



VCU

Faculty Search Guidelines

Office of the Provost

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Faculty Search Process Guidelines

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INTRODUCTION AND 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, has primary oversight for recruiting a talented and diverse faculty, and for the implementation and interpretation of these Faculty Search Guidelines. The Office of the Provost, in part, 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 Vice President for Health Sciences (VPHS) oversees faculty recruitment on the health sciences campus.

Employment Equity

VCU is an affirmative action and equal opportunity employer. Under the 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 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.



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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 managers and HR professionals are responsible for proactively supporting VCU's commitment to equal employment opportunities. The [Diversity and 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 RESPONSIBILITIES OVERVIEW

Hiring Authority: The individual who authorizes hiring decisions for the position. The hiring authority is ultimately responsible in 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 is frequently the direct supervisor of the impacted role; when the hiring authority is not the direct supervisor, they may delegate many search-related functions to the direct supervisor. In general, the hiring authority:

- initiates the search approval process, in conjunction with their local human resources staff
- develops or oversees the development of the position description
- oversees advertising
- oversees the selection of the search committee members and gives members their charge
- considers finalist candidates, using candidate evaluations by the search committee, and determines which candidates to advance to the final interview stage
- oversees the finalist (on-campus) interview process and interviews finalists
- ensures reference checks are conducted
- evaluates finalist round feedback (if applicable)
- selects the top candidate, negotiates offers, and oversees 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/direct supervisor may not serve as chair or as a member of the search committee.

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

Faculty: Full-time benefited personnel who meet the criteria of faculty, as described in the Faculty Handbook (available in the Faculty HR section of the InsideHR website). Full time faculty is defined as having effort equal to or greater than 75 percent.



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Human Resources Staff (HRS): 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 liaison between Office of the Provost/VPHS. Other responsibilities include:

- providing professional administrative 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 Office of the Provost/VPHS as necessary
- gathering required documentation from the search committee
- in conjunction with the search chair, ensuring proper dispositioning of applicants
- ensuring reference checks are conducted
- providing aggregate demographic reports as needed to ensure diversity of applicant pool
- contacting Office of the Provost/VPHS to close the search
- coordinating hiring paperwork and facilitating onboarding of new faculty hires

Search Chair: The person(s) designated by the hiring authority or their designate to lead the search process, from the search committee charge until the successful presentation of finalists. 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 voting power in selection decisions. At the hiring authority's discretion, the search chair may provide additional leadership during and after the finalist/on-campus interview stage. The term search chair is inclusive of support personnel, such human resources staff or an executive assistant. Upon conclusion of the search, the chair collects all search documents used by the committee and forwards to HR staff for record retention.

Search Committee: A group of individuals designated by the hiring authority or their designate to screen applicants, interview candidates, and participate in selection decisions. 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.



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Search Stakeholders: Individuals interested in a search process or search outcome and that are not the hiring authority, HR staff, the search chair, or a search committee member. Examples of stakeholders are unit faculty, unit staff, students, community members, or non-committee members who may participate in on-campus interviews.

FACULTY SEARCH GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Generally, all full-time 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).” Prior to initiating a search for a faculty position, the hiring unit should contact Equity and Access Services in advance to determine if any underutilization of gender and/or race exists in comparison to the associated discipline. 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.

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 shall consider VCU’s deep commitment to diversity, both seen and unseen, as well as service loads and workloads when identifying the committee. The hiring authority may require and should otherwise strongly urge all search committee members to complete a 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 Office of the Provost or VPHS for more information about search committee trainings.

A search committee should comprise 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. 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

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- 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, hiring authority/ managers, and those in similar positions. Search committee members can be comprised of VCU faculty, staff, alumni, students, and community partners, as appropriate for the position.
- Be comprised of at least one woman, one man, and one member of an underrepresented population

Additionally, the search committee must have realistic expectations of and the time 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. **Position Description Development:** Consider what role the search chair and/or search committee will have in developing the position description
3. **Administrative Support:** Consider who will plan logistics related to the search process, including search-related meetings, organizing evaluations, arrangements for on-campus interviews (such as lodging, booking interview rooms, making dinner reservations, etc.) and travel arrangements for candidates
 - a. On-campus interview planning typically requires a major time commitment and it is strongly recommended that individuals giving search support complete search committee trainings
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 put up for consideration by the search committee
6. **Search Conclusion:** How the hiring authority prefers to 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. For high level positions, 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.

