

Part 2: Preparation

Preparing to launch an approved competitive search involves multiple steps, and the earlier the hiring unit can begin, the better.

2.1 Multi-year Planning

Ideally, preparation for a specific search should begin one or more years prior to when the job ad will be posted. Long-range hiring plans allow the unit to think strategically about how individual searches fit within short- and long-term goals for maintaining or enhancing excellence in research, teaching, service, and outreach—and to articulate that thinking to deans or chancellors, students, advancement officers, community stakeholders, and potential applicants.

Units should share their long-term “wish lists” of potential hires with their allies across campus and across the UW system. How might units work together to meet similar or mutual goals?

2.2 Potential for Cluster Hires

Multi-year planning may help the unit think about how individual searches might be fruitfully bundled into a “cluster hire,” or how the unit might collaborate with one or more other units to organize a cluster hire across multiple disciplines or across multiple UW campuses.

Cluster hires can be especially useful for attracting **applicants working in relatively small or new fields or subfields** as well as for attracting **applicants from historically underrepresented backgrounds**, since cluster hires signal a significant commitment to—and investment in—a specific area of research, teaching, service, and/or outreach. Cluster hires suggest the building of communities.

More information about cluster hires is available in the Toolkit.

2.3 Forming Search Committees

As the unit prepares for a specific search, its leadership should think carefully about how to form the official search committee:

- There are **multiple models** for effective search committees: what is possible and practical will depend on the size of the unit, how its sub-units typically interact, how many searches the unit will conduct in a given hiring season, and the overall unit culture and climate. Keep in mind that **how you form search committees signals what the unit values and how it distributes power**. Sample search committee models are available in the Toolkit.
- Make sure the search committee is diverse and inclusive, since the committee will likely be the first point of contact for potential applicants. **The committee’s composition sends a message to potential applicants about the unit’s climate**.

- Include individuals who will provide a range of different perspectives and expertise, and who will provide a demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion. Depending on the nature of the position, you may want to invite **at least one person from outside the unit** to serve on the committee. You may also want to include a **graduate student representative**; many units always include a student representative as a best practice.
- It is helpful, for instance, to **balance established and early career faculty** who are close to the subfield of the search with **at least one colleague who is outside the subfield**. It can also be helpful to have a member of your unit's **leadership** team (e.g., an associate or vice chair) serve *ex officio* on all search committees to make sure the unit's broader interests—including its commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion—are represented at meetings.
- If the unit has a diversity committee, consider asking a member to serve on the search committee. If the unit does not have a diversity committee, consider using the occasion of an approved hire and the development of a new search process as an opportunity to form one. **The diversity committee's role is to ensure that members of underrepresented groups have been recruited as applicants and given full and careful consideration.**
- Be mindful not to overburden **colleagues from underrepresented backgrounds** with a disproportionate number of committee assignments. If particular faculty members are needed on the search committee, where might they be relieved of other duties?

Additional information about forming search committees is available in the spring 2021 webinar on Planning for Faculty Hiring posted to the OFA and ADVANCE websites.

2.4 Informing Search Committees

Unit leadership should meet with search committees before they begin their work in order to:

1. **Officially charge** the committee and introduce the Interfolio system. It may be useful to have your Interfolio administrator join you.
2. Discuss the unit's specific **goals** for the search and provide any relevant **data**. Also discuss the unit's expectations for the search process, including the **expectation of confidentiality**. Maintaining confidentiality of committee deliberations can be especially challenging if there are internal applicants or other applicants who are well known, such as alumni.
3. Outline the ideal search and recruitment **timeline**.
4. Emphasize the importance of each committee member's regular **attendance** at meetings and full **participation** in the search process. Be sure to specify the role any graduate student representatives are expected to play on the committee.
5. Detail available fiscal **resources** and administrative support.

Moreover, unit leadership should:

- Ask the appropriate dean to meet with the committee early in the process to reiterate the importance of equity and inclusion, the advisory role of the committee, and the need for confidentiality. **The Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement is also available to meet with search committees at any stage of the process.**
- Schedule one or more training sessions on interrupting bias, both for the committee and for the voting faculty. **The Office for Faculty Advancement can tailor workshops to the unit's specific needs. Arrange by email or through the OFA's online request form.**
- Create a clear plan for how committee members will communicate with each other, the unit, campus allies, and candidates.
- Make sure all committee members understand they will be expected to participate in recruitment efforts, including personal outreach to potential applicants and to candidates.

Note: Preparation also includes creating an **assessment rubric** and creating an **assessment plan**, both of which are described in Part 4: Assessment.

2.5 Enlisting the Support of the Whole Unit

Finally, as you prepare for an approved competitive search it is important to devise strategies for enlisting the whole unit in the search process. How will the unit **build consensus** around its needs, priorities, and selections?

- At what point(s) will it be appropriate to inform the unit of the committee's assessment plan, progress, and recommendations?
- At what point(s) will it be appropriate to gather the unit's input, and in what form(s)? For instance, will the unit as a whole discuss and/or vote on which candidates from the preliminary interviews are invited for final interviews, or will the search committee make such decisions on its own?
- How can the unit—including not only faculty but also graduate students, post-docs, and alumni—assist in attracting a broad pool of applicants?
- Once an offer is made, how can the unit assist in recruitment efforts?

2.6 Enlisting the Support of Key Allies

Similarly, it is important to think about which **other units** within your college or school and/or across the university's three campuses may be able to offer assistance during the search process, as well as which **community groups or organizations** may be able to provide valuable support.

- Which other units might help attract a diverse applicant pool?
- Which other units, community groups, or individuals should attend job talks, or meet with candidates?
- Which other units, community groups, or individuals will be especially useful during recruitment efforts?

2.7 Providing Oversight for Search Committees

Unit leadership should also think carefully about how to monitor and support search committees through the entire hiring process.

- **At which points in the process will it be useful to check in with the committee chair, request relevant data, or require a written report?** Before the job ad is posted? Before the committee begins to assess applications? When the committee creates a “long” short list for preliminary interviews? When the committee creates a short list of candidates for final interviews? Before the committee makes its recommendations to the unit?
- Your Interfolio administrator will be able to help you access **de-identified, aggregate (i.e., anonymous) demographic data about your applicant pool** for specific positions. National databases can help you access **availability data for your broad discipline or field**; some academic associations also gather data on numbers of graduates in their fields or subfields. Links to several of the better-known national databases are available in the Toolkit.
- Given the unit’s prior history with faculty hiring, are there any points in the process where problems are more likely to occur? If so, **how might unit leadership effectively coach the committee or the unit as a whole toward better outcomes?**
- Keep track of issues that arise during the search process to discuss at the debriefing.

2.8 Debriefing Search Committees

At the conclusion of the hiring season, unit leadership should plan to debrief search committee chairs and, when possible, full search committees. This is **an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the unit’s hiring process**, as well as an opportunity to learn from both successes and any difficulties that arise.

During the coronavirus pandemic, for instance, search committees learned a great deal about **how to successfully navigate faculty hiring in a virtual environment**, including how to streamline their processes and better focus on those activities that are essential for evaluation and selection. Search committees also learned a great deal about **how to work with candidates** to ensure they are able to present their best selves and to participate fully in hiring activities. Many of these lessons are transferrable to in-person processes as well.