

ESF Candidate Screening and Evaluation

Part One: Creating the Screening Criteria Checklist

Part Two: Initial Screening – Online Application System

Part Three: Search Committee Review of Applicant Materials

Part Four: Search Committee Discussion of Candidates

Part One: Creating the Screening Criteria Checklist

The search committee should create a screening criteria checklist based on the vacancy announcement to assess the strength of written application materials submitted by applicants. The checklist should distinguish between required qualifications, preferred qualifications, etc. The checklist should be weighted appropriately based on the vacancy announcement. Search committees should be careful in establishing “other” criteria which is not included in the vacancy announcement, particularly for subjective criteria that could be applied based on stereotypes. It is not appropriate to characterize candidates in terms of whether or not they would be a “good fit”.

Part Two: Initial Screening – Online Application System

The online interview system may be set up for initial screening of candidates to determine if they meet the objective selection criteria, such as holding a specific degree. Search committee chairs will work with the Human Resources representative to set this up through the online system. Candidates who meet those initial required qualifications are automatically entered into the online folder called “Qualified Candidates” by Interview Exchange. Search committee members may still view “All Applicants” if desired. Even though candidates may check a box to indicate that they possess certain qualifications, final verification should be made by the search committee and/or Human Resources representative (e.g. verification of education or number of years of experience) through the screening criteria checklist and/or other means of validation, such as credentials or reference checks.

Part Three: Search Committee Review of Applicant Materials

Using the screening checklist, each search committee member should *independently* review each submitted application and the corresponding application materials (available on Interview Exchange) and score according to the checklist/rubric created by the search committee. Search committee members should keep the checklist and any other notes in their possession until the materials are gathered by the search committee chair at the conclusion of the search.

Guidelines for reviewing vitas/resumes include:

- Determine if the candidates submitted all required application materials, such as cover letter, vita, resume, list of references, etc.
- Watch for gaps in work history or applicants with many jobs in a brief period of time, or too varied experience or work history. Keep in mind that in some cases there may be good reasons for a gap in work history, such as caring for a family member with an extended illness, child care, etc. (Note: When conducting the interview, the committee may ask about gaps in work history within the guidelines of legal interview questions.)
- Watch for the “functional resume” – one that omits dates and only describes experiences and qualifications. As stated above, it is very important to verify education and employment dates of the applicant.
- Look for qualifiers. Does the vita overuse phrases such as “had exposure to,” “assisted with,” “understanding of?” These may reflect lack of actual experience or training.
- Red flag any negatives. Letters of application that reflect bitterness, anger, or passing the fault usually indicate a lack of responsibility or accountability on the part of the applicant.
- Be careful not to read into application materials. In particular, do not determine that an applicant is “overqualified” and therefore not interested in the position, or wonder why an applicant out of the region would be interesting in commuting or moving.

In some cases, particularly where there is a very large pool of candidates (e.g. over 100) the search committee chair and/or designated search committee member may screen the candidates to a more manageable pool (e.g. 30) for the search committee to review.

Part Four: Search Committee Discussion of Candidates

After search committee members have reviewed all applicant materials, the committee will meet to discuss their individual reviews of the application materials. All acceptable candidates should be identified. From that list, the committee develops a short list of acceptable applicants to contact for phone or campus interviews. Be careful not to eliminate applicants the committee still has a moderate interest in. It may be necessary to reconsider these applicants if the campus interview applicants prove unsatisfactory.

The Affirmative Action Officer (AAO) must attend this meeting for the following two purposes:

1. To confer on whether or not the applicant pool appears to reflect a diverse population of applicants and if not, to discuss additional ways to expand the recruitment efforts;
2. Approve the determinations made by the search committee (e.g. short list, finalists).

(Note: In rare cases, if the AAO cannot attend this meeting, the search chair will meet separately with the AAO to review the search committee determinations.