POSITION DESCRIPTION (PD) DEVELOPMENT

The hiring authority (or designee) is responsible for the fundamental task of developing a clear and comprehensive position description. The position description is 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, individuals from the academic unit, search committee members, and HRS. The final position description 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 descriptions are submitted in eJobs as part of the request to recruit process and, as such, undergo a formal review and approval process.

Best Practice Recommendations for Developing Position Descriptions:

General Recommendations

- Include brief, general information about VCU and the hiring college, school, and/or department
- Ensure position descriptions are constructed in a thoughtful and attentive manner. Carefully consider the appropriateness of recycling descriptions: 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 hospitable learning environment for all students."
- Do not use abbreviations; if abbreviations must be used, spell out the term the first time it appears
- If you need assistance, please contact Office of the Provost or visit the Faculty HR section of the InsideHR website for sample position descriptions

Guidance for the “Responsibilities” Section of the Position Description

- Use bullets and concise language
- 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”
- Word 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 missions, 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 the “Required Qualifications” Section of the Position Description

- Under “required qualifications,” include only those qualifications that are strictly non-negotiable; applicants who do not meet every required qualification are ineligible for hire
 - 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.”
- Include at least one requirement 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:
 - “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 level, include the following or similar mandatory text:
 - “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).”

- 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 the “Preferred Qualifications” Section of the Position Description

- 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 total number of qualifications (both required and preferred combined) to five to seven items. A long list of qualifications may have an exclusionary effect; however, leadership positions frequently require more qualifications.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES AND ADVERTISING PLAN

The hiring authority 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 the HRS to oversee or assist with these tasks.

Best Practice Recruiting strategies:

- Ask the search committee or hiring unit to proactively recruit and circulate vacancy announcements; 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 Equity and Access Services or the Division for Inclusive Excellence 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 targeted media source (one that serves underrepresented populations, such as women, minorities, veterans, those with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, etc.) for a minimum of thirty (30) calendar days.**

Centralized Advertising Plan:

Effective January 2019, VCU will be running a year-long Central Advertising Plan (CAP) pilot in which all VCU vacancies (except internal searches or direct appointments/waivers) will be posted automatically in the online job boards of ChronicleVitae, HigherEdJobs, and DiverseJobs. These three sources will satisfy the required ad placements with no cost to or effort on the part of the hiring unit. Ads will remain on the CAP sites for 30-60 days or until the posting is removed from eJobs, whichever is sooner. Hiring units are encouraged to purchase additional advertising as appropriate to the position and specific recruiting strategy (see section below). Any unit-initiated advertising is unit-funded. Units should not duplicate 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, add 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 advancing candidates)
- Ask colleagues who work in the field or research area for placement suggestions

Content Requirements

- Include language that demonstrates VCU's commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion
- Ensure content does not contradict the official posting, or provide additional information not included in the posting
- Include one of the following EEO statements:
 - If ad **does not** link to the VCU job site, it must contain the full EEO statement: *"Virginia Commonwealth University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action university providing access to education and employment without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, political affiliation, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or disability."*
 - If ad **does** link to the VCU eJobs website, it must contain the following abbreviated 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 content from the official posting
- Include information about VCU and the respective college, school or unit

POSITION APPROVAL AND POSTING PROCESS

The hiring authority works with local HRS 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 building the position description. The HRS initiates the request for recruitment and, upon approval, creates the job posting in the eJobs system.

