



Guide for
**Staff Searches
and Hiring**

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I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. COMMITMENT TO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/EQUAL EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY.....	1
III. CONFIDENTIALITY.....	1
IV. INITIATING THE SEARCH PROCESS.....	2
V. SEARCH COMMITTEE.....	2
Establishing Search Committee.....	2
Search Committee Responsibilities.....	2
First Committee Meeting.....	3
Preparation of Recruitment Plan.....	3
VI. RECRUITING.....	4
Advertising.....	4
Minority Recruitment.....	4
VII. ACTIVITIES DURING THE SEARCH.....	4
Candidate Pool Screening and Rationale.....	4
Documenting the Search.....	5
Veteran’s Preference.....	5
Communicating with Candidates.....	6
Selection of Interviewees.....	6
VIII. CAMPUS VISITS.....	6
Planning for Effective Interview.....	6
Making a Good Impression.....	7
Conducting the Interview.....	7
Interview Questions to Avoid.....	8
After the Interview.....	8
IX. FINAL STAGES OF SEARCH PROCESS.....	9
Making a Recommendation.....	9
Offer of Employment.....	9

I. INTRODUCTION

Hiring and retaining exceptional employees is one of the most important responsibilities at UHCL. This search manual describes the procedures and provides the necessary forms for conducting a fair and equitable search.

II. COMMITMENT TO AFFIRMATIVE ACTION/EQUAL EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The University of Houston-Clear Lake is committed to providing equality of treatment and opportunity in an environment that appreciates and respects the diversity of the community it serves. It is university policy to prohibit discrimination in employment and educational services based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, veteran status or sexual orientation, except where such a distinction is required by law, and to promote the full realization of equal opportunity through an affirmative action program.

III. CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is the foundation of a credible search committee and trustworthy search process. Searches and search committee meetings are confidential. Any inquiries received, in-person or by email, regarding the position, the status of their application, the status of the search, or who is on the search committee, please forward them to the Employment Coordinator. Applicants should not be aware of who is on the search committee and should not be contacting any search committee members directly. The goal is to maintain confidentiality of who is on the search committee for as long as possible.

Internal Candidates: Searches with internal candidates can be difficult for all of those involved, and can result in feelings of resentment among colleagues or applicants. Some of this is inevitable, and the situation will be awkward. It is important to follow search procedures in an attempt to conduct a fair search. Internal candidates should undergo the same procedures as external candidates. We understand internal candidates are different but the principle of equal treatment should always be followed.

IV. INITIATING THE SEARCH PROCESS

All positions require job posting approval, prior to posting, through the Strategic Hiring Committee process. Determine the category the vacancy is in and this will clarify what steps must be completed before the position can be posted:

Category 1: Operational level positions including; positions without managerial or supervisory duties. No reclassifications - straight replacement.

Category 2: Managerial positions including; positions with managerial or supervisor duties. Category 1 positions that include a reclassification.

Category 3: Director and above positions including; managerial and supervisory positions that are a re-class, and all positions that are either new or part of a departmental re-organization.

If the vacancy is created by a separation of an employee, decide if you want to fill the position as is or change it before beginning the recruitment process. Review the position description and make changes as appropriate to ensure you are recruiting for the skills needed and to ensure the duties listed match the duties the employee is expected to perform. It is vital the position description includes the most current information, is clearly written, and provides as much detail as possible to assist in proper recruitment.

V. SEARCH COMMITTEE

Establishing the Search Committee

All Director level and above staff searches must be directed by a search committee. Establishing a strong and credible search committee is essential for a successful search process. The Chair will be designated by the Supervisor, Hiring Manager, or Department head.

- The search committee should consist of a minimum of three members, unless a written exception is granted by the Supervisor and Human Resources.
- Committee members should include members that are knowledgeable of the position duties and responsibilities, can represent the department's stake in the process or have affiliation with the position.
- Full-time, part-time, professional, and, support staff members are eligible for membership on the search committee. When appropriate, the supervisor may name one or two committee members from outside the department, as well as consider students for the committee. Student committee members must be employees of UHCL to access applications.
- Underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, male, female, and other should be part of the search committee membership.

