



VCU

Faculty Search Guidelines

Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

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INTRODUCTION & SCOPE

In direct support of the institutional mission and in compliance with equal opportunity laws and practices, the following guidelines support Virginia Commonwealth University's deep commitment to fostering a diverse and highly talented faculty body. These guidelines provide the University community with an overview of the faculty recruitment, selection, and hiring processes at VCU. The guide highlights best practices, providing step-by-step directions and resources to hiring officials and support staff to ensure consistency and compliance in the recruitment and selection process. In support of these commitments, laws, and policies, it is imperative that all hiring authorities and anyone serving as a chair or search committee member become aware of these guidelines prior to commencing a faculty search or serving on a faculty search committee. Faculty recruitment requires a substantial commitment of time and resources. Therefore, it is incumbent upon those involved to make a genuine commitment to ensure that all aspects of the process are conducted equitably, with due diligence, and in compliance with applicable laws and policies.

The Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs has primary oversight for recruiting a talented and diverse faculty, and for the implementation and interpretation of these Faculty Search Guidelines. This office also provides expert resource information on faculty searches, regular training for university employees who have a role in faculty searches, and recruitment tools and additional resources. The Office of the Senior Vice President for Health Sciences (OSVPHS) oversees faculty recruitment on the health sciences campus.

Employment Equity

VCU is an affirmative action and equal opportunity employer. Under Federal and State Equal Employment Opportunity laws and VCU policy, it is prohibited to discriminate against an applicant or employee based on race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex (including pregnancy), political affiliation, veteran status, family medical and genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or disability. Although these guidelines apply to the recruitment of all faculty eligible for full Commonwealth of Virginia benefits, principles of equal employment opportunity apply to **all** employees, regardless of employment status.

All employment decisions at VCU are based on job requirements and whether candidates have the skills necessary to perform the work. This applies to all employment actions, including but not limited to recruitment, selection, hiring, promotion and compensation. Anyone who is involved in the recruitment or selection process must understand the role of affirmative action and its integration in the process. Detailed information can be found on the Equity and Access Services website at equity.vcu.edu.

Equity and Access Services (EAS) is the university office responsible for leading, coordinating, and supporting VCU's civil rights compliance, which includes equal opportunity and affirmative action in employment practices. EAS ensures the university complies with its responsibilities by developing and monitoring policies and practices related to equal employment opportunity and affirmative action compliance in employment. EAS also creates and coordinates implementation of the university's annual affirmative action plan. This office provides training for search committees, addresses and resolves concerns of discrimination, and coordinates employment-related disability accommodation.

Diversity and Inclusion

VCU takes great pride in its commitment to a campus community that embraces diverse perspectives, cultures, experiences, and people. Diversity among faculty, staff, and students strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. Hiring authorities and HR professionals are responsible for proactively supporting VCU's commitment to equal employment opportunities. The [Diversity & Inclusion Toolkit](#) provides guidance and suggestions for conducting fair and equitable searches. It presents ideas that lay the foundation for successfully attracting and recruiting diverse candidates.

DEFINITIONS AND OVERVIEW OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Administrative Support: The staff member(s) who coordinate logistics related to the search process, including items such as scheduling search-related meetings, making arrangements for on-campus interviews (i.e. arranging candidate travel and lodging, reserving interview rooms, making dinner reservations), and assisting with other search-related tasks. Logistical support is typically provided by staff within the hiring unit, though higher level searches may utilize administrative support from the unit of the search chair.

Hiring Authority: The individual who authorizes hiring decisions for the position. The hiring authority is ultimately responsible for ensuring that VCU hires the most qualified candidate for the position to help shape the future of the university and to ensure its continued success. The hiring authority may be the direct supervisor of the impacted role; when the hiring authority is not the direct supervisor, they will in many cases delegate the below search-related functions to the direct supervisor, usually a department chair, director, or another direct report of the hiring authority:

- initiate the search approval process, in conjunction with their local human resources staff
- develop or oversee the development of the job posting
- ensure implementation of the Strategic Recruitment Plan (see details below)
- oversee the selection of the search committee members and give members their charge
- consider finalist candidates, using candidate feedback by the search committee, and determine which candidates to advance to the final interview stage
- oversee the finalist (on-campus) interview itinerary and interview finalists
- conduct reference checks, or delegate appropriately
- evaluate finalist round feedback (if applicable)
- select the top candidate, negotiate offers, and oversee candidate notification

To ensure integrity of the search process, and to prevent potential for or appearance of undue influence, coercion, and/or pre-selection, the hiring authority and/or direct supervisor may not serve as search chair or as a member of the search committee.

Hiring Unit: The unit, such as a department or school, in which a position is housed. The hiring authority or local human resources staff frequently act on behalf of the hiring unit.



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Faculty: Benefits-eligible personnel who meet the criteria of faculty, as described in the [Faculty Handbook](#). Full time faculty is defined as having effort equal to or greater than 75 percent.

Human Resources Professional or Associate (HRP or HRA): The individual(s) responsible for providing HR services at the school and/or unit level. This individual typically initiates and oversees the search process within university systems on behalf of the hiring authority, the hiring unit, and the search chair, and acts as a liaison between the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Senior Vice President for Health Sciences, as applicable. Other responsibilities include:

- providing professional support for the search, including assisting in the development of position descriptions and ads, and posting and advertising the position
- providing guidance on the search process to stakeholders, consulting with the Provost's Office/OSVPHS as necessary
- gathering required documentation from the search committee
- in conjunction with the search chair, ensuring proper dispositioning of applicants
- ensuring reference checks have been conducted
- assisting with implementation of the Strategic Recruitment Plan and including it with final search materials
- providing aggregate demographic reports as needed to ensure diversity of applicant pool
- closing the search
- coordinating hiring paperwork and facilitating onboarding of new faculty hires

Search Chair: The person(s) designated by the hiring authority or their designee to lead the search process, from the search committee charge until the successful selection of the top candidate by the hiring authority. The chair ensures an organized, efficient search while maintaining confidentiality, avoiding conflicts of interest and bias, and ensuring compliance with institutional policies and applicable laws. As the official spokesperson for the search committee, the chair provides status updates to candidates and keeps the hiring authority informed of the progress of the search, to include making recommendations regarding top candidates (finalists). The search chair leads the evaluation process, but is a member of the search committee and has equal weight in making recommendations to the hiring authority. At the hiring authority's discretion, the search chair may provide additional leadership during and after the finalist/on-campus interview stage. Upon conclusion of the search, the chair collects all search documents used by the committee and forwards to the HRP or HRA in the hiring unit for record retention.

