Screening and Selecting New Faculty

A Guide for Department Chairs

At

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
EAST BAY

Office of Equal Employment Opportunity

October 2006
HOW TO FIND THE BEST PERSON FOR YOUR FACULTY

Step 1: Profile the Department’s Needs

The key to effective hiring is to predetermine your hiring goals in terms of needs. By deciding what the essential goals of the department are, and measuring the current faculty makeup to see what the gaps are, you will be able to determine the specific requirement for the new faculty member.

“Hiring goals” are defined by considering the department’s plans – your strategic direction – and what you must do to achieve them. Your plans should be based first on requirements such as (re)accrediting issues, and then on departmental goals. When your goals are clear you can carefully examine current faculty and their contributions to present and future goals, and then determine the gap between what you have and what you need. That will enable you to identify the essential qualities you want in your new faculty – course offerings, research plans, and other contributions you will need to achieve your department’s vision.

Some factors to consider:
- The number of faculty available to carry the core teaching load, or among whom the core teaching load can be distributed,
- Special course offering needed to satisfy your commitments to student pursuits,
- Capability of present faculty to meet present goals and also pursue future goals,
- Consequences of not satisfying a commitment (transitioning to other academic goals),
- “Must do” factors: accrediting requirements, “contracts” with students, etc.
- Probable student enrollment, by major, minor, specialization, etc.

Step 2: Establish the Position’s Specific Requirements

After you have established the hiring goals, determine the specific expertise or specializations needed by the candidate to fulfill those goals.

To gain a clear understanding of these requirements, try categorizing them according to two principal factors: academic requirements, and those requirements that are, in the context of faculty selection, collegial in nature. “Academic” requirements are understood. “Collegial” requirements, on the other hand, refer to matters related to a community of scholars – how a person needs to interact and what he or she must do to fulfill a given departmental role and in general be an optimal contributor to the goals of the department. Please note that behavioral requirement must be defined in terms related strictly to the performance of the role. For example, if you are filling a position in a multi-discipline project, or one that will be responsible for leading a team, you can reasonably consider factors needed for such roles and goals.

Try assessing the position’s essential requirements in light of three basic questions:
- What must a candidate know?
- What must he or she be?
- What must he or she have? (example: specialized scholarship; particularized experience)

Remember that you will be filling a position in a particular environment, with particular goals, and with particular needs.
Step 3: Establish Your Priorities

The last step in preparing to recruit and select is the establishment of priorities in your requirements. You want to ensure that in an interview you will gain information about the essential requirements: any time you have left over may be devoted to requirements that are lower on your priority list. Categorize your requirements according to critical ("must-have") and desirable ("want-to-have").

“Critical” requirements, those you absolutely must have, will eliminate some candidates. “Desirable” requirements are the attributes you would like an applicant to possess in addition to the critical, but that are not by themselves going to eliminate someone from consideration.

BEFORE YOU INTERVIEW

Have a Plan

You will benefit if you plan how you will proceed with the entire screening and selection process and announce the plan to the faculty in writing.

It is helpful to plan and organize at least the following nine steps:
- When, where and how faculty can review applications,
- How initial applicants will be screened and candidates selected for interviews,
- How non-selected applicants will be notified,
- When the candidates will be called in – general time frames, days of the week, hours, etc.
- How interviews will be conducted (committee, sequential, pre-determined questions, etc.)
- How (and perhaps who) will ask questions
- Makeup of screening and selection committees
- Selection of committee chair
- Committee pre-meeting to review ground-rules

Work With Your Faculty Human Resources Office

Set aside time to develop an understanding of the position, settle any questions regarding special requirements, and define selection criteria. Ask any questions you may have about the position regarding your selection criteria, special requirements, candidates that were referred, interview questions, and the interview process.

Choose a Selection Committee

A selection committee serves many important purposes, but four stand out:
- It provides for a diverse set of experiences in screening and evaluating qualifications,
- It enables judgments to come from a diverse spectrum of values, cultures and attitudes,
- It minimizes negative personal influences or biases,
- It is safer in ethical and legal terms
The selection committee will help you pick the candidate best suited for the position as well as overall departmental needs. You might select committee members and a chairperson based on the following criteria, keeping in mind ethnic and cultural diversity within the panel:

- Knowledge of the immediate as well as longer-range goals of the department
- Vested interest in the responsibilities of the specific position
- Capacity to judge outside the narrow bounds of her or his personal interests
- Relationships and interactions in the department
- Campus interactions

In the interest of fairness, committee members should not needlessly reveal that they are going to serve as panelists. Also in the interest of fairness, lobbying for certain qualifications or specializations or selection criteria should take place in pre-announced meetings of faculty where opinions can be shared and rebutted, and decisions are reached collectively.

