



# Search Committee Training

Texas A&M AgriLife Human  
Resources

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# Why is this important?

- Texas A&M AgriLife is committed to providing a welcoming, inclusive environment for all students, faculty and staff. One focus of this commitment is the recruitment and hiring process.
- The diversity of our faculty and staff brings strength to AgriLife, keeping that diversity in focus with each search gives us an opportunity to attract, hire and retain the talented people we want and need to continue our legacy of teaching, research, and service excellence.
- This training provides instruction, advice and techniques to enable search committees to run more effectively and efficiently. It is also designed to increase knowledge of correct, legal and recommended hiring practices.

# Overview

- Selecting and forming a search committee
- Review of job description
- Starting a search
- Advertising
- Reviewing candidates
- Interviews
- Making the offer
- Recordkeeping
- After the hire

# Know What it Takes

- Start out with a good plan for conducting a recruitment search based on departmental goals and AgriLife policy and procedures, as well as a clear understanding of equal opportunity laws.
- As a search committee member, it is vital that you know what it takes to conduct a good and legal search.
- An essential role of the search committee is to ensure that all applicants are considered equitably throughout the process. Confidentiality should be maintained.

# Definitions

- Affirmative action refers to efforts made to expand employment opportunity for members of a particular race, gender, ethnicity, or other group previously excluded from employment opportunities. These efforts must be consistent with applicable laws and regulations.
- Equal employment opportunity is the right of all persons to be considered based on their ability to meet the requirements of the job. Because equal opportunity does not typically change existing conditions, affirmative action efforts may be necessary.

# Forming a Committee

- The department/unit head, director or other administrator is responsible for selecting the committee members and designating a chairperson. Departments should include individuals who have broad perspectives and a commitment to diversity.
- The chairperson calls the committee members together, and they develop a recruitment plan. A key part of the recruitment plan is establishing a timeline for the overall search - from an advertising deadline date to the date of hire - also key is determining attendance requirements and other responsibilities for search committee members.

# Selecting a Chairperson

It is desirable to select a diversity-sensitive search committee and especially chairpersons who are highly regarded in their unit or department, within AgriLife, and the community and who:

- have experience in searches that have been successful in recruiting underrepresented groups;
- are skilled at conducting respectful, effective meetings;
- are knowledgeable about legal processes relating to hiring and recruiting, equal opportunity and affirmative action.

# Review of Job Description

- Know expectations for the position being recruited.
- Include detailed job description with required and preferred qualifications.
- Job description serves as basis for how the committee reviews, interviews and selects candidates and should be referenced at each stage of the search.
- Develop selection criteria that are objective and based on job requirements.
- Selection criteria should include qualifications for teaching, research and service for faculty and specific qualifications needed for support staff, research and/or extension positions.
- Eliminating unnecessary qualifications can widen the pool of candidates.



# Starting a Search

- Plan out meeting dates, times and locations for committee
- Know long range plan for your unit/departmental
- Know expectations of unit/department head
- Consider goals/objectives of position and strategic plan
- Consider new attributes needed in unit
- Consider tenure if applicable

# Increasing the Odds for Success

- Begin searches early, before the busiest or most competitive periods.
- Include only needed qualifications in the position description, and if there is a choice of specialty areas, consider searching for either rather than selecting one.
- Use an open-ended application deadline, e.g., "review of applicants will begin on [date] and continue until the position is filled."
- Use a personal approach in recruiting applicants — get on the phone!
- Re-advertise or add more recruiting sources during the search, if needed.
- Consult with AgriLife Human Resources for assistance in formulating and executing your search.

# Advertising

- Advertise widely.
- Always include the required EEO statement " AGENCY NAME is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action/Veterans/Disability Employer"
- Include a link to the job posting on the advertisement.
- Additional resources for diversifying your applicant pool: <https://agrifeas.tamu.edu/documents/building-diverse-applicant-pool.pdf>

# Advertising Suggestions

- Professional or discipline-specific journals and publications
- Professional associations
- Personal contacts at conferences
- Colleagues at other institutions/agencies
- Job Boards targeting Veterans, Individuals with Disabilities, and other diverse populations

# Veterans/Disabled

Make sure to include qualified women, minorities, veterans and disabled when advertising:

## Recruiting Veterans

<https://agrifeas.tamu.edu/hr/diversity/veterans/#recruiting-veterans>

## Recruiting Individuals with Disabilities:

<http://agrifeas.tamu.edu/hr/diversity/people-with-disabilities/>

# Reviewing Candidates

- Evaluate the applicant pool by screening applications based on advertised minimum and preferred qualifications.
- Develop and retain a ranking/matrix of all applicants – the selection criteria should be carefully defined, directly related to the requirements of the position, and clearly understood and accepted by members of the search committee.
- Document selection criteria related to how the committee initially screened and ranked applicants, how applicants were selected for interview and how the finalist was selected.