Search Committee: A group of individuals designated by the hiring authority or their designee to screen applicants, interview candidates, and participate in the selection process. The primary goal of the search committee is to provide evaluations of qualified finalists to the hiring authority. At the hiring authority's discretion, the search committee may provide additional input after the finalist recommendation or on-campus interview stage. Search committee members are expected to maintain strict confidentiality, disclose any conflicts of interest and biases, and ensure compliance with institutional policies and applicable laws during the lifecycle of the search.

Search Stakeholders: Individuals interested in a search process or search outcome that are not the hiring authority, HR staff, the search chair, or a search committee member. Examples of stakeholders are the unit faculty, unit staff, students,

community members, or non-committee members who may participate in final round interviews (which typically involves a campus visit, either in person or virtual).

Strategic Recruitment Plan (SRP): Process by which the hiring unit documents strategies implemented to achieve a diverse, inclusive, and equitable outcome for each search performed. The Strategic Recruitment Plan is intended to enhance accountability at each stage of the faculty recruitment process. (See additional details below)

FACULTY SEARCH GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Generally, all faculty recruitments must follow a competitive national search process, as described within these guidelines, unless a “waiver request” has been granted as an exception (see section below on “National Search Exceptions (Waivers).” A thorough and inclusive search process aligns with VCU’s commitments to diversity, access, and equal employment opportunity and serves to increase the size and diversity of applicant pools, promote fairness, and increase the likelihood of a successful search. As such, all faculty searches must incorporate a strategic recruitment plan as described below.

STRATEGIC RECRUITMENT PLAN

The Strategic Recruitment Plan includes two required components:

- 1) The SRP I form is submitted by the hiring unit along with the initial posting request and documents the following:
 - a) Search committee composition and how the committee offers diverse representation
 - b) Confirmation that each committee member has completed the required online search committee training and signed a Confidentiality and Code of Ethics Agreement
 - c) Confirmation that the job advertisement uses inclusive language
 - d) Confirmation that each applicant will be asked to submit a diversity statement along with their materials
 - e) Any anticipated active recruiting efforts, or places where the position will be announced other than VCU’s job board and the Central Advertising Plan (CAP) sources described below
 - f) Estimated demographic availability data (i.e. what a representative applicant pool should look like based on available data sources)
- 2) The SRP II form is submitted by the hiring unit after the search has concluded and documents whether the search was successful in generating a representative applicant pool.

USE OF A SEARCH FIRM

Search firms are typically only used for certain high-level leadership recruitments. To request use of a search firm, please include a note regarding this request along with the posting request materials described below. The primary function of a search firm is to assist with drawing highly qualified candidates to a position. They provide only minimal operational/logistical support so hiring units must still coordinate search logistics and ensure that all VCU search process

guidelines are followed. The hiring department bears the full cost of all expenses to use a search firm and is responsible for ensuring that the search firm is on contract to do business with VCU.

FACULTY SEARCH INITIATION

The hiring authority (or designee) initiates a faculty search. The process outlined within this section describes the required and best practice processes related to planning and initiating a faculty search.

ESTABLISHING A DIVERSE SEARCH COMMITTEE

The hiring authority identifies the search committee, which will play a critical role in the faculty search process. They may use a range of acceptable criteria to determine search committee composition to include ambassadorship, inclusiveness, knowledge, experience, and specified interest. The hiring authority is expected to consider VCU's deep commitment to diversity, both seen and unseen, as well as service loads and workloads when identifying the committee. All search committee members must complete the online search committee training via [Talent@VCU](#) (use search term "Search Committee Training"). If a committee member has completed training within two years, they are considered current on the search process and best practices. Please reach out to the Office of the Provost or the OSVPHS for more information about search committee training.

A search committee should include a group of heterogeneous, varied, differentiated individuals to bring a variety of perspectives to the team. The size, composition, and scope of the committee will vary based on the specific position under recruitment. However, it is required that search committees consist of at least three members, including the chair, who must be a VCU employee. For senior-level searches, the committee size may be larger, reflecting the number and diversity of stakeholders affected by the hire; however, it is recommended that larger committees do not exceed 10-12 individuals. The composition of a search committee is key to a broad and inclusive search. As such, the committee should:

- Include individuals with different backgrounds, perspectives, and expertise
- Include individuals with knowledge of the position's responsibilities and duties, and the technical expertise to effectively evaluate candidates' qualifications
- Represent a diverse cross-section of the University population, comprised of members with a demonstrated commitment to diversity
- Include appropriate stakeholders such as peers of the new hire and those in similar positions. It is recommended that search committee members be comprised of VCU employees only so as to mitigate risk to the university. However, exceptions to this may be permitted when appropriate. Non-employee stakeholders such as alumni, students, and community partners may participate in the interview process and provide feedback for the position.

Additionally, the search committee must have realistic expectations of the time needed to commit to the search process; understand the requirements of the position; and understand and respect the principles of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action.

Note: Department Chairs or hiring authorities should not chair nor serve on search committees within their own department.

PREPARATORY MEETING

The hiring authority and search chair typically meet prior to the position approval and posting process.

Potential discussion items include:

1. **Timeline:** The desired search timeline: target posting date, search committee charge date, and proposed hire date. As a best practice, and if possible, coordinate interview dates well in advance with key stakeholders (e.g. deans) for on-campus interviews.
2. **Development of Posting Language:** Consider what role the search chair and/or search committee will have in developing the language that appears in the primary job posting, which constitutes a description of the position's responsibilities and qualifications.
3. **Administrative Support:** Consider who will coordinate logistics related to the search process, as described in the administrative support definition above. On-campus interview planning typically requires a major time commitment and it is strongly recommended that individuals providing search support complete search committee training.
4. **Search Committee Charge:** The organization of the meeting where the search committee receives their charge (see section below, "Search Committee Charge Meeting")
5. **Finalist Recommendations:** The target number of finalists to be identified for consideration by the search committee.
6. **Search Conclusion:** How the hiring authority prefers to collect input and conclude the search after on-campus interviews. (If the hiring authority has not yet determined preferences, this conversation may be conducted at a later time). Options include:
 - a. Develop and deploy an online feedback form to be used by stakeholders, which may or may not be anonymous
 - b. Search chair provides an aggregated summary of candidate strengths and weaknesses as determined by search committee members. As a best practice, written feedback from each search committee member is recommended to avoid one or more committee members influencing the opinion of others in a group discussion.