Request to Recruit and Posting Procedures

- The hiring authority provides the local HRS with the following information:
 - The **final** draft of the position description (Note: Once approved in eJobs, any changes to the PD will have to be resubmitted for approval through a separate Request to Recruit)
 - The anticipated hire date
 - Tenure eligibility status (e.g. tenure-eligible or term) and rank (or open rank)
 - A detailed justification for the hire, including a clear description of how the role furthers strategic and organizational goals
 - The names, titles, gender, and race category (if known) for each search committee member, including the search chair
 - Assurance that the committee has been constructed with consideration for diversity and inclusion, if committee is not composed of one woman, one man, and one member of an underrepresented population
 - The anticipated salary range (must be within established faculty salary ranges for that position)
 - Labor distribution index(es)
 - Advertising sources (do not need to include CAP sources) and advertisement drafts (if using sources other than CAP sources)
 - A detailed application process (i.e. instructions regarding application materials, priority deadlines, timeline, etc.)

- The HRS initiates the Request to Recruit as described in the *eGuide to Faculty Recruitment* in eJobs
 - 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 VPHS

When the Request to Recruit is approved, the HRS creates the posting and sends to Office of the Provost or VPHS for review, approval, and posting on the VCU job site. Advertisements can then be placed (usually by the HRS) in the additional approved outside recruitment sources.

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 are responsible for reviewing the following content, regardless of whether the topics are explicitly discussed.

SEARCH COMMITTEE CHARGE MEETING

Best practices content for hiring managers (or designees) charging search committees are listed below. The list is not inclusive or prescriptive.

1. **Acknowledgement:** Thank the search committee for their service and provide an overview of the importance of the search
 - May discuss the strategic alignment of the position
 - 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:
 - Helping develop the position description (though the PD may have already been developed)
 - Developing evaluation criteria
 - Carefully reviewing each official application; only formal applications (those that come in through the VCU Jobs site) may be considered. Applicants who send materials outside of eJobs (via mail, email, in person, etc.) should be directed to submit an application in the eJobs system. Exceptions are permissible in special circumstances, such as when related to a reasonable accommodation.
 - Asking the search committee to actively seek out qualified applicants, including those from historically disadvantaged or underrepresented groups
 - Developing preliminary interview questions and conducting preliminary interviews prior to the finalist stage
 - Recommending finalist candidates for on-campus interviews

- The recommendation is the search committee’s primary function
 - Finalist candidates must be considered qualified for the position
 - Clarifying desired recommendation format: a common format is providing 3-5 unranked candidates, along with each candidate’s CVs, and a summary of perceived candidate strengths and weaknesses
4. **Parameters:** Clarify the search parameters and shared governance expectations
- Relate that all search-related communications flow through the search chair
 - 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
 - The committee must abide by federal, state, and university employment policies. Critically, it may not consider any applicant’s race, marital status, gender, parental status, or other legally protected attribute.
 - Affirm confidentiality requirements; committee members may not disclose or make available any search-related information to search stakeholders before, during, or after the search
 - Request flexibility after the finalist candidate proposal: the committee may be asked to supply additional candidate feedback
5. **Timeline:** Clarify broad timeline expectations

STARTUP MEETING

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

1. **Guidelines:** Distribute the search guidelines and *Guidelines for Lawful Interviewing* to all search committee members; clarification of content where necessary
2. **Roles:** Provide clarification of the search committee role, as needed. 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
3. **Conflicts:** Initiate a “call for conflicts”
 - a. Ask committee members to disclose (privately if desired) any potential search conflicts. Examples of conflicts include close ties to a candidate, being related to a candidate, serving as a reference for a candidate, or any known bias that could possibly influence evaluation. Conflict remedies include recusal from evaluation of specific applicants or from the search committee altogether. For additional information, contact Office of the Provost, VPHS or refer to VCU’s Code of Conduct.
4. **Position Description Feedback:** If applicable, reviews the process for submitting and aggregating feedback
5. **Timeline:** Reviews or leads the determination of the search timeline and requests members to 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 Office of the Provost/VPHS for guidance
6. **Methods:** Lead a discussion of applicant evaluation methods; many committees determine criteria (based on qualifications in the PD) and questions prior to reviewing any applications, in order to promote impartiality
 - a. The search committee and search chair jointly determine the methods, which must be reasonable and defensible, lawful, and abide by VCU’s Code of Conduct
 - b. 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 confidentially consider each application, and 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 advancing applicants 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 (see below for technical process).