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**Screen Carefully**

Applications must be screened for the *most appropriately qualified* candidates to interview. After candidates are selected, the committee members should review their applications again to pinpoint areas where additional information may be needed or can be clarified during the interview. Prepare key areas of inquiries for all candidates.

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**Contact the Candidates**

The committee chairperson or designee contacts the interviewees to advise of the time, date, and place for the interview, the expected length of interview, parking availability and parking fees, and interview procedures.

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**THE TEN-STEP INTERVIEW PROCESS**

The following guidelines are provided as an aid in complying with University policy and with Federal and State laws. Before the interview, take a few minutes to again review the Curriculum Vitae and supporting documents. DO NOT WRITE on the original application or CV. Your comments, “squiggles,” highlighting, etc., could be used in legal proceedings if the application material should ever be subpoenaed.

1. **Create a relaxed interview setting**

The interview setting should be quiet, comfortable, and free from distraction of telephones and any other kind of interruption. Ask that all phone calls be intercepted. Keep on schedule, as candidates become apprehensive when asked to wait.
Ask each candidate to arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the interview. Give him/her a copy of any materials you feel are important, such as an agenda for the interview, and a list of the selection committee members with their titles. Allow at least 15 minutes between interviews to permit candidates to come and go without overlap, and to allow the committee members to evaluate a candidate’s responses to question while still fresh in their minds.

2. Follow a logical sequence

Keep the same format for each candidate and allow an equal amount of time for each candidate to answer questions. A friendly handshake and small talk before beginning the interview can make the interviewee feel comfortable. Introduce him or her to the rest of the committee and invite the candidate to be seated. Give the candidate an update on the status of the recruitment – number of applications reviewed, how many candidates are being interviewed, and the expected timeframe for completing the process.

3. Let the candidate do the talking

After explaining the process, let the candidate “shine.” It is extremely important to listen and concentrate on what the applicant is saying. The applicant should carry 80-85% of the total conversation. The panel members’ input should be limited to asking questions, probing deeper, and keeping the applicant talking and on track. The panel should clear up points on the application, asking follow-up questions that encourage the candidate to talk. Ask only questions that are directly related to the position. Use “W” questions-who, what, when, where, and why; also, how? Several types of questions are useful:

Direct questions are easy to understand, and are more likely to yield concise answers and specific information. Example: Why did you apply for this position?

Open-ended questions often produce unexpected and valuable information, may reveal attitudes and feelings, and can indicate how well a candidate can organize his or her thoughts. Example: Tell us about your teaching/research/committee-work at XYZ.

Probing questions, such as Could you explain what you mean by...? can further clarify the candidate’s views.

Allow silence after asking a question so that you don’t interrupt the candidate’s thinking process. Encourage the candidate with: Take your time; we want you to be clear and specific.

4. Be mindful of your questions

Formulate questions that indicate whether or not a candidate meets requirement you have established for the position. Keep four rules in mind: 1) Ask questions that focus on past experience or education; 2) Avoid questions that address the candidate’s personal lifestyles or habits; 3) Ask questions that relate to your listed expectations; 4) Ask the same questions of all candidates. Avoid:

- Closed questions that require merely a yes or no response.
- Multiple questions that require several answers.
• “Loaded” questions that force a choice between two alternatives.
• Questions dealing with areas that are not factors for job performance, such as gender (if you would not ask a question of a man, do not ask it of a woman, and vice versa), age, race, religion, veteran status, marital status, felony convictions (unless clearly relevant to the position’s requirements), medical conditions (do not make medical judgments or disqualify a candidate on factors that are purely medical in character), disability (it is illegal to ask about the nature and/or severity of the disability, the condition causing the disability, if the applicant will need treatment or special leave because of the disability, or about any prognosis or expectation regarding the condition or disability, or family/family plans.)

5. Take notes

Taking notes will help you remember details of the interview; however, writing notes during the interview could be distracting and upsetting to a candidate. If you do plan to take notes, explain before the interview starts that you will be taking notes or recording the candidate’s responses so that you will not have to rely on memory. Try to maintain some eye contact while writing.

6. Close on a proper note

After the committee members have explored all relevant factors, they can ask the candidate if he or she has any questions, needs clarification, or has anything to add. You may also want to briefly outline CSU benefits, introduce the candidate to others in the office, and/or give a tour of the department and campus. Thank the candidate for coming, and explain your notification process—when a decision will be made, whether a second interview will be conducted, and how candidates will be notified. Remember to smile, shake hands, and lead the candidate to the door.