DEVELOPMENT OF VCU JOB POSTING - REQUIREMENTS AND BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

The hiring authority (or designee) is responsible for the fundamental task of developing a clear and comprehensive job posting which provides a description of the position's responsibilities and qualifications, serves as the basis for candidate evaluation decisions, and may inform future performance management. The hiring authority is encouraged to engage multiple stakeholders in the drafting process. The stakeholders may include, but are not limited to: [Recruitment Inclusive Champions \(RICs\)](#), individuals from the academic unit, search committee members, and human resources staff. The final posting should be written to elicit interest, adequately summarize the job, and outline key duties and qualifications, separating out those that are required vs. preferred. All position posting requests are submitted via VCU's electronic recruiting system (Talent@VCU) and undergo a formal review and approval process.

Developing a Job Posting:

***Requirements for all Job Postings**

- Include at least one required job qualification addressing diversity and inclusion
 - Example: "Demonstrated experience working in and fostering a diverse faculty, staff, and student environment or commitment to do so as a faculty member at VCU."
 - Example: "Experiential learning through lived experiences and/or professional service that inform worldviews and/or perspectives about minority group status, to include race, age, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and disability."
- For tenure eligible positions at the **Assistant Professor** rank, include the following or similar mandatory text as a required qualification:
 - *"An established research agenda and a clear potential for external funding, as well as potential for scholarship or creative expression to complement and expand existing expertise in the department(s)."*
- For tenure eligible positions at the **Associate Professor or Professor** level, include the following or similar mandatory text as a required qualification:
 - *"A well-developed scholarly/research portfolio with evidence of multi-disciplinary applications and external funding appropriate to complement and expand existing expertise in the department(s)."*
- HRP/A's should ensure that the job title on VCU's posting site (Talent@VCU) includes both the working title and department as applicable. (Ex. "Assistant Professor, Sociology")

General Recommendations

- To promote an inclusive process, units are **strongly encouraged** to post salary ranges on the public job announcement. If this is not done, first round candidates should be made aware of the salary range before screening interviews are conducted.
- Include brief, general information about VCU and the hiring college, school, and/or department
- Ensure that job postings are constructed in a thoughtful and attentive manner and carefully consider the appropriateness of recycling previously used postings. Consider short and long-range organizational needs, as well as the position's evolutionary potential.

- Use inviting and inclusive language that “sells” the role to the target audience
 - Incorporate keywords that a qualified job seeker may use when job hunting
 - Use gender-inclusive language such as “their” or “the incoming faculty” rather than “his or her” or “she or he”
 - Avoid exclusionary language such as “the ideal candidate”
- Avoid generic descriptions; attempt to distinguish the role from others
- When appropriate, weave VCU’s core values into description text
 - Example: “In support of the unit’s strong commitment to diversity, the faculty fosters a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for all students.”
- Avoid abbreviations; if abbreviations must be used, spell out the term the first time it appears
- If you need assistance, please contact your human resources professional

Guidance for Including Job Responsibilities

- Use concise language and consider using bullets
- Avoid generic duties as these may suggest a lack of attention
 - Instead of: “Teaching, research, and service”
 - Use: “Provide classroom and lab instruction for a diverse group of undergraduates”
- Communicate duties such that they will remain relevant over a reasonable period of time
 - Instead of: “Teach two sections of Microbiology 101...”
 - Use: “Lead classroom and laboratory-based learning; anticipated curriculum areas include...”
- Consider tying duties to organizational mission, goals, or values
 - Example: “Engage in research activities and develop collaborations in support of...”
- Consider acknowledging how the incumbent may shape the duties (if applicable):
 - Example: “The unit will assign courses with consideration for faculty expertise and interest.”

Guidance for Including Required Qualifications

- Under “required qualifications,” include only those qualifications that are strictly non-negotiable, as applicants who do not meet every required qualification are ineligible for consideration
 - Example: If a Ph.D. is required, an offer cannot be extended to a candidate that does not have this degree
- Develop language with sensitivity for disparate impact potential
 - Consider whether a particular job qualification could have an exclusionary effect on certain protected groups and, if so, whether an alternate qualification may be appropriate
- Avoid highly specific or rigid language, which may inadvertently disqualify compelling candidates
 - Instead of: “A Ph.D. in Public Health”
 - Use: “A terminal degree in a job-related field, such as public health, applied behavioral sciences, health behavior, health policy, social behavioral health, or epidemiology.”
- Do not tailor qualifications so narrowly as to suggest pre-selection

- Do not write qualifications so broadly that it is difficult to select candidates that meet the desired qualifications for the position

Guidance for Including Preferred Qualifications

- Include key qualifications that are highly desired but are not specifically required
- Include qualifications that will guide the search committee in differentiating and evaluating candidates
- Consider limiting the total number of qualifications, both required and preferred. A particularly long list of qualifications may have an exclusionary effect; however, leadership positions do frequently require more.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES AND ADVERTISING PLAN

The hiring authority or designee oversees the development of recruitment strategies and an advertising plan. A typical recruitment strategy encourages a competitive, robust, and diverse search pool, and promotes inclusion. The hiring authority may ask department HR staff to oversee or assist with these tasks.