Dispositioning of Applicants-Technical Process

- It is recommended that after the initial review of applicants, the search chair goes into eJobs to move each non-advancing applicant in the workflow (see the “Changing Applicant Status” section of the *eGuide to Faculty Recruitment in eJobs* for detailed instructions)
- The search chair selects the applicable non-selection reason for each non-advancing applicant. If an applicant’s status is undetermined, the search chair leaves the candidate un-coded until the status is certain.
- The above tasks may be delegated to the HRS, if the search chair explicitly provides all the non-selections reasons/codes.

SCREENING INTERVIEWS

Faculty searches generally include one or more screening interviews, which may occur via telephone, video, 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 pre-determined method and format

- Search committee should develop screening and campus interview process in advance of the screening interviews
- Each applicant must be asked the same, position-related questions; follow-up questions are allowed, so long as they pertain to the candidate's ability to perform the job
- Each committee member is expected to attend all interviews; however, in the event of a conflict, the chair must ensure that the majority (and no less than three members, chair included) of the committee is present
- Only official applicants (those who submitted a complete application through the VCU eJobs site) and search committee members may participate in interviews. Exceptions are permissible in special circumstances, such as when related to a reasonable accommodation.
- Deviations from the pre-determined interview method are discouraged. Care should be taken so that any deviations would not advantage or disadvantage a candidate.
- The search chair has the option to disclose the hiring range to applicants during screening interviews to ascertain interest for the next round of interviews

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, so long as they request the same information of all applicants within the same interview round. Examples of supplemental information include a diversity statement or instructional video.

Records Retention: Upon conclusion of the search, the chair forwards all official search material to the HRS

FINALIST RECOMMENDATIONS

After completing preliminary interviews and any other necessary evaluation activities, the search committee determines which applicants to recommend for an on-campus interview. The search chair should also disposition the 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 telephone (or video, etc.) interviews but not selected for an on-campus interview. It is recommended that three candidates be invited for on campus interviews, should three viable candidates exist. The finalist applicants are typically called *candidates*.

Candidates invited for on campus 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 on-campus interview list. The hiring authority may advance an alternate candidate if they do not agree with one or more finalist recommendation or if an advancing candidate withdraws from consideration.

Dispositioning of Candidates- Technical Process

- After candidates are selected for an on-campus interview, it is recommended that the search chair moves each non-advancing applicant in the workflow, per the “Changing Applicant Status” section of the *eGuide to Faculty Recruitment in eJobs*
- The search chair selects a non-selection reason for each non-advancing applicant; alternate applicants may be coded as “Alternate Choice Candidate”
- The above tasks may be delegated to the HRS, if the search chair explicitly provides all the non-selection reasons/codes

REFERENCE CHECKS

Reference checks must be conducted by the hiring authority (or designee) **only** 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, eligibility for rehire, work performance, etc. 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, Office of the Provost encourages reference checks to be conducted on all top candidates prior to a campus interview; however they may be completed afterwards.

Contacts: VCU may only contact only those individuals who the applicant 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 an offer extension.

ON-CAMPUS INTERVIEWS

- All faculty positions require at least one campus interview visit, consisting 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 schedules. 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. Typically, a salary range is provided at this time, if it has not already been disclosed.

The hiring authority (or designee) oversees the on-campus interview process. The goals of the process include:

- Aiding the hiring authority in final selection
- Providing candidates with information about the position and organization



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- 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 On-Campus Interview Planning:

Prior to bringing candidates to campus, the search committee chair meets with the hiring manager for a briefing on the candidates selected by the search committee for on-campus interviews. This allows the hiring manager the opportunity to vet the slate of candidates before resources are committed to bring candidates on campus. In accordance with the Governor's Executive Order 1 (2006), preference in hiring should be given to veterans in accordance with VCU's Veteran's Preference Guidelines for faculty.

After approval from the hiring manager, all candidates should be contacted by the search chair (or designee) to schedule on-campus interviews. The search committee chair (or designee) should ask all candidates if they require any accommodations during their campus interviews. If so, candidates should be provided with contact information of the ADA compliance 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 adjustments in the interview location, schedule, etc.