Search Committee Responsibilities

Effective search committee members are well-connected, available to participate fully and consistently, and comfortable engaging in rigorous debate to ensure the best outcome. The search committee is responsible for conducting the initial search, screening of applicants and presenting recommended candidates for further consideration. All search members should be fully prepared to:

Attend all scheduled search meetings	Support recruitment efforts
Review all submitted application materials as required	Compare and rank applicants with regard to the stated position requirements

Set aside biases to fully consider all who may be qualified to assume University roles	Keep all interview notes and screening information to submit to HR
Participate in/assist with the interviewing process	Make appropriate applicant recommendations
Follow any designated deadlines/timeframes to complete task.	Maintain confidentiality with regard to search process.

First Search Committee Meeting

The first search meeting involves the chair and committee discussing the position description, planned recruiting activities (via Recruitment Plan), timelines for completion, interviewing time lines, and the potential hire date. It is vital for the chair and committee to be consistent with regard to position information, position details and requirements, reviewing applications, desired candidate specifics and defined search time line.

Please invite the Employment Coordinator to the first committee meeting.

Director level and above: Include the Affirmative Action Officer to present the **required** Search and Screen training. This training must be completed before committee member's will be granted access to the applicant pool.

Preparation of Recruitment Plan

The recruitment plan includes the position data and the names of each committee member. Additionally, it indicates the search committee's plans for additional external advertising. Indicate recruitment plans by checking the appropriate box(s). The goal for external advertisement is to ensure the advertisement reaches the most diverse pool of applicants possible. It is critical that search committees adopt a proactive approach to selecting non-traditional methods of posting position announcements to increase their ability to attract diverse candidates.

Please note: Human Resources will automatically advertise the position on the UHCL jobs site, HigherEdjobs.com and the Texas Workforce Commission.

When recruiting applicants, the overall goal is to reach those looking for new opportunities in addition

Technique/Source
Ask current department members to identify potential candidates.
Network with people who "know people" in the field (who may be called upon to nominate individuals).
Identify journals read by people in the discipline/profession.
Identify Professional associations for people in the discipline/profession.
Identify websites that are visited by people in the discipline/profession.
Identify the relevant professional or community organizations, caucuses, etc. that respond to the needs of women, people of color, people with disabilities, etc.
Identify the names of people who are publishing interesting research, giving strong presentations nationally, etc.
Identify affinity groups and placement offices at other Universities and institutions and the best way to share the recruitment with them.
Identify ways to obtain nominations from alumni, and members of the University community.
Placement in local or national publications.
Placement on specific electronic resources (listservs, job banks, Web sites, etc.)

VI. RECRUITING

Advertising

HR will post all full-time staff positions on the UHCL jobs site, TWC and higheredjobs.com. The Employment Coordinator can provide long and short advertisements that should be used for external advertising upon request. If you create your own ad, it must be approved by Human Resources prior to use on external sites.

Director level and above: Ads for external use must be approved by the Affirmative Action Officer.

*Please make sure additional external advertising is done only after the position is posted by HR and open for applications.

Minority Recruitment

In keeping with UHCL's commitment to diversity, it is important a search committee focus on a recruiting plan to increase the pool of underrepresented individuals. With that in mind, the importance lies in what is the current make-up of existing employees, how there can be more focus with regard to underrepresented groups, and how past search activities can be changed/broadened. Previous efforts may not have resulted in a "diverse pool" of candidates, or not enough effort was made in recruitment activities.

VII. ACTIVITIES DURING THE SEARCH

Candidate Pool Screening and Rationale

Search Committees will review all applications and advance candidates based on job-related criteria without regard to subjective judgments or impressions.