Best Practice Recruiting strategies:

- Ask the search committee or hiring unit to proactively recruit and circulate job postings; the hiring authority may suggest a minimum number of outreach attempts
- Identify and proactively recruit qualified individuals from populations that are currently underrepresented at the organizational level, hiring unit level, or within specific disciplines
- Consider recruiting from or partnering with organizations that serve underrepresented populations, such as minority-serving institutions (MSIs), veteran serving organizations (VSIs), organizations serving LGBTQIA+ populations, etc.
- Contact colleagues within and beyond VCU to solicit nominations and leads
- Invite members of underrepresented minority (URM) groups who have performed successfully in part time, postdoctoral, or temporary positions to apply
- Recruit at conferences and professional events
- Draw upon internal networks and tap professional organization networks
- Recruit from colleges and universities with high minority and/or female enrollments
- Recruit from comparable units in other higher education institutions
- Utilize social media, to include blogs and listservs
- Contact the Office of [Institutional Equity, Effectiveness, and Success](#) for additional resources

ADVERTISEMENT REQUIREMENTS AND BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective advertisements drive candidate interest and highlight key position elements. Advertisements should abbreviate and be consistent with the full posting; it is recommended that the advertisement be derived directly from the approved posting. **All national searches for faculty positions must be advertised in at least one national media source and one**

media source targeted toward diverse audiences (i.e. one that serves underrepresented populations such as women, minorities, veterans, those with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, etc.) for a minimum of thirty (30) calendar days. The Centralized Ad Plan (CAP) described below automatically fulfills these requirements at no departmental cost; however, units are encouraged to advertise via other sources as able.

Centralized Advertising Plan:

VCU currently offers a Central Advertising Plan (CAP) in which all VCU vacancies (except internal searches or direct appointments/waivers) will be posted automatically to the online job boards of HigherEdJobs, the Chronicle of Higher Education, and DiverseJobs. Ads will remain on the CAP sites for 30-60 days or until the posting is removed from VCU's job site, whichever is sooner. As noted above, hiring units are encouraged to purchase additional advertising as appropriate to the position and specific recruiting strategy (see section below), keeping in mind that any unit-initiated advertising is unit-funded. Units should not post duplicative advertisements in the CAP sources or in very similar sources.

Advertisement Placement Suggestions for Unit-Funded Advertisements (non-CAP sources):

- Advertise in a combination of mainstream, discipline/field-appropriate, and targeted sources
- For online job-board advertisements, consider adding priority placement to increase visibility
- Advertise in sources with demonstrated success; review past searches to identify the most effective sources, particularly those generating applications for candidates who have advanced in a search process
- Ask colleagues who work in the field or research area for placement suggestions
- Check out [this list](#) for additional source ideas

***Requirements for All Ads**

- Include language that demonstrates VCU's commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion
- Ensure that content does not contradict the official posting, or provide additional information not included in the posting
- Ensure that the ad links to the VCU posting, as all applications must be submitted via our jobs site
- Include the following EEO statement: *"Virginia Commonwealth University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer. Women, minorities, veterans, and persons with disabilities are encouraged to apply."*

Content Suggestions

- Maximize the most visible part of the ad, which is usually the beginning. Open with a clear headline and call to action:
 - Example: "Virginia Commonwealth University seeks an innovative molecular biology researcher and educator to further discovery and learning."
 - Highlight key duties in the first paragraph of text ads, rather than information about the unit or school.
- Units can and typically should re-organize and/or abbreviate content from the official job posting
- Include information about VCU and the respective college, school or unit

JOB POSTING APPROVAL PROCESS

The hiring authority works with local HR staff to seek approval for the position and recruitment. The search committee charge meeting (described in a subsequent section) may occur before or after the position approval and posting process; however, it is recommended that the committee be involved in developing the posting language. The HRP/A initiates the request for recruitment and, upon approval, creates the job posting in the Talent@VCU system.

Procedures for Requesting To Post a Position:

- The hiring authority or designee provides the local HRP/A with the following information:
 - The final draft of the posting language
 - The anticipated hire date
 - Tenure eligibility status (e.g. tenure-eligible, term, or open tenure status) and rank (or open rank)
 - A detailed justification for the hire, including a clear description of how the role furthers strategic and organizational goals
 - Information for populating Part I of the Strategic Recruitment Plan described above
 - The names, titles, and department for each search committee member, including the search chair
 - The anticipated salary range (must be within established market salary ranges for the position- HRP/A will confirm). It is recommended that this salary range be visible to candidates on the job posting.
 - Funding source (HRP/A will work with local finance staff to determine budget indexes for labor distribution)
 - Advertising sources (do not need to include CAP sources) and advertisement drafts, if using sources other than CAP sources.
 - Application process (i.e. instructions regarding application materials, priority deadlines, timeline, etc.)
- The HRP/A initiates the posting request (i.e. “requisition”) as described in the [Talent@VCU Recruiting HR User Access Training](#).
- Individuals within the approval workflow each consider and approve or deny the request and/or content. The workflow culminates in approval from the Office of the Provost or the OSVPHS.

SEARCH COMMITTEE CHARGE AND STARTUP MEETING

The hiring authority (or designee) is responsible for charging the search committee (usually at the first meeting) and the search committee chair is responsible for leading the startup meeting. The search committee charge and startup meeting can be held back-to-back; however, the hiring authority does not participate in the startup meeting. The purpose of the charge is to set search parameters and to help the search committee understand the position goals and requirements. The purpose of the startup meeting is to organize the search process and begin committee work.

All parties involved in the search process are responsible for reviewing the following content, regardless of whether the topics are explicitly discussed.

SEARCH COMMITTEE CHARGE MEETING

Best practices for hiring authorities (or designees) charging search committees are listed below. This list is not all-inclusive or prescriptive.

