Hiring Process FAQs

Q. How should unsolicited reference information (either phone call or personal conversation) be handled?

A. Information should be accepted, with thanks. We want as much valid information as possible to make an informed employment decision. The individual who receives the information should just take notes on the information given and submit it to the search committee. The person receiving the information should inquire as to the relationship the individual has with the candidate (i.e., colleague, friend, relative, ex-relative, etc.) and ask for a way to contact the reference for additional information or verification. Negative references must be corroborated by another reference, as positive references should be corroborated.

Q. How can we narrow the search further?

A. The minimum and preferred qualifications should be evaluated in a quantitative way to the greatest extent possible. When additional information is needed from the candidate, it may be gathered in a number of ways: a phone call, email, or even discussions at national meetings. This communication is not deemed an interview (for our purposes, an "interview" is a more formal communication conducted on-campus). It is advisable to have at least two committee members who phone the candidate for this information.

Q. Can we contact other references?

A. We suggest that if there are individuals not listed as references that would give valuable information, contact the candidate(s) to inform them of the committee's intention to communicate with other references. The candidate then has the opportunity to 1) contact those references to let them know of the impending call, 2) explain the reason for the omission as a reference, or 3) withdraw from consideration.

Q. Can the committee ask different questions of the interviewees?

A. A structured interview protocol is highly recommended to prevent any appearance of discrimination. Each interviewee should have a similar interview procedure; meet with the same people, have the same logistical arrangements, be asked the same questions, etc. If one candidate's answer necessitates a follow-up question, that question does not need to be asked of other candidates. Also, answer any questions that the interviewee asks of the committee.

Q. What is the difference between a "Search" committee and a "Selection" committee?

A. Both "search" and "selection" committees evaluate each of the applications submitted for the position and they determine acceptable interviewees. The separation between the two definitions is distinct. A Search committee forwards the names of acceptable candidates (either ranked or unranked, as the Department Head decides) to the Department Head or Dean/Vice President who then makes the hiring decision. On the other hand, a Selection committee and the Department Head make a joint hiring selection.

Q. Who can be a member of a Hiring Committee?

A. The administrator needs to consider the efficacy of each prospective member's contribution to the committee. A potential committee member should be selected for the candid and thoughtful perspective he/she can bring. Students, non-USU employees, the exiting employee, etc. can certainly be included if those individuals are capable of ascertaining minimum and preferred qualifications. Each committee member's vote will have equal value. Diversity in gender and ethnicity among the committee members is preferred.

Q. Can other individuals see the applications?

A. We want any qualified individual to feel comfortable about applying for a position at Utah State University. We believe that respecting the privacy of those individuals is paramount. Hiring committees are given a charge of confidentiality. Individuals who are not official members of hiring committees should not have access to any pre-interview information. The administrator who selects the committee makes the final decision on the composition of the committee. However, additional committee members can be added/removed at the administrator's discretion.

Often, colleagues and staff are asked for input to evaluate those who have been chosen as finalists for positions. At that time, interviewee information can be made available to others.

Q. How many members constitute a hiring committee?

A. The Faculty Code (404.3.3) indicates a minimum of five committee members, with a majority of those from the faculty. For exempt positions, the minimum is three individuals. The minimum number for non-exempt positions is one.

Q. Can a hiring committee interview without the entire committee?

A. The recommendation is that a majority of committee members be present; and that the missing member(s) is given appropriate notes. The missing member does not have to abstain from voting.

Q. How can networking be utilized in soliciting applications?

A. Collegial networking is a proven method of increasing the applicant pool. However, caution must be used in informing a prospective candidate about a job opening. Please do not use phrases which might lead an applicant to believe he/she has an advantage over other applicants. Phrases like the following would be appropriate: "A position is available at Utah State University in your area of expertise for which you may want to become an applicant. I would be happy to provide you with the job description or website information."

Also, this is a great opportunity to "sell" Utah State University as a great employer.

Q. What questions can you ask a “foreign national” candidate?

A. The applications for foreign nationals must be evaluated exactly the same as for all other candidates. Interviewees should all (U.S. citizens included) be asked a question such as “If you are offered this position, will you be able to get employment authorization?” The only time that discrimination against a “foreign national” is lawful, is if there are two equally well qualified finalists: one is a U.S. citizen and the other is a foreign national. An offer can be made to the U.S. citizen without prejudice.

Q. How can you tell if a candidate can get work authorization?

A. Search committees should (and can, lawfully) ask interviewees if they have current U. S. work authorization. If the individual answers, “Yes,” you may ask what visa the individual has. Usually, individuals finishing their PhDs in the United States have an F-1 visa. Often, individuals with J visas are required to return to their home country for a minimum of two years prior to accepting U.S. employment (sometimes the two year home stay is waived). An H (specialty) visa is temporary in nature (maximum of six [6] years at a time).

Q. What is the cost to get an H visa?

A. The Human Resources Office is able to assist departments that need to get a sponsorship (H) visa for their prospective employees. An H visa will cost the department $800 for a single individual; $1000 for an employee with dependents. The federal approval process is currently taking about 4.5 months. However, “premium processing” (a decision is made within a 15 day period) is available for an additional $1000.

Q. Will an H visa suffice for a tenure-track position?

A. An H visa is only a bridge for a tenure-track position. A foreign national must apply for “permanent resident” status within the initial 18 months of employment. USU currently is not prepared to handle “permanent resident – green card” petitions. There are immigration attorneys who can assist in that process. Currently, this process takes about 2.5 – 3 years, and costs about $5000.