Once the candidates have accepted an invitation to interview on campus, written itineraries should be developed, using the guidelines below. Itineraries can be developed by the hiring authority, chair, or the administrative support staff (typically of the search chair's unit). As a best practice consideration, keep in mind the campus visit is usually the first impression the candidate has of VCU. Ensure the experience is a welcoming and a 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 finalist candidates should be given a comparable on-campus interview experience with similar access to information, stakeholders, resources, and social activities.

Interview Questions and Topics: Interview questions and topics should be standardized, job-related, and align with federal, state, and university policies.

Interviews with Hiring Authority: The hiring authority is required to conduct an interview with all candidates that are selected for on-campus interviews. These interviews are usually included in the itinerary.

Confidentiality: On-campus 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: A VCU representative (an employee, or even a student) should be enlisted to escort the candidate between interview events; candidates should not be expected to navigate the campus alone. Ideally, the same person escorts the



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candidates throughout the process and is a positive steward 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, or room service for all candidate meals during the interview period (for out of town candidates, generally from arrival through departure from Richmond). Food and beverage purchasing must comply with institutional procurement and purchasing guidelines.

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, on-campus interviews should include an open forum and the hiring manager should broadly announce the forum to staff, students, and faculty. Other faculty searches may include an open forum. Forums typically include a presentation component and a question and answer component.

Conclusion of On-Campus Interview: When the campus interviews are concluded, the search committee chair should provide the hiring authority with the committee's assessment of the top candidate(s) (e.g., strengths and weaknesses), in accordance with the instructions provided by the hiring authority.

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. 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.

All who participate in on-campus interviews, except for the candidates, may be supplied a mechanism to provide individual, digitized (written) feedback regarding the candidate(s), as related to the interaction. Feedback is generally limited to those stakeholders who interact with the candidate, based on their interactions or personal observations.

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



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SEARCH CONCLUSION

The hiring authority (or designee) negotiates the terms of hire with the top candidate (e.g. start date, salary, start-up funding, etc.). Any tentative offer must stipulate that the offer is contingent upon the university approving the offer, a successful credentials verification, 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 HRS can provide this template to the hiring authority (designee). Intents to Offer are not binding, and they are not enforceable employment contracts.

VERIFICATION OF CREDENTIALS

The hiring authority or designee, usually the HRS, obtains written permission from the candidate to verify credentials (i.e. highest completed degree). This verification of credentials must be included in the Request to Offer.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING OBTAINING TRANSCRIPTS:

It is a condition of employment that within thirty (30) days of hire, all new faculty are required to submit documentation to the hiring authority 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 by which they were 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, then 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 HRS obtains formal approval to offer the position through a Request to Offer in the eJobs system. In order to complete this step, the hiring authority will need to provide the HRS with the prospective employee's salary, start date, and a justification for their hiring, all of which are required sections of the Request.

Offer Approval Process

- The HRS completes the Request to Offer process within eJobs, per the *eGuide to Faculty Recruitment in eJobs*. Steps include:
 - Code any active applicant within the system (if not already done by search chair) based on the information provided by the committee
 - Upload proof of verified credentials
 - Upload copies of ads placed in outside recruitment sources (other than the CAP sources), as indicated on approved Request to Recruit.

If the Request to Offer is approved, the HRS advises the hiring authority that a formal offer in the form of an employment contract can be issued to the candidate

Decline of Offer: If the candidate declines the offer, the hiring authority (or designee) must request that the status of the Request to Offer be changed to “Offer Declined.” At this point, the hiring authority has a few options:

- If the unit would like to select an alternate top candidate out of the same applicant pool, a new Request to Offer will need to be initiated, using the same process as described above
- If there is no other qualified candidate in the applicant pool, the search process and position announcement must be closed. The unit should contact Office of the Provost or VPHS to request that search be re-opened. (See section on “Reopening a Search”)
- The hiring authority (or designee) can close a search without a hire by contacting Office of the Provost or VPHS. This will remove the posting from the web and applicants will see that the search was cancelled. Should this occur, the hiring authority (or designee) should notify applicants in eJobs, indicating that the position was closed.

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 hiring proposal has been approved by OFFR or VPHS, a formal offer (employment contract) can be extended to the successful candidate. The HRS 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 *Faculty Terms and Conditions of Employment*, 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 contact Office of the Provost or VPHS to change the status of the Request to Offer to “Contract Received, Hire Approved.” At this point, the search will be officially closed.