1. **Acknowledgement:** Thank the search committee for their service and provide an overview of the importance of the search
 - o May discuss the strategic alignment of the position
 - o May acknowledge the importance of shared governance
2. **Position substance:** Provide an overview of the position, search goals, and any appropriate context
3. **Responsibilities:** Provide an overview of the search committee responsibilities to include the following:
 - o Helping develop the posting language, if applicable
 - o Developing evaluation criteria
 - o Carefully reviewing each official application.
 - o Actively seeking out qualified applicants, including those from historically disadvantaged or underrepresented groups
 - o Developing preliminary interview questions and conducting preliminary interviews (i.e. “screening interviews”) prior to the finalist stage
 - o Recommending candidates for final round interviews, which should be conducted on campus if possible
 - These recommendations are the search committee’s primary function
 - Finalist candidates must be considered fully qualified for the position as advertised
 - Clarify desired recommendation format. A common format is providing 3-5 **unranked** candidates, along with each candidate’s CV, and a summary of perceived candidate strengths and weaknesses.
4. **Parameters:** Clarify the search parameters and shared governance expectations
 - o Relay that all search-related communications should flow through the search committee chair
 - o Inform the search committee that they alone evaluate applicants until the recommendation of finalist candidates - other search stakeholders may participate only at the finalist/on-campus interview stage
 - o Remind the committee that they must abide by federal, state, and university employment policies. Critically, they may not consider any applicant’s race, marital status, gender, parental status, or other legally protected attribute in determining candidacy.
 - o Affirm confidentiality requirements - committee members may not disclose or make available any search-related information to search stakeholders before, during, or after the search
 - o Request flexibility after the finalist candidate proposal - the committee may be asked to supply additional candidate feedback
5. **Timeline:** Clarify timeline expectations

NOTE: It is recommended - though not required - that a [Recruitment Inclusive Champion \(RIC\)](#) attend the initial search meeting.

SEARCH COMMITTEE STARTUP MEETING

Best practices for the initial startup meeting of the search committee, led by the search chair, are provided below. This list is not all-inclusive or prescriptive.

1. **Guidelines:** Distribute these search guidelines and the [Guidelines for Lawful Interviewing](#) to all search committee members; clarify content where necessary
2. **Roles:** Provide clarification of the search committee roles described above as needed, including discussing any items that may not have been communicated by the hiring authority/designee or another party. Common points include:
 - a. The committee must take **confidentiality** extremely seriously. Disclosing the names of applicants, the substance of their applications, or any search-related information is unacceptable. Such actions are unethical and have the potential to harm applicant reputations and the reputation of VCU. By the initial start up meeting, committee members should have received and signed a confidentiality agreement provided by the hiring unit. (Confidentiality statements are required as part of the Strategic Recruitment Plan)
 - b. Only formal applications (i.e. those that are submitted via the [VCU jobs site](#)) may be considered. Applicants who send materials through other channels (i.e. via mail, email, in person, etc.) should be directed to submit an application on the VCU jobs site. Exceptions are permissible in special circumstances, such as when related to a reasonable accommodation.
 - c. Throughout the entire search process - during the screening, interviewing, and decision-making phases - **all committee members must be advised to take clear, job-related, fact-based notes**. Be advised that even casual comments noted in margins may be open to inspection by the candidate and scrutinized in the context of future challenges to hiring decisions. Standardized evaluation sheets should be created and used by the search committee and other constituents or groups that might participate in open sessions of the interview process, such as public seminars.
3. **Conflicts:** Initiate a “call for conflicts”
 - a. Ask committee members to disclose (privately if desired) any potential search conflicts. Examples of conflicts include having close ties to a candidate, being related to a candidate, serving as a reference for a candidate, or any known bias that could potentially influence evaluation. Conflict remedies include recusal from evaluation of specific applicants or from the search committee altogether, if necessary. For additional information, contact the Office of the Provost, the OSVPHS, or refer to VCU’s Code of Conduct.
4. **Job Posting Language Feedback:** If applicable, develop a process for submitting and aggregating feedback on the proposed job posting
5. **Timeline:** Review and lead the determination of the search timeline and request that members hold search-related dates.

- a. Committee members who are not available for key search activities should alert the search chair; the hiring authority may replace the member in this instance. If a committee member needs to be replaced, please contact the Office of the Provost or the OSVPHS as applicable.
6. **Methods:** Lead a discussion of applicant evaluation methods.
 - a. Determine application evaluation criteria (based on qualifications outlined in the posting) and discuss preliminary interview questions. Decisions regarding evaluation criteria and interview questions should be made prior to reviewing any applications in order to promote impartiality. Sample interview questions can be found [here](#).
 - b. The search committee and search chair jointly determine the evaluation and interview methods, which must be reasonable, defensible, lawful, and abide by VCU's Code of Conduct
 - c. If desired, committees can vote anonymously on evaluation decisions
7. **Communications:** Ask members to utilize the search chair as a communication conduit; all hiring authority communications as well as inquiries from non-committee members flow through the search chair

APPLICATION REVIEW

The search committee is required to exercise confidentiality in considering each application and to evaluate each applicant's qualifications and perceived ability to execute position responsibilities. The evaluation should be based upon the content of the official position description and align with the evaluation methodology determined in the startup meeting. As a best practice, each committee member should evaluate each applicant, and then determine which applicants to advance as a group. For each non-advancing applicant, the search committee must determine a [non-selection reason](#), which will be used to "disposition" the applicant.

SCREENING INTERVIEWS

Faculty searches generally include one or more screening interviews, which may occur via telephone or other method (e.g. Zoom, Skype, etc.). The search committee, under the leadership of the search chair, should adhere to a consistent screening interview process. Some best practice recommendations for providing a consistent applicant screening process are as follows:

- Each interview should follow the same predetermined method and format
- Each applicant must be asked the same, position-related questions. Follow-up questions are permitted, as long as they pertain to the candidate's ability to perform the job
- Each committee member is expected to attend all interviews. In the event of a conflict, however, the chair must ensure that the majority of the committee (and no less than three members including the chair) is present
- Only official applicants (i.e. those who submitted a complete application through the VCU jobs site) and search committee members may participate in screening interviews. Exceptions are permissible in special circumstances, such as when related to a reasonable accommodation.

- Deviations from the predetermined interview method are discouraged. Care should be taken so that any deviations would not advantage or disadvantage a particular candidate.
- If the salary range has not already been posted or otherwise disclosed, applicants being invited for screening interviews should receive this information prior to the interview process so as to ascertain continued interest in the position.

Compliance: Interviews must comply with all applicable policies and the [Guidelines for Lawful Interviewing](#)

Supplemental Information: The search committee may request supplemental information of applicants, as long as they request the same information of all applicants within the same interview round. Examples of supplemental information may include an instructional video, a sample of professional or academic work, etc.

Records Retention: Upon conclusion of the search, the chair forwards all official search materials to the HRP/A within the hiring unit.