We encourage you to review the applications on-line versus printing every application. Applications can be screened on-line 24/7 from any computer. Should you choose to print any of the applicants' documentation please remember the documents contain very personal information, should not leave your office or the campus, and should be destroyed when the search is complete.

Please note: All applications are first reviewed by the Employment Coordinator in Human Resources. Only complete applications that meet the minimum requirements will be forwarded to the hiring department for additional review. These applications must receive full and consistent consideration by the Search Committee.

Step 1: Determine whether each candidate meets or exceeds the minimum requirements for the position. This is done by objectively comparing an applicant's resume information with the position description/job posting.

Step 2: Each committee member must analyze the skills and qualifications noting results individually on the screening matrix. Score all applicants using the screening matrix developed in the search committee meeting.

Documenting the Search

Human Resources provides the search committee with the necessary documents to use during the screening process including;

1. **Matrix Summary:** This excel spreadsheet includes the names of all committee members and is an accumulation of each committee members scores for each candidate. It also includes a column for Veterans Preference. Please indicate Yes or No in the appropriate column based on the applicant's answer to the question.

2. **Screening Matrix:** Lists the minimum and preferred requirements with suggested scoring. The committee can revise the matrix and submit to the Employment Coordinator for approval prior to reviewing applications. It also includes a column for Veterans Preference.

Director level and Above: Committee is charged with adding required and preferred elements found in the job description. All candidates must be evaluated against a common set of criteria to determine their suitability for the next step in the process. Must be approved by Affirmative Action Officer prior to reviewing candidates. Email the Affirmative Action Officer for approval.

Veteran's Preference

Veterans who are disabled, who served in the active military in the Armed Forces during certain specified time periods, who were discharged or released under honorable conditions, or in military campaigns are entitled to preference over others in employment with or appointment to a state agency or institution of higher education as long as they meet the minimum qualifications and any preferred qualifications for the position to which they apply.

The question, "do you qualify for Veteran's Preference?" is on all employment applications.

Interviews: An individual who qualifies for veteran's employment preference is entitled to a preference in the interview process over other applicants who do not have a greater qualification.

1. If there are 2 equal candidates and one qualifies for Veteran's Preference, the Veteran is entitled to an interview over the other candidate.

3. **Candidate Evaluation Form:** Used to assess the candidate's qualifications and potential success in the position.

4. **Employment Reference Check:** At least 2 professional references are required for the finalist. At minimum, all 10 questions must be asked. Additional job specific questions may be necessary. List any additional questions and answers.

5. **Collaborator How-To:** Included to help the committee navigate the online application site.

Ensure documentation provides rationales for search committee decisions and recommendations. This can be as extensive as notes to the candidate files, or as brief as a note on the matrix (e.g., "Does not have required education"). Notes should indicate specific job-related reasons for selection or non-selection.

** Ensure all applicants are evaluated on the basis of the pre-established criteria related to the position. Avoid comments either orally or in notes that are not job related.

2. If the hiring department intends to interview five or fewer applicants, at least one must qualify for veteran's employment preference.

3. If the hiring department intends to interview six or greater applicants, at least 20% of the total number interviewed must qualify for veteran's employment preference.

4. The interview process shall remain the same for all applicants including veterans. For example, if the hiring department is instructed by HR to interview applicant A, who is a veteran, they cannot be given a phone interview while the other applicants are interviewed in-person. Applicant A should be brought to campus and included in the same interview process.

Important Notes: Veteran's employment preference does not guarantee the veteran a job. Positions at UHCL must continue to be filled with the most qualified applicant.

Communicating with Candidates

The names and information of the search committee are confidential and should remain so for as long as possible. However, many times applicants will reach out to the hiring department or members of the search committee regarding the status of the search and their application. Please only respond with the following;

- Thank the candidate for their continued interest in the position.
- Inform the candidate you cannot comment on an ongoing search and that you will be forwarding the inquiry to Human Resources.
- Forward the email to the Employment Coordinator and he/she will respond on the department's behalf.

