hiring manager to develop a list of interview questions based on job duties and selection criteria. Best practice suggests using behavior-based interviewing techniques. This includes questions such as, “Describe a situation where you had to say no to a customer, co-worker, or supervisor because you didn’t think saying yes would be right,” or “If you were asked to operate a new piece of equipment, what would you want to know first?” If requested, an HR representative can assist with developing interview questions.

Consider the following when developing the interview questions:

- Ask questions which force the applicant to talk through a situation versus a yes or no answer.
- Relate the question you are asking to only one of the job duties and/or selection criteria at a time.
- Be mindful of how many questions are being asked in the timeframe given for the interview. Allow sufficient time for the candidate to respond. Remember, you want the candidate to do most of the talking, not the search advisory committee.
- Relate questions to the core competencies which are most meaningful to the position.
- It is best practice that an interviewer should have 10-15 questions prepared for a one-hour interview. While the same questions should be asked of all interviewees, an interviewer can and should ask relevant follow up questions. These follow up questions will vary somewhat from candidate to candidate.
- The questions in an interview should be job related. There are some questions which are unlawful and should not be asked under any circumstances. Please use the guide in Appendix B.

The search advisory committee must focus on qualifications, expertise, and demonstrated behaviors as a whole in order to determine which candidate is best-suited for the position. The

search advisory committee must substantiate why a candidate is not selected with objective criteria.

Questions about permissible interview questions should be directed to the HR Representative for your area, the Assistant HR Director or HR Director.

Interview Bias

The following are common interview biases the search committee should be made aware of prior to conducting interviews:

Stereotyping Bias – Forming an opinion of someone based on gender, religion, race, appearance, or any other type of characteristic.

First Impression Bias – Making judgements about an interviewee based on their first impression being positive or negative.

“Similar to Me” Effect – Thinking highly of someone who has a similar mind set or personality to the interviewer.

Negative Emphasis Bias – When the interviewer receives a small amount of negative information and uses it to base their entire hiring decision off of it. We tend to weigh negative information heavier than positive information.

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Cultural Noise – The interviewer’s ability to distinguish between a candidate’s socially acceptable answer rather than revealing their true opinion.

Contrast Effect – When a stronger candidate interviews after a weaker candidate, they may appear more qualified than they are because of the contrast between the two.

Please strive to be self-aware of the judgments you unintentionally place onto others.

Interview Notes and File Retention

The search advisory committee should take notes during the interview. Notes can be helpful when reflecting on candidates and for use in discussion with other search advisory committee members. Notes should be factual in nature and concern only those areas the university is lawfully allowed to consider. Keep in mind that interview notes and search documents may be subject to scrutiny after the fact (e.g., during a federal audit, litigation or public records request) and the meaning of each word may be questioned.

Sarcastic comments, jokes, or information regarding the attributes of a candidate that are not job-related may create an unintended appearance of bias. It is appropriate to take notes that

focus on required skills and relevant applicant responses. All interview notes and search documents, whether from phone interviews or on-campus interviews, should be maintained as part of the search record.

The Standard Practice Guide provides guidance on records retention. Specifically, SPG 201.22 “Recruitment and Employment” states:

“Units are responsible for ensuring a complete record (employment advertisement(s), resumes, interview questions, list of interviewed candidates, interview notes, etc.) of the hiring process is maintained for a period of four (4) years after the start date of the selected candidate.”

Interview notes should be attached to the job posting in eRecruit as outlined by the human resources office in the posting-to-hire process (see the Posting-to-Hire process at www.umflint.edu/hr/posting-process). HR recommends the notes are attached as a Word document, and are a collective summary from the hiring manager and search advisory committee. Other documents, as specified by the SPG, should be maintained in the hiring manager’s office for the appropriate time outlined in the SPG. Search advisory committee members should submit all search- related materials to the hiring manager after a candidate has been hired.

Questions regarding record retention should be directed to the HR representative, Assistant HR Director or HR Director at (810) 762-3150.

Resources

The University of Michigan-Flint University Human Resources website, www.umflint.edu/hr/posting-processes contains several resource guides to aid administrative support staff, hiring managers and search advisory committees.

If you have any questions, please contact the University Human Resources Office at (810) 762-3150.

Appendix A

University of Michigan Organizational Competencies

The order below is alphabetical.

- 1) Advancing the Mission – Demonstrates ability to operate effectively in a manner consistent with the University of Michigan mission and culture; demonstrate understanding of the unique issues related to higher education.
- 2) Building Relationships/Interpersonal Skills – Values organizational diversity; treats others with respect; promotes cooperation; effectively manages relationships.
- 3) Creative Problem Solving/Strategic Thinking – Develops and creates ideas, processes and approaches that shape the future; takes risks and makes decisions based on facts; uses analysis and critical thinking skills to solve problems; ensures that decisions are aligned with articulated strategic directions of management.
- 4) Communication – Demonstrates effective verbal, written, listening and presentation communication skills.
- 5) Development of Self and Others – Seeks opportunities to learn and to develop themselves and others; applies new skills/knowledge needed to add value to the performance of the organization; sets developmental goals for self and others; seeks performance feedback.
- 6) Flexibility/Adaptability to Change – Responds positively and champions change to others; demonstrates the ability to incorporate innovative practices in the workplace to enhance effectiveness and efficiency.
- 7) Leadership – Influences others to accomplish the mission in ways consistent with the values of the organization; holds self (and others) accountable to meet goals and objectives.
- 8) Quality Service (Customer Service) – Strives to meet the expectations of internal and external customers; demonstrates being focused on others.

Appendix B

Legal Interview Questions and Notes

TOPIC	LEGAL AREAS FOR COMMENT	DISCRIMINATORY AREAS TO AVOID	SAMPLE LEGAL NOTES
Family Status	General comments made by candidate regarding conflicts with job attendance or travel requirements	Comments that include marital status, spouses names, maiden name, children, pregnancy, childcare arrangements	"Candidate X is unable to travel on weekends and can only work until 2:00pm on Friday." "Candidate is only interested in flexible work hours, and this position requires Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm."
Race	None	Comments regarding racial background, nationality, place of birth	None
Religion	None	Comments that include types of religion practices, churches attended, religious holidays celebrated, candidate dress that indicates religious affiliation	None
Residence	Listing of the candidate's current address, or verification of the address listed on the resume	Information that includes whether the candidates rents or owns their own home, who lives with them, living conditions in their area of residence	"Candidate provided new address and phone number for contacting her: 555 Main Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48103 (ph) 734/666-6666."
Gender	None	Comments that indirectly indicate that the candidate is Male or Female, including using the words, "Male" or "Female, listing physical attributes that would indicate one gender or another, type of clothing worn that is gender specific	None
Citizenship or Nationality	Comments about eligibility to work in the U.S. Notes regarding the ability to speak a foreign language (only if job related)	Comments indicating the candidate is not a U.S. citizen, that the candidate was born in a country other than the U.S.	"Candidate is eligible to work in the U.S. and has been to the International Center for verification."
Disability	Comments about the candidate's response to the question, "Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job (show job description), with or without accommodation." Listing of specific accommodations that the candidate requested after reading the job description.	Interviewer's anecdotal comments regarding the candidate's use of assistive devices such as a wheelchair, braces, cane, eyeglasses, etc. Any comments about the candidate's physical attributes, including height, weight, etc.	"Candidate requires an ergonomic work station and keyboard tray in order to work on the computer for more than 15 minutes at a time."