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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 recommendation, 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, by phone (preferred) or email by the hiring authority or search chair.

Applicants/candidates who request a rejection reason should be directed to the hiring unit, who should contact Office of the Provost or VPHS for guidance. Please note that the search committee, hiring unit, hiring authority, Office of the Provost, or VPHS 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 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 must be placed indicating the new deadline date if the search is extended for more than 30 days. **Advertisements in CAP sources may need to be reposted, at unit expense, if the ad has already been removed after 30 or 60 days.** 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. For guidance on extending a search, please contact Office of the Provost or VPHS.

RE-OPENING A SEARCH

In most cases, hiring units must close open positions after a period of one year. 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.

In both instances, the initial search must be properly noted and forwarded to Office of the Provost or VPHS to remove the position from the VCU eJobs website. Applicants must be notified that an administrative decision has been made not to fill the position 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 Request to Recruit and proposed advertisements to begin the new search may then be submitted in eJobs.

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 may warrant an internal, local, or expedited search, hiring units may request an exception from the national search requirement. Generally, internal and local searches follow the standard faculty search process, except they do not involve national advertising or national pools.

Internal Search Technical Procedures

- HRS, on behalf of the hiring authority, requests an internal search via the eJobs Request to Recruit process, 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 (see the *eGuide to Faculty Recruitment in eJobs* regarding Requests to Recruit).
- Once approved, work with Office of the Provost/VPHS to get it posted. It could be posted on eJobs noting that it is an internal search (open only to VCU employees) **or** Office of the Provost/ VPHS can provide the HRS with a link to the internal posting so that only those with the link can apply/be considered. This link may then be distributed through internal/local/regional channels, such as listservs or local publications
- To make a hire, the hiring unit follows remaining steps within the *eGuide to Faculty Recruitment in eJobs*

DIRECT APPOINTMENTS

Direct appointment of a candidate through the waiver of the faculty search process does not utilize a competitive selection process. Direct appointments are typically reserved for urgent business continuity needs and are restricted to a period of no longer than one year, after which time a national search must be conducted. Direct appointments require formal approval from Office of the Provost or VPHS and are processed in eJobs in a way similar to other recruitments: it differs in that the applicant is identified when the Request to Recruit is submitted, and the application is accessible only through a direct link—there is no public 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 of why a national search is not being conducted. Reasons for waiving a national search may include: unexpected vacancies/resignations; selecting an additional applicant from the same pool; 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 used when an individual has been selected as a principal investigator for a project.

Direct Appointment Technical Procedures

- The local HRS, on behalf of the hiring authority, initiates a Request to Recruit in eJobs. **NOTE:** a current CV and a completed Verification of Credentials are required to be uploaded for all direct appointment requests (see the “Direct Appointments” section of the *eGuide to Faculty Recruitment in eJobs* for detailed instructions on this process)
- When the selected person is an existing VCU employee and will receive supplemental pay as part of their interim appointment, the hiring unit submits an Off-Cycle Salary Increase request, rather than a Request to Recruit, in eJobs; please see the *eJobs Guide for Faculty Off-Cycle Actions* for complete instructions

FACULTY TITLE CHANGES

The Office of Faculty Recruitment and Retention and the Office of the Vice President for Health Sciences 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 like-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. Title changes requests are to be submitted through eJobs (see *eGuide to Faculty Recruitment in eJobs*).

RECORD RETENTION

To comply with federal requirements, all records pertaining to the recruitment process (i.e., application materials, search committee notes, summaries of telephone 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 HRS. 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. Throughout the entire search process — during the screening, interviewing, and decision-making phases — **all committee members are 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 can 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.

VCU hiring authorities/ managers must document when and why applicants are eliminated from consideration of a position. VCU’s applicant tracking system has several predefined non-selection codes to document



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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.

Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

- A FOIA request for search committee records is often the first step by an unsuccessful candidate 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 if necessary.
- 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 the InsideHR website.

Any questions concerning any aspect of these procedures must be addressed directly to Office of the Provost or VPHS.

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