# Fairness

Ensure fairness to all applicants during the screening and selection process. Fairness has been achieved if the following criteria exist:

- consistent treatment of applications at each stage of the selection process;
- consistent evaluation of all applicants;
- stated qualifications providing the basis for the selection criteria used in the final decision;
- allowing each member of the group to contribute to the evaluation of all applicants.
- documented decisions

# Committee Interviews: A Recommended Strategy

- In most circumstances, a committee interview helps to ensure fair and objective screening and evaluation of candidates, building consensus in the evaluation process.
- Committee interviews are recommended because this type of interview usually tends to be thorough, more focused and job-related.
- Members are accountable to each other and aware that they are being observed; therefore, questions tend to be more to the point and personal biases are reduced.
- By participating simultaneously, all interviewers are able to evaluate the same sample of the candidate's responses and presentation.



# Planning the Interview

- Schedule interviews and events to ensure consistent treatment of all candidates, including internal candidates.
- Develop a group of core questions based on the position-related criteria by which the candidates are to be evaluated.
- Use the same core questions with all candidates to allow comparative judgment and ensure that crucial position-related information is obtained.

# Planning the Interview

- Avoid problems such as repetitive questioning and the atmosphere of an “interrogation.”
- Assign each interviewer a specific topic such as technical knowledge, management style, past experience or a specific question to ask.
- Document all interview questions and answers.

# Interviewing Resources

- Interview Questions Guide  
<http://agrifeas.tamu.edu/documents/ag-422.pdf>
- Lawful Interview Questions  
<https://agrifeas.tamu.edu/documents/lawful-questions.pdf>
- Acceptable vs. Unlawful Interview Questions  
<https://agrifeas.tamu.edu/documents/acceptable-and-unlawful-questions.pdf>
- Sample Interview Questions  
<http://agrifeas.tamu.edu/files/2013/04/sampleinterviewquestions.pdf>

# Reference Checks

- Reference checks should be an integral part of every search. The search committee determines the process by which references will be checked and letters of recommendation requested.
- Reference Check Form  
<https://agrifeas.tamu.edu/documents/ag-446.pdf>
- Document all reference check questions and answers.

# Making The Offer

- The search committee should select the candidate of choice and make a recommendation to the hiring supervisor.
- The hiring supervisor makes the offer to the candidate.
- The search committee should ensure that unsuccessful candidates have been notified prior to public announcements of the appointment. Official, timely notification to internal candidates is especially important.
- Offer letters – Follow the Dean of Faculty process/templates if TAMU faculty positions; use AgriLife HR offer letter templates for all other positions
- Foreign national considerations – contact IFSS or HR with questions

<http://agrilifeas.tamu.edu/hr/supervisor-toolkit/international-employees/>

# Recordkeeping

- Rating sheets/hiring matrix, interview questions and answers and reference check materials are selection materials must be retained in the recruiting file.
- Written documentation/notes must also be retained.
- Be advised that even casual comments noted in margins may be considered as written evidence of discriminatory evaluations.

# After The Hire

- Search committee wrap up – meet to gather all required documentation and notes, discuss success of search and ways to improve process.
- The hiring department should be deliberate in welcoming new hires by providing onboarding assistance to ensure a smooth transition and enhance the probability of the candidate's success in the new position.
- The department/unit head may want to identify someone who will be willing to serve as a mentor and participate in other professional development activities.

# Resources

AgriLife HR Website: <http://agrilifeas.tamu.edu/hr/>

Dean Of Faculties Hiring Website: <http://dof.tamu.edu/hiring>

AgriLife Rules & Procedures: <http://agrilifeas.tamu.edu/rules-procedures/>

Texas A&M University Rules & SAPS: <http://rules-saps.tamu.edu/>

TAMU System Policy & Regulation Library:  
<http://www.tamus.edu/legal/policy/policy-and-regulation-library/>



# Forms

Search Committee Identification Form

<https://agrilifeas.tamu.edu/documents/ag-475.pdf>

Search Committee Guidelines

<https://agrilifeas.tamu.edu/documents/ag-476.pdf>

# Thank You

By following the basic steps outlined in this training, you are sure to conduct an efficient and legal search that is fair and consistent for all candidates and achieves the ultimate goal of equal opportunity.

The good faith effort that you put into your duties as a search committee will allow you to choose the best candidate for the job and for Texas A&M AgriLife. Your role as a search committee member is vital to the future of AgriLife. The decisions that you make as a team, will affect our faculty, staff, and students for years to come.

# Questions?

AgriLife Human Resources will do all we can to help you fulfill the important mission of search committees.

Please contact our office at 979-845-2423 at any time during the search process and we will be happy to assist you.