FINALIST RECOMMENDATIONS

After completing preliminary interviews and any other necessary evaluation activities, the search committee determines which applicants to recommend for an on-campus (or final round) interview. The search chair should work with the hiring unit HRP/A to ensure appropriate dispositioning of applicants that are not advancing, using the appropriate non-selection reasons. As a best practice, the search chair should also notify any applicants that were granted preliminary interviews but not selected for a final round interview. It is recommended that three candidates be invited for final round interviews, should three viable candidates exist. As noted above, final round interviews should occur on campus if possible. Candidates who advance to final round interviews are typically called “finalists”.

Finalists invited for interviews must meet all required qualifications for the position and be perceived as acceptable for hire. As a best practice recommendation, search committees should consider adding one or two alternate candidates to the finalist interview list. The hiring authority may advance an alternate candidate if they do not agree with one or more finalist recommendations or if an advancing candidate withdraws from consideration.

REFERENCE CHECKS

Reference checks are typically conducted by the hiring authority (or designee) and must only be initiated **after** receiving permission from the candidate and obtaining or verifying the list of references and contact information. Reference check questions must be developed to verify the candidate’s employment, work performance, competencies, etc. Sample reference questions can be found [here](#). VCU strongly encourages a consistent method and approach, such as the use of standard questions. Reference checks may be conducted via a letter, email, or phone call. Reference check information is strictly confidential. At the hiring authority’s discretion, the search committee may or may not be privy to results.

Timing: As a best practice, it is recommended that reference checks be conducted on all top candidates prior to being invited for a final-round interview; however they may be completed on only the top candidate after finalist interviews have taken place.

Contacts: VCU may only contact only those individuals who the candidate has authorized VCU to contact, either through the application process or other digitized or written means. A current or previous employer reference is highly preferred. Reference checks, ideally 3 from current and previous employers, **are required** for the top candidate of the position prior to extending an offer.

FINAL ROUND INTERVIEWS

All faculty positions require at least one final round (typically on-campus) interview that consists of meeting with the hiring authority and search committee, at a minimum. The hiring authority will determine if any other key stakeholders within the unit and across the university need to be included on the interview schedule. If the candidate CV will be shared with interview stakeholders as part of the interview process, the hiring unit must **obtain candidate approval and redact any personal contact information**. The anticipated salary range should be provided at this time, if it has not already been disclosed.

The hiring authority (or designee) oversees the final round interview process. The goals of the process include:

- Aiding the hiring authority in making final selection
- Providing candidates with information about the position and organization
- Engaging VCU stakeholders in the search process
- Providing the candidate with an interview experience that is professional, welcoming, and creates a positive impression of the college/school/unit and VCU at large

Itinerary and Final Round Interview Planning:

Prior to engaging candidates in a final round interview, the search chair meets with the hiring authority for a briefing on the finalists selected by the search committee. This allows the hiring authority the opportunity to vet the slate of candidates before resources are committed to bringing candidates on campus. Per the Governor's Executive Order 1 (2006), preference in hiring should be given to veterans in accordance with VCU's [Veteran's Preference Guidelines](#).

After approval from the hiring authority, all finalists should be contacted by the search chair (or designee) to schedule on-campus or final round interviews. The search committee chair (or designee) should ask all candidates if they require any accommodations during their interviews. If so, candidates should be provided with contact information of VCU's [ADA services office](#). This will ensure the university's compliance with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and prompt the department to make any necessary adjustments to the interview location, schedule, etc.

Once the candidates have accepted an invitation for a final round interview, written itineraries should be developed, using the guidelines below. Itineraries can be developed by the hiring authority, chair, or administrative support staff.



Faculty Search Process Guidelines

Please keep in mind that the campus visit is usually the first impression the candidate has of VCU. It is critical to ensure the experience is a welcoming and manageable one for the candidate.

Consistency: Itineraries must be developed and applied in a consistent and standardized manner to all applicants, whether candidates are internal or external to VCU. All finalists should be given a comparable interview experience with similar access to information, stakeholders, resources, and social activities.

Interview Questions and Topics: Interview questions and topics should be consistent, job-related, and align with federal, state, and university policies. All questions must align with the [Guidelines for Lawful Interviewing](#).

Interviews with Hiring Authority: The hiring authority or designee is required to conduct an interview with all candidates that are selected for final round interviews. These interviews should be included in the itinerary.

Confidentiality: Final round interview itineraries are to be kept confidential. Only the hiring authority, planners, and the candidate(s) should be privy to the full itineraries.

Candidate partners/spouses: Partners or spouses may accompany a candidate to Richmond at their own expense; however, partners and spouses should not attend formal interview activities.

Escort: VCU representatives (employees or even students) should be enlisted to escort candidates between interview events; candidates should not be expected to navigate the campus alone. This responsibility may be shared across multiple individuals as needed. These individuals escort the candidates throughout the process and are positive stewards for VCU and for the host unit. Escorts are reminded to engage candidates in appropriate conversation (i.e. refraining from asking personal questions).

Tours: As a best practice, on campus interviews should include a real estate tour utilizing one of the university's approved [relocation partners](#), a campus tour, and a unit tour. Planners should not connect candidates to a specific realtor.

Meals: The hiring authority, in conjunction with the appropriate administrative staff, should arrange for catering, restaurant reservations, and/or reimbursement for candidate meals during the interview period for out of town candidates (generally from the time of arrival through departure from Richmond). Food and beverage purchasing must comply with [institutional procurement and purchasing guidelines](#), as well as any guidelines stipulated by the hiring unit.

Breaks and Transitions: As a best practice, include breaks and transition times within the itinerary. It's a good idea to ask candidates what pace they feel comfortable with before planning their itinerary. While the day will undoubtedly be full, we do not want to overwhelm candidates.

Open Forum: For positions at the level of department head and above, final round interviews should include an open forum and the hiring authority should broadly announce the forum to staff, faculty, and students as applicable. Other faculty searches may include an open forum, as well. Forums typically include a presentation component and a question and answer component. Attendees are also usually given an opportunity to provide feedback regarding the candidate's performance.

FINAL CANDIDATE EVALUATION

The hiring authority initiates the collection and aggregation of final evaluation feedback (from the search chair) of candidate strengths and weaknesses, as determined by search committee members.