7. Check references

References are checked for three basic reasons: (1) to verify employment; (2) to verify what you have learned during the interview and (3) to confirm employment recommendations. References should always be checked regardless of your impression of the interviewed candidate’s qualifications. Reference checks should be conducted for every finalist, after you have completed your interviews. Your questions should be developed ahead of time to ensure consistency and fairness to all candidates. Question must be job-related. Responses can be used in consideration only if documented. Check current references to ensure fairness to the candidate.

NOTE: There is no legal prohibition against an attempt to obtain reference information; however, for a variety of reasons including adverse litigation decisions, many universities tend to provide no or minimal information.

8. Make your selection

All information obtained in the interviews should be kept confidential. Evaluate the candidates solely on what you learned in the interview, the candidate’s behavior during questioning, and information gathered during the reference check. Each panel member should ask himself or herself: Setting aside my personal biases, would I hire this person with reasonable confidence that
he or she could meet our expectations for success? Select candidates to recommend who have the qualifications to best meet the pre-determined plans for the position. In making your final choices, keep in mind University and departmental policies on affirmative action, and interest in diversity. Only the Dean has the authority to make position and salary offers.

9. Decide on a salary

Always be certain you comply with budget and compensation guidelines before sharing information with any candidate.

Salary recommendations must reflect general comparability factors and other pertinent information, such as contract considerations.

10. Complete the required documentation

All candidates who were interviewed should be notified, by telephone if possible. A candidate has the right to know the reason(s) for not being selected. If you have followed the guidelines provided for developing selection criteria and interview questions, and concluded with an in-depth job-related interview, your reasons for not selecting a candidate will be supportable should they ever be challenged.

Complete the required documentation and return it as soon as the offer has been accepted. Make a copy of the new faculty member’s application and other documents for your departmental files.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Acceptable Inquiries</th>
<th>Unacceptable Inquiries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Whether the applicant has worked under another name.</td>
<td>Inquiries about the name that would seek to elicit information about the candidate’s ancestry or descent. Inquiries about name change due to a court order, marriage, or otherwise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthplace</td>
<td>See citizenship below.</td>
<td>Birthplace of applicant, spouse, parents, or other relatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Statement that employees must be eligible to work in the United States.</td>
<td>Any inquiries about citizenship or whether the applicant is or intends to becomes a U.S. citizen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence Nationality</td>
<td>Place of residence Length of residence in this city.</td>
<td>Specific inquiries into foreign addresses that would indicate national origin, nationality of applicant. Whether applicant owns or rents home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Can inquire if applicant meets minimum age requirements, or state that proof may be required upon hiring.</td>
<td>Cannot require that applicant state age or date of birth. Cannot require that applicant submit proof of age before hiring. Any questions that may tend to identify applicants over 40 years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Inquiry or restriction of employment is permissible only when a BFOQ exists.</td>
<td>Any inquiry that would indicate sex of applicant. Applicant’s sex cannot be used as a factor for determining whether an applicant will be “satisfied” in a particular job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital and family status, sexual identity</td>
<td>Whether applicant can meet specific work schedules.</td>
<td>Marital status or number of dependents. Names, ages, or addresses of spouse, children, or relatives. Questions about sexual identity, orientation, or preference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race, color, physical</td>
<td>Voluntary submission of AA/EEO information is made directly to the Office of Equal Employment and Diversity.</td>
<td>Inquiry as to applicant’s race, color of skin, eyes, or hair or other questions directly or indirectly indicating race or color. Applicant’s height or weight when it is not relevant to the job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Can ask an applicant questions about his or her ability to perform job-related functions.</td>
<td>General inquiries (“Are you disabled?”) that would tend to reveal disability or health conditions that do not relate to fitness to perform the job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Applicant’s academic, vocational attainment.</td>
<td>Date last attended high school (reflects age).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
<td>No acceptable inquiry.</td>
<td>Any question concerning pregnancy or birth control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrests and convictions</td>
<td>Asking about conviction of a crime related to job qualification.</td>
<td>Asking about arrests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>No acceptable inquiry.</td>
<td>Any question requesting the applicant’s religious affiliation, church, parish, pastor, or religious holidays observed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Experience</td>
<td>If needed for employment history, you may ask about applicant’s military experience in the U.S. Armed Forces.</td>
<td>Any question into applicant’s general military experience. Any question into type of discharge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizations</td>
<td>Any question into applicant’s membership in organizations which the applicant considers relevant to his/her ability to perform the job.</td>
<td>Asking what organizations, clubs, and societies the applicant belongs to that are not relevant to his/her ability to perform the job (political, social, religious, etc.)</td>
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