



VCU

Faculty Affairs

To: Academic and Administrative Faculty Hiring Authorities

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Date: May 4, 2017

Subject: Stakeholders, Search Committees and Shared Governance **#Action Required#**

This memo is the first action toward greater clarification of the distribution of decision-making responsibilities in the faculty search process. The clarifications presented here are intended to uphold principles of participatory or shared governance in the recruitment of diverse and talented faculty. This office will pursue additional actions in the coming weeks to ensure university-wide compliance and understanding. In anticipation of these actions, we are asking all academic and administrative units to review unit-level policies and procedures on the faculty search process and to identify issues of alignment with these clarifications by July 1, 2017. The expectation is that unit-level policies and procedures will be brought into alignment by January 1, 2018.

The faculty search process is a hallmark of shared governance at our university. The distribution of decision-making responsibilities in the faculty search process represents broad and meaningful participation from faculty stakeholders (i.e., faculty not serving on the search committee) with clear accountability from the faculty search committee and the hiring authority. This distribution of responsibilities should promote communication, empowerment, partnership equity, transparency and trust. But, most importantly, the balance of decision-making responsibilities in shared governance must be evidenced as effective in achieving the educational mission of the university.

The intentional or unintentional disruption to the decisional balance in the faculty search process compromises shared governance and impedes the successful recruitment of diverse and talented faculty. Our awareness of incidents of this sort necessitates clarification of extant policies and procedures that govern faculty search administration and requires immediate intervention until the threat to the decisional balance has been substantially minimized.

Below are clarifications to the faculty search process that focus on the responsibilities of the search committee and hiring authority. The clarifications are intended to be prescriptive. The clarifications amplify existing university policy and procedures governing faculty search processes. The expectation for academic and administrative units is (1) to determine if unit-level policies and procedures are consistent with these clarifications by July 1, 2017, and, if yes, then (2a) to prepare a unit-level review summary and make available upon request by the above referenced date; and, if no, then (2b) to develop a unit-level action plan to minimize disruptions to the faculty search process, effective by January 1, 2018.

Clarification #1: Representation

The hiring authority is responsible for the constitution of the faculty search committee. The hiring authority may determine search committee membership through direct appointment or election, or a combination of both to satisfy unit-level needs for faculty representation. The hiring authority is permitted to use a range of acceptable criteria to determine search committee composition to include ambassadorship, inclusiveness and specified interest.

Clarification #2: Reporting Structure

The faculty search committee reports directly to the hiring authority. This reporting structure must not be intervened by people or practice, nor misrouted by unit policy or procedure. The faculty search committee reports on candidate search status to the hiring authority, only. The hiring authority is accountable for communication about candidate search status to faculty stakeholders.

Clarification #3: Recruitment

The faculty search committee and hiring authority should make every effort to maximize faculty participation in the recruitment phase of the faculty search process. The search committee and hiring authority should seek input from faculty stakeholders in drafting faculty search position descriptions and making referrals and sourcing. Faculty participation also should be encouraged during the campus interview phase of the faculty search process. The search committee and hiring authority should make every reasonable accommodation for faculty stakeholders to have substantive engagement and interactions with search candidates during 1-on-1 or group interviews, open forums, roundtables, and in similar contexts.

Clarification #4: Assessment

The faculty search committee and hiring authority should conduct a comprehensive assessment of search candidates. The comprehensive assessment must provide faculty stakeholders with multiple and varied means to provide substantive, digitized or written feedback on their interactions and perceptions of search candidate qualifications. The faculty search committee and hiring authority should conclude the comprehensive assessment of search candidates only after a representative sample of faculty stakeholders have provided feedback.

Clarification #5: Review

The faculty search committee and hiring authority are accountable for collected and confidential materials related to all search candidates. Descriptive applicant materials (e.g., cover letter, curriculum vitae, selected publications and/or works) collected from search candidates may be shared with faculty stakeholders for review, only if the search candidate provides verbal or written consent to the faculty search committee and/or hiring authority. Evaluative applicant materials (e.g., faculty stakeholder feedback, interview performance reviews, references, survey results and vote tallies) collected on search candidates shall not be shared with faculty stakeholders. Neither the search committee nor the hiring authority shall disclose or make available to faculty stakeholders any evaluative materials or summary statements on search candidates. The faculty search committee and hiring authority shall treat all evaluative discussions, materials and summary statements as confidential.

Clarification #6: Recommendations

The faculty search committee is the only entity at the unit-level or below with authorization to determine search candidate acceptability and to recommend search candidates to the hiring authority. The determination of search candidate acceptability and the recommendation of search candidates to the hiring authority are the exclusive rights and responsibilities of the faculty search committee. The search committee recommendations to the hiring authority must not be encumbered by any policy, practice or procedure at the unit-level that presents a disruption to shared governance.

References and Resources

American Association of University Professors. *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*.

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