All who participate in final round interviews, except for the candidates, should be supplied with a mechanism to provide individual, digitized (written) feedback regarding the candidate(s). Feedback is generally limited to only those stakeholders who directly observe or interact with the candidate and can be provided anonymously.

Note that stakeholders do not determine the acceptability of candidates for hire; however, they may provide non-comparative feedback (i.e. strengths and weaknesses) based upon their interactions or observations of the candidate. All evaluation materials are strictly confidential. Typically, only the hiring authority may see the final round interview feedback results, but the search chair may also be included in the aggregation of evaluation results or the final review process.

SEARCH CONCLUSION

The hiring authority (or designee) negotiates the terms of hire with the top candidate (i.e. proposed start date, salary, start-up funding, etc.). Any tentative offer must stipulate that the offer is contingent upon the university approving the offer, as well as a successful verification of credentials and a satisfactory background check. The *official* offer is in the form of an employment contract and is not issued until the search process has been approved by the required university officials.

Any written intent to offer must be provided on the university's approved "Intent to Offer" template. The HRP/A can provide this template to the hiring authority (or designee). Intent to Offer letters issued using the approved standard template are not binding, and they are not enforceable employment contracts.

VERIFICATION OF CREDENTIALS

The hiring authority or designee, usually the HRP/A, obtains written permission from the candidate to verify credentials (i.e. highest completed degree). Documentation that the candidate's credentials have been verified must be attached to the requisition in Talent@VCU prior to sending the offer request through the approval workflow.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING OBTAINING TRANSCRIPTS:

As a condition of employment, all faculty members must submit documentation to the hiring authority within thirty (30) days of their start date showing that they possess the academic qualifications for the position into which they are hired. Failure to comply with this documentation requirement may result in termination of their faculty appointment with VCU.

In most instances, this documentation will be an original, official seal-bearing transcript from the institution that awarded their highest degree. If the faculty member's duties include teaching and the content area is different from the discipline or field in which their highest degree was earned, they may be required to provide additional documentation upon hire or as assignments change to confirm their academic qualifications for the respective instructional duties. Having academic degree transcripts/documentation on file with the university is VCU policy. It is also in support of the accreditation requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), VCU's accrediting body.

OFFER APPROVAL PROCESS

The HRP/A obtains formal approval to offer the position by routing an offer letter request to the respective vice president's office via the Talent@VCU system. In order to complete this step, the hiring authority will need to provide the HRP/A with the prospective employee's proposed salary, start date, and a justification for their selection, all of which are required sections of the request. Instructions for processing an offer request can be found in the [Talent@VCU Recruiting HR User Access Training September](#). HRP/A's should be sure to upload proof of verified credentials and copies of any ads placed in publications other than the CAP sources. Additionally, all non-selected candidates should be assigned an appropriate non-selection code prior to routing the offer request. If the offer letter request is approved, the HRP/A notifies the hiring authority that a formal employment contract may be issued and assists in preparing and issuing the contract letter.

Decline of Offer: If the candidate declines the offer, the hiring authority (or designee) has a few options:

- If the unit would like to select an alternate top candidate out of the same applicant pool, a new offer letter request will need to be initiated, using the same process as described above
- If there is no other qualified candidate in the applicant pool, the existing search process and position announcement must be closed. The unit should contact the Office of the Provost or OSVPHS to request that the search be reinitiated. (See section below on "Reinitiating a Search")
- The hiring authority (or designee) can close a search without a hire by contacting their HRP/A. This will remove the posting from the web. Should this occur, the hiring authority (or designee) should notify applicants who have been interviewed that the position has been closed and thank them for their time and interest in the process, indicating that the position was closed. All other applicants should have their disposition status updated to "requisition canceled."

MAKING THE OFFICIAL OFFER AND CLOSING THE SEARCH

The following steps should be followed for making the official offer of employment and closing the search:

- **Contract Preparation:** Once the offer letter request has been approved by the Office of the Provost or OSVPHS, a formal employment contract can be extended to the successful candidate. The HRP/A usually prepares the employment contract for the dean/unit head's signature. The contract is required to be issued to the prospective faculty member with a copy of the appropriate *Faculty Terms and Conditions of Employment* document, as well

as a communication detailing the new hire process, transcript requirement, background check requirements, benefits information, etc. (See Faculty HR section of the [InsideHR website](#) for sample “Welcome” letter)

- Once the contract has been signed and returned by the faculty member, the employing department must ensure that the search is properly closed out in Talent@VCU.

FINAL APPLICANT/CANDIDATE NOTIFICATION

After an offer has been accepted (i.e. contract signed), the hiring authority (or designee) is required to notify any candidates who were not selected and not previously notified. As a best practice, all candidates who were interviewed, but not selected (whether or not the search resulted in a hire) should receive a personalized notification of non-selection- either by phone (preferred) or by email from the hiring authority or search chair.

If an applicant/candidate requests a rejection reason, please contact the Office of the Provost or OSVPHS for guidance. Note that the search committee, hiring unit, hiring authority, Office of the Provost, or OSVPHS are not required to provide non-hiring reasons to applicants/candidates who inquire.

EXTENDING A SEARCH

Most searches must conclude or be canceled within a one-year period. The hiring unit may request to extend a search beyond one year in certain circumstances, such as to increase pool diversity, increase the pool size, or finish a nearly complete search. Advertisements in non-CAP recruitment sources, if used and if extended, should be revised to indicate the new deadline date if the search is extended for more than 30 days. For additional guidance on extending a search, please contact the Office of the Provost or OSVPHS.

REINITIATING A SEARCH

If a hiring unit wishes to make substantive changes to the position description or significant changes to the posted qualifications, it must close the search and start anew. Applicants must be notified that an administrative decision has been made not to fill the position as written at this time. Even though a successful candidate was not identified, search documentation must be maintained for a minimum of three years from the date of the search closure. After closing the unsuccessful search, a new posting request to begin a new search (including new proposed advertisements) may then be submitted via Talent@VCU.