Selection of Interviewees

Determine person(s) to be interviewed utilizing scores given, discussion among the committee, and reviewing the needs of the department.

- Email the completed matrix summary indicating which candidates have been selected to move forward. Director level and Above: email matrix summary to the Affirmative Action Officer and copy HR.
- Determine whether telephone interviews are necessary or if it is more efficient to move to on-campus interviews.
- Create uniform job-related interview questions and add to interview question template.
- Develop uniform job-related questions to ask each candidate. Phone interview questions should be more technical and knowledge based. Avoid questions that address interpersonal skills, as it is difficult to assess these skills over the phone.
- Phone and on-campus interview questions must be approved by HR prior to conducting any interviews. **Director level and Above:** interview questions must be approved by the Affirmative Action Officer. Email questions for approval to Affirmative Action and copy HR.
- All candidates should be asked the same questions, allowing for individualized follow-up questions as needed.

VIII. CAMPUS VISITS

Planning an Effective Interview

With careful planning, a campus visit can create a positive impression on the candidate while also gathering specific information on which the University can make an informed decision about which candidate(s) to nominate.

- Identify all people and groups to be involved in the interview process and provide them with relevant information about the position: job description, essential functions of the position, necessary areas of inquiry, and standard interview questions.
- Schedule and reserve appropriate spaces for interviews and communicate those times and places to interviewers as far in advance as possible. Send reminders a few days before the event.
- Review the structure of the visit and the interview process with all interviewers, especially those who may be conducting individual interviews rather than meeting with the committee.
- Provide information about the candidate and his or her experience to all participating in the

interview process and encourage them to read it. Those who are prepared ask better questions and make a better impression on the candidate.

- Ask faculty/staff to provide feedback about specific facets of the candidate's potential, rather than just requesting generic feedback.
- Provide a rating sheet or other systematic feedback mechanisms, and detail how

feedback should be given to the committee or chair.

- Encourage note taking during the interview that focuses on required skills and relevant applicant responses.
- Notes can be helpful when reflecting on individual applicants or when discussing them with others who interviewed the same persons for other positions.

Making a Good Impression

Remind participants the campus visit is an important opportunity for the department to communicate three messages:

1. You are seriously interested in the candidate's credentials and work, as well as other evidence of their excellence and creativity.
2. UHCL is a good place to work, because it is intellectually lively and committed to diversity in its leadership, faculty, staff and student body.
3. UHCL's faculty and staff work to frame the future of our university and you see value in the candidate.

Additionally, first impressions are important:

- ✓ Consider appointing a host for the visit who takes responsibility for all aspects of the visit including escorting the candidate to and from interviews.
- ✓ Do not schedule the candidate's interview day so tightly that there is no time for breaks. Candidates should be given windows between appointments to take care of personal and professional business and to gather their thoughts.
- ✓ Be sure that departmental staff know that candidates will be visiting so that they can greet visitors appropriately.
- ✓ Plan schedules that are similar in format to ensure an equitable basis for evaluation. Internal and external candidates should be given equal opportunity to interact with campus colleagues.

Conducting the Interview

Before meeting with selected applicants, you will establish the list of interview questions to be asked of each candidate, which must be approved by the Employment Coordinator. Director level and Above must be approved by the Affirmative Action Officer. Questions can be informational, situational or behavioral in nature. Below is a list of standard guidelines to prepare you for this stage:

1. Standardize your process. Make sure you are consistent, equal and fair to each candidate, and that they each are exposed to the same interview format, plan, and questions.
2. Ask only job-related questions that are unambiguous and consistent with the job advertisement.
3. Inquire into the candidate's education, work history/experience, job-related educational experiences, and technical skills/knowledge. Constantly assess candidate to assure the best fit.
4. Ask about problems and challenges the candidate experienced in previous jobs; what he/she liked or disliked.

