

Best Practices – Charging a Search Committee

Below are recommended content areas Hiring Officials should cover when giving a charge to the committee (preferably at the initial Search Committee meeting and in writing as a follow-up to the meeting):

General Opening Comments

Please note: In addition to giving a verbal charge, it is recommended that the Hiring Official provide a written charge to the committee prior to the committee beginning its work.

- Express gratitude to the committee members for the service they will provide, and particularly for shaping the future of the department/unit, School, and University, at large.
- Strongly emphasize the institution’s focus on inclusion and commitment to recruiting a broadly diverse candidate pool. Review the labor market or pipeline data sheets with the committee.

Specification of the Position

If possible the search chair and search committee should be engaged early on in the process, even prior to posting the position, to aid in determining the specification of the position where appropriate and also in the recruitment plan.

Things to cover in the discussion include:

- The working or official title and job description of the role to be filled. For faculty this should include information on the intended tenure eligibility of the position, research/scholarship focus areas that are most desired in alignment with School goals, and whether the position will be open rank or at a specific level.
- Discuss the importance of the role – impact on department, school/division, university, research agenda, etc.
- Articulate essential competencies, professional behavioral characteristics, and qualifications for candidates (i.e. –degree, degree disciplinary area, national reputation, ability to be tenured, previous supervisory/administrative/experience, etc.)

Committee Chair Roles and Responsibilities

- Request or appoint an “equity coordinator”¹ for the search. Discuss the role of the EC and how they can support the committee’s efforts.
- Challenge the committee to create a proactive recruitment strategy (See [Recruitment Plan Checklist](#)) that incorporates diverse sources where qualified applicants may be found.
- Discuss the duties of the search committee chair and members. These duties are performed in accordance with University policies and procedures as well as the Hiring Official’s articulated expectations – examples:
 - Develop a screening tool (i.e. rubric) to facilitate a consistent methodology for the review of applications;
 - Review applicant materials;
 - Create interview questions;
 - Schedule and conduct screening interviews;
 - Oversee schedule for on-campus interviews;
 - Ensure Human Resource support representatives are regularly updated on search progress; and
 - Provide summary justifications for the candidate(s) and alternate(s) recommended for hire.
- Communicate the expectation that the committee is to use consistent, job-related criteria when reviewing and screening applicants.
- Emphasize maintaining confidentiality for all applicants/candidates.

¹ If in Arts & Sciences, Engineering, or Nursing a “DDI” or other “equity coordinator” will already be appointed to faculty searches.

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- Discuss how any conflicts of interest will be handled.

Logistics of the Search

- Clarify scope of the search – National, Regional, Internal, etc.
- Specify the desired timetable for the search committee to do their work, including an expected start date.
- State the desired format for the committee’s recommendations to hiring official regarding applicants for campus visit and the finalists
 - Discuss utilization of screening interviews
 - Determine number of on-campus visits
 - Discuss how finalist recommendations should be presented – justifications, pros and cons, strengths and weaknesses, etc. It is recommended that the committee should not rank candidates, but present as being acceptable, not-acceptable.
- Communicate the type of administrative and fiscal support given to the committee, particularly for scheduling and designing the interviews, travel support, and logistics, etc.

Role of Hiring Official

- Affirm that the final decision on candidate(s) will be made by the Hiring Official
 - Also note, the Hiring Official reserves the right to choose outside of the recommendations from the committee, in rare situations, when necessary.

This document has been informed by the VCU Office for Faculty Recruitment and Retention resource - *“Best Practices for Charging Faculty Search Committees”*.