NATIONAL SEARCH EXCEPTIONS (WAIVERS)

Generally, VCU requires that all faculty are recruited through national, competitive searches. VCU strongly encourages hiring units to use the standard faculty hiring process, as detailed in this document. Hiring units who wish to use an alternate hiring method or procedure must formally request an exception from the standard search process, also known

as a “waiver.” **VCU does not routinely grant exceptions to the search process and permits them only in limited circumstances and with a compelling and thorough justification.**

INTERNAL, LOCAL, AND EXPEDITED SEARCHES

If a compelling reason exists to warrant an internal, local, or expedited (i.e. posted for less than 30 days) search, hiring units may request an exception from the national search requirement. Generally, internal and local searches must still follow the standard faculty search process.

Internal Search Procedures

- HRP/A, on behalf of the hiring authority, requests an internal search via Talent@VCU, complete with a thorough justification for the request. Justifications must demonstrate that the limited nature of the search will not adversely impact the recruitment efforts for increasing workforce diversity.
- Once approved, work with the respective senior VP’s office to post the position. Internal postings will appear on VCU’s Internal Applicant Portal and are only visible to VCU employees.
- The hiring and onboarding process for internal recruitment is handled the same as for other types of recruitments.

DIRECT APPOINTMENTS/ONE-YEAR WAIVER

Direct appointment of a candidate through a waiver of the faculty search process does not utilize a competitive selection process. Direct appointments are typically reserved for urgent business continuity needs only and **restricted to a temporary period of no longer than one year**, after which time a national search must be conducted. Direct appointments require formal approval from the Office of the Provost or OSVPHS and are processed similarly to other recruitments. The primary difference is that the applicant is identified when the posting request is submitted, and the application is accessible only through a direct link (i.e. there is no public or internal posting associated with a direct appointment). These requests require a **detailed** justification of the applicant’s qualifications for the position, as well as an explanation for why a national search is not being conducted. Reasons for waiving a national search may include: unexpected vacancies/resignations; an interim, acting, or temporary appointment; or an emergent business need that cannot be delayed by the length of time it would take to conduct a national search. A direct appointment may also be requested when an individual has been selected as a principal investigator for a grant-funded project (limited duration), or when an exceptional search candidate is identified as an ideal incumbent for another position that they did not apply for or which may not currently be posted.

See section below regarding the appointment process for Endowed Faculty positions.

Direct Appointment Procedures

- HRP/A, on behalf of the hiring authority, initiates a requisition request in Talent@VCU. **NOTE:** A current CV and a completed Verification of Credentials are required to be uploaded for all direct appointment requests
- When the selected candidate is an existing VCU employee and will receive supplemental pay as part of an interim appointment, the hiring unit submits an Off-Cycle Salary Increase request in DocuSign, rather than a requisition request in Talent@VCU.

ENDOWED FACULTY APPOINTMENTS

The university values the importance of faculty input into the appointment of endowed positions. Deans, in collaboration with their department chairs, will appoint a committee (which may also serve as a hiring search committee) to review and make recommendations for the endowed appointment. The committee should include at least one current holder of an endowed position, preferably from the unit initiating the search. A competitive process should be used for the recruitment and selection of endowed faculty positions whenever possible, following the same general search and selection guidelines used for other university faculty positions as outlined in this document. Candidates nominated for an endowed position must meet the criteria stipulated by the donor(s) who established the fund as approved by university officials and the VCU Board of Visitors, as applicable.

Process for all endowed appointments:

The dean or department chair will solicit external and internal letters of recommendation, as appropriate, depending on the requirements for the appointment considering the donor's gift agreement. The appointment recommendation dossier will include letters of recommendation from the selection committee, department chair, and unit leader, as appropriate. All letters of recommendation and support, the gift agreement or other documentation of donor intentions, the candidate's curriculum vitae, and information pertaining to the term of the appointment and annual reporting requirements will be reviewed by the unit leader. The final recommendation with the aforementioned materials and candidate dossier will then be forwarded for review and approval by the Provost or Senior Vice President for Health Sciences, as applicable.

The Provost or Senior Vice President for Health Sciences will review the application and, if approved, will forward the recommendation to the University president. If approved by the President, the process is completed. For faculty members holding an administrative title of dean/equivalent or higher, the President will forward the recommendation to the Board of Visitors for final approval.

FACULTY WORKING TITLE CHANGES

The Office of the Provost or the OSVPHS as applicable are responsible for reviewing and approving **all** faculty title change requests. When considering a request, the reviewing office will consider the appropriateness of the title, the proposed

title's alignment with similar positions across the institution, and the nature of the change. If the title change reflects a substantive job change, a competitive national search may be required.

RECORD RETENTION

To comply with federal requirements, all records pertaining to the recruitment process (i.e. application materials, search committee notes, summaries of pre-screening interviews, interview questions and responses, candidate itineraries, evaluation forms, reference checks, etc.) must be collected from the committee by the search chair and returned to the hiring department's HRP/A. This is typically done at the conclusion of the search. All recruitment documents must be maintained by the hiring department for a minimum of three (3) years from the effective date of appointment or when the search was closed, if not filled. During this retention period, such documentation is subject to review and audit by university, federal, and state officials.

VCU hiring authorities/managers must document when and why applicants are eliminated from consideration of a position. VCU's applicant tracking system contains predefined non-selection codes to document elimination reasons (see sections above regarding non-selection codes/coding). Evaluation sheets and all other interview and selection materials, derived from all sources, are important documents that must be added to the search file. All notes become part of the official record, and it is advised these are stored in the applicant tracking system or in the departmental drive, for ease of access and in support of green initiatives at the university. As noted above, all search participants should be advised to use clear, job-related, objective language in all search-related written materials.

Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

- A FOIA request for search committee records is sometimes made by unsuccessful candidates in gathering information related to the interview process.
- Search committee records are considered personnel records and as such are protected from disclosure to the general public but must be released to the subject of the records, redacting information related to other candidates as applicable.
- Emails, notes ("personal" or otherwise), survey results, search committee evaluations and other documents resulting from the search process are all subject to disclosure to the candidate under FOIA with the exception of confidential letters and statements of recommendation.

RESOURCES

For resources regarding the faculty search process and hiring new faculty, please visit the Faculty HR section of [InsideHR](#).

Any questions concerning any aspect of these procedures must be addressed to the Office of the Provost or Office of the Senior Vice President for Health Sciences, as applicable.



Faculty Search Process Guidelines

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