5. Assess the candidate’s stability, job accomplishments, progression, job interests, research, goals, and reasons for leaving current position. Be cautious of potential age biases here and remember to be consistent with each candidate.

6. Ask if you can contact listed references. Make sure names and contact information are correct. Information may have changed since applicant initially submitted documentation.

Interview Questions to Avoid

You absolutely cannot ask any question during an interview that relates to an applicant’s race, color, religion, age, gender, national origin, sexual orientation or disability. The following are merely a few of the questions prohibited.

Are you a U.S. citizen?	What is your spouse’s name?
Where were you born?	What is your maiden name?
What is your birth date?	Do you have any children?
How old are you?	Do you have childcare arrangements?
Do you have a disability?	What is your race or ethnic origin?
Are you married?	What is your religion? What church do you attend?

After the Interview

It is helpful to discuss the candidate with the committee immediately following the interview. The focus of the evaluation could cover everything from candidate knowledge/skills/abilities, professional character, work ethic, communication/interpersonal skills, match with current organization and position, and candidate reservations (if any). Notes should be made on screening matrix forms, templates, checklists, or via other screening methods. It is important to remember any notes documented during the search process will remain part of the search file in HR. Please use good judgement when documenting your comments.

- Review the candidates interviewed with the Search Committee.
- Document all decisions, comparing credentials and qualifications of the semi-finalists, evaluate candidates on their qualifications and the full range of strengths, contributions and ability to work well within the department.
- Consider only the candidate’s ability to perform the essential functions of the job and avoid making assumptions based on perceived race, ethnic background, religion, marital or familial status, age, disability, sexual orientation, or veteran status.
- Ensure the final discussion of the candidates’ remains focused on the search criteria and evidence about the qualifications of the candidates for the position. Do not engage in or permit others to engage in discussion of personal characteristics that are not job-relevant, or global evaluations unsupported by specific evidence.

It is common to administer candidate reference checks after interviews have been conducted and final candidates are under consideration. It is important to verify the accuracy of a candidate’s background that was presented during the search/interview process. We require at least 2 professional references for the finalist.

IX. FINAL STAGES OF SEARCH PROCESS

The recommendations for finalists should be submitted to the Hiring Authority. In some cases the Hiring Authority will also be the search chair. They may require additional documentation, such as the search committee's assessment of each finalist or any related input from faculty/staff groupings. It is best practice to have two top candidates in case the first choice does not accept the offer of employment. Please communicate the selected finalist to the Employment Coordinator along with the suggested starting salary and start date.

All search paperwork should be submitted to the Employment Coordinator. Required search paperwork includes: matrix summary, screening matrix from each member of the search committee, notes from phone and on-campus interviews, candidate evaluation forms from each committee member, and at least 2 professional reference checks. All paperwork must be submitted to the Employment Coordinator before a verbal offer of employment will be extended to the finalist.

Offer of Employment

Upon receipt of the finalist information the Employment Coordinator will obtain criminal history record check clearance and job offer approval from the hiring manager, the C/DBA and Compensation. The salary recommendation from the department is reviewed for equity purposes. The hiring department and Human Resources must be in agreement before a verbal offer will be extended to the finalist. Once all required paperwork is collected and the job offer has been approved, the Employment Coordinator is responsible for extending a verbal offer to the finalist. If there is a negotiation, the Employment Coordinator serves as the liaison between the candidate and the hiring department. Once an

agreement is reached regarding the salary and start date, the offer letter is created. The offer letter will be sent electronically to the candidate from the online application system. Upon acceptance of the electronic offer the candidate will complete the electronic onboarding process.

The Employment Coordinator will bring closure to the search by emailing the remaining active candidates regarding the status of the search and the search will be considered closed and filled. In the event an agreement could not be met or a finalist was not selected, the search will be considered failed. The Employment Coordinator will email the remaining candidates regarding the status of the search. All search paperwork is still required.