

## 4.00 INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

### 4.01 CAMPUS VISITS

When the pool of candidates has been narrowed to a small group of individuals in whom the search committee is seriously interested, some may be invited to visit the campus.

At this point, a decision needs to be made as to whether interviewing expenses will be paid. Considerations may be given to partial reimbursement, but all candidates must be given the same reimbursement consideration.

Before the candidate arrives, a detailed and thorough agenda should be established. This will include the individuals and groups the candidate will meet, facilities to be visited, and faculty or staff who will escort the candidate from place to place. One person should be designated as the primary host or hostess for the visit.

The agenda should be sent to the candidate or shared with him or her at the outset of the visit. All members of the search committee should also receive a copy. Since broad exposure of a candidate to potential colleagues is desirable, the search committee may wish to send copies of the agenda to all members of the unit.

You may also wish to send the candidate information about your department and college, e.g., a departmental handbook that includes the names and major achievements of the faculty and staff or a college brochure describing activities for the past year. A campus map also should be included.

The University of Wisconsin, Madison has a variety of brochures and pamphlets that may be of interest to a candidate. The University League publishes a *Guidebook for Faculty and Staff* that gives valuable and interesting information on Madison and the University and would be helpful to new employees; the most recent copy of this booklet is available from the Secretary of the Faculty's Office (262-3956). University Communications maintains the online copy of the UW-Madison Almanac. To view it go to the UW-Madison home page at: <http://www.wisc.edu/>. Click on FACTS under "About UW-Madison." Then click on "Related Sites.. Other resources may be appropriate depending on the nature of the search and/or type of position involved. Contact the Office of News and Public Affairs for further assistance (262-3571). The Campus Assistance Center publishes *Resources: New Student Information Handbook*, an annually updated student resources guide which may also be of interest to visiting candidates. Contact the Campus Assistance Center, 420 N. Lake St. (263-2400) to obtain the most recent copy.

When recruiting a candidate, the search committee should offer to arrange to have the individual picked up at the airport. Shortly before the visit, when writing or calling the candidate to determine arrival and departure times, it is advisable to ask if there are any

special circumstances about which the search committee should be apprised. If the candidate, for instance, has a disability it would be useful to know if a van or a full-size car is needed. If the candidate has special dietary requirements, courtesy demands that they be taken into account in planning the menu for a luncheon or a dinner.

If an escort meets the candidate, that person should be prepared for the visit. One should, for instance, know how to pronounce the candidate's name and should have reviewed his or her dossier. The escort may wish to inform the candidate about cultural events and entertainment facilities in Madison as well as provide a brief overview of the University. If a question is asked which the escort or members of the search committee do not have sufficient information to answer (e.g., "Tell me something about the Asian community in Madison"), the candidate should be assured that a member of the committee will obtain the needed information and respond to him/her with the answer.

#### **4.02.01 INTERVIEWING: PLANNING AND STRATEGIES**

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Care must be taken to avoid asking inappropriate questions in the course of an interview. The Equal Employment Opportunities Commission (EEOC) has made it clear that certain questions or phrases are unacceptable. The test is whether these questions or phrases can be interpreted as (a) soliciting information not pertinent to the person's ability to perform the job and (b) seeking information that could be used to discriminate against the applicant on the basis of his or her race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, sexual preference, or disability status. (Refer to Appendices J & K for a list of appropriate and inappropriate interview questions.)

#### **4.02.02 THE INTERVIEW**

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For candidates who are new to Madison and to the department, the interview is one of the most critical stages in the evaluation process. It is generally the first opportunity for the candidate and the search committee to interact.

While the interview allows the search committee to evaluate the candidate, it also permits the candidate to judge both the search committee and the University. An interview that is carefully planned, that begins on time, that allows the candidate to present himself or herself in the best possible light, and that elicits the necessary job-related information, is a major element in recruitment.

It is the policy of the University of Wisconsin-Madison to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified persons with disabilities who are applicants for employment. All applicants who are invited for interviews should be informed of this policy so that they can request accommodations for interviews if needed. Employment opportunities are not to be denied to anyone because of the need to make reasonable accommodations to a person's disability.

Before the interview begins, it is advisable for all members of the committee to review the candidate's dossier and the job description. You may also wish to reflect on how to create an atmosphere of openness in the interview. Both sides need to know what expectations the committee has of a candidate and the candidate has of the position.

The questions to be asked of a candidate are of paramount importance. The search committee should devise a group of core questions based on the job-related criteria by which candidates are to be evaluated. These questions should be asked of all candidates, thereby allowing comparative judgments to be made while insuring that crucial job-related information is obtained. Many search committees have found that beginning with open-ended questions relaxes the candidate and encourages him or her to speak freely.

Developing questions ahead of time need not be unduly restrictive. Follow-up questions based on the responses to predetermined questions will most likely vary with each candidate. One should also examine the questions to make sure none will have the effect of screening out or discouraging women or minorities. A patterned interview of this type has the beneficial effect of minimizing unconscious biases. Time should also be allotted for the candidates to ask questions of the committee.

Since candidates are generally concerned about time frames, they should be informed of the date by which they will next hear regarding the search.

As part of the interview process, candidates often meet with members of the department, the department chair, appropriate administrators, and deans. To obtain the maximum benefit from these interviews, the committee should circulate to all individuals with whom the candidate will meet, his or her dossier, a copy of the job description, and a copy of the interview schedule. The search committee should also inform administrators in advance if it wishes to receive evaluations from them, as well as specific areas that it wishes to have explored. A dean, for instance, may be asked to assess a candidate's research record or to comment on the scholarly potential of a candidate. Such suggestions will give a focus for interviews as well as provide vital information for the selection process.

The department chair or administrator should review with the candidate the criteria and procedures for promotion, the salary considerations and medical and fringe benefits, and the policies regarding tenure, if a faculty appointment is involved.

When women or minorities visit the campus for interviews, they may find it reassuring to have a chance to visit privately with other women and minorities at the University so they will not feel that they will be isolated if they accept a position here. Time should be set aside for that purpose. Of course, they will have a chance to meet women and minorities in the unit to which they are applying, but there is no need to limit them to individuals in that field. The Equity and Diversity Office can assist in arranging meetings with others on campus or in the larger community.

In many instances, a search committee will wish to set aside a block of time for the candidate to meet informally with faculty, staff, and students. Such occasions are intentionally unstructured so that they may become better acquainted with the candidate. It is in precisely these situations, however, that care must be taken to avoid asking questions or making comments - either directly or indirectly - that relate to race, the derivation of one's name, ethnic origin, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, age, political affiliations, or other personal matters. Such questions or remarks create a negative impression of the search committee, the department, and the University (Appendix J).

Simple courtesy, as well as the spirit of affirmative action, demands that all candidates be treated equally during their interview and campus visit. When feasible, similar events should be scheduled, interviews with the same University personnel should be arranged, and an equal amount of time should be allotted for each candidate.

Search committees often ask a faculty candidate to teach a class or seminar or to make a presentation to a group of faculty and students. Such occasions provide students and faculty with the opportunity to judge the teaching ability of a candidate while permitting individuals not on the search committee to offer their evaluation.

Having a candidate visit the campus requires numerous arrangements. It is important for the Chair of the Search Committee to appoint someone to handle the logistics of a visit. Arrangements generally include collecting flight information and travel plans, picking up the candidate at the airport and returning him or her there, reserving meeting rooms, preparing schedules and itineraries for search committee members and the candidate, arranging social events, making hotel reservations, arranging for meals, and reimbursing for travel expenses and any incidental costs (refer to "Travel Regulations," *UW-System Financial Policy and Procedures Paper FPPP #36*, Section XIX).

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#### **4.02.03 CLOSING THE INTERVIEW**

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Make sure that you have not overlooked any questions, and encourage the candidate to suggest anything that might expand on or clarify his or her training and experience.

Tell applicants your schedule for filling the position. You should also feel free to tell them how many vacancies exist or are expected in the near future, how many candidates are being interviewed, and how and when you will communicate your employment decision.

If you have any questions about the interview process, call the Academic Personnel Office or the Equity and Diversity Office.