

## What Every Search Committee Should Know

One of the most critical and costly decisions which faculty and academic administrators must make is related to the recruitment and selection of new colleagues. Selecting qualified persons with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for the identified position as well as the potential to grow with the organization is crucial to the university's overall success. Andrews University uses a process featuring a search committee to discover, evaluate, and recommend for academic and administrative appointments the best candidate for the position.

The policy including membership of search committees and terms of reference is found in WP 1:717 and 2:142. Individual units (schools, departments, offices) may have additional terms of reference which build on the basic policy expectations. For example, the Seminary and Religion Department routinely include representation from church administration on search committees.

Critical to the success of this process is the committee's commitment to conduct interviews and relate to all candidates, including those not selected, in a manner which promotes good public relations for the department and university as well as avoids any legal liability. This set of procedures is designed to support optimal effectiveness in the search process.

### **Discrimination in Recruitment and Hiring**

Andrews University is an equal employment opportunity employer. This means that the University is committed to avoiding discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, citizenship status, veteran status, or disability as required by law. See the Human Resources Hiring Packet for further information on questions which are permissible to ask, and those which should be avoided.

### **Steps on the Search Pathway**

Expectations. The first set of activities by the Search Committee should be to determine what the expectations are for the available position. The existing job description should be reviewed to determine if it is current and changes should be noted for needed updating. After this review, the committee needs to prepare a set of criteria which reflect the **expectations held** by the department or academic unit for success in the position. These criteria would include both qualifications expected and characteristics desired.

Although this step will require some initial investment in discussion time, that will pay off when these criteria are used to compare candidates. The job description and criteria become the basis for preparing the job posting.

Position Posting. Permission to post is given by the administrative officer or, depending on financial conditions, may be required from the university Compensation Committee. Once approval has been given, HR should be consulted on the wording of the job position announcement. HR communicates the position's availability by posting in several locations: (a) the university web site, (b) NAD Education web site, and when appropriate, (c) North American

union papers<sup>1</sup>. The posting will invite interested candidates to submit a curriculum vitae (CV) and letter.

The Search List. The Search Committee should endeavor to obtain an extensive list of possible Adventist candidates<sup>2</sup>. Various approaches may be helpful in creating this “long list” of possibilities. Members of the committee should talk with colleagues, both at the university and elsewhere, seeking suggestions. Lists of SDA faculty elsewhere may be scanned. The VP of Academic Administration can do a search of the Adventist Professional Network database (APN) if key search terms are provided. Common practice in many universities is to mail a position description with invitation to apply to faculty or administrators in other schools.

Invitations to apply for the position may be issued freely to qualified candidates not employed by the denomination. If an interested individual employed by another SDA institution initiates a conversation by responding to a job posting with a vitae and letter of application, then preliminary discussions with that individual are acceptable. However, traditional protocol (followed by Andrews University) is to obtain administrative agreement from another SDA institution before prospective candidates are invited to submit a vitae. This “permission to contact” is usually obtained by the academic vice-president or the president.

Andrews University is a diverse institution and seeks to develop a workforce which reflects its enrollment patterns. This means that efforts should be made to seek minority candidates and assure a gender balance in the unit. This may require seeking advice and assistance from knowledgeable people not on the search committee.

As the search proceeds, the committee will review the growing list of candidates against the job expectations and do a preliminary sorting. Categories of candidates usually emerge which identify those candidates that the committee is seriously interested in considering, those which are possible candidates, and those which don't seem to fit the criteria. Individuals in the first two categories, sometimes nicknamed the “a” and “b” lists, may be invited by the committee to submit a CV if they have not already done so. Developing and sorting the search list usually takes the longest period of time.

Choosing Candidates to Interview: As the search list is sorted, attention will be given to selecting which individuals on the “a” list are desirable to interview. A variety of methods may be used at this stage. Scrutiny and discussion of the CV occurs and informal feedback about the prospect list may be solicited from colleagues.

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<sup>1</sup> To list in the church's union papers the position should be one which requires national search. A delay of two months from posting to printing is usual so will significantly prolong the search process.

<sup>2</sup> Although Andrews does hire a small number of faculty who have faiths other than Seventh-day Adventist, the requirements to do so are rigorous and limited by policy. See 2:101:1 and 2:225:2.

Determination of immigration status should be made at this stage, if not already known. If a prospect does not already have an H-1 visa, there are stringent requirements which must be met before such a person should be considered a candidate. Visa applications are costly and the need to hire a non-U.S. citizen must be demonstrated to be imperative, which is not easily achieved. The immigration authorities may also demand that a remuneration scale be used which is outside the university wage scale. If the candidate is employed by the church in another world division, the basis on which such a candidate might transfer to Andrews should be a matter of consultation with the academic VP and the director of HR. Andrews University no longer invites people to join its workforce on Inter-Division status so the candidate must be willing to accept an Independent Transfer.

Reference Checks. When a short list of strong candidates has been developed, reference checks may now begin.. Contacting at least three (3) other individuals for discussion of the suitability of the prospect for interview is essential. Usually the names of such references have been provided by the candidate; if not, such names should be requested at this point. Before anyone is contacted for a formal reference check, the candidate should give permission for such contacts to be made.

Questions for use in reference checks should be well-structured. These may be guided by the criteria previously developed which describe what kind of candidate is desired. See the provided set of guidelines on Reference Checks. By the time a candidate arrives for an interview, at least three reference contacts should have been made.

From the short list and discussion of the reference check information obtained, the search committee usually identifies 2 or 3 strong prospects to select for on-campus interview. Preferably, the committee has determined that these prospects have an interest in the position so that travel funds are not needlessly expended. When this decision stage is reached, it is courteous to notify the other candidates that they have not been selected for interview.

The Interview Process. Preparing for the interview requires attention both to logistical arrangements (see separate Check Sheet for New Faculty Interviews) and committee readiness. Candidates who are being seriously considered will be invited to visit the campus for interviews with the Search Committee and central administration. Prospective faculty must be interviewed by the president and the vice-president of academic administration as well as by the dean and the department faculty. Individual interviews with other professionals or colleagues with a stake in the decision are also recommended.

Courtesy requires that if such an individual employed by an SDA institution is selected for interview, an Andrews administrator will notify the other employing institution of our intent to invite that person to campus for an interview before travel arrangements are made.

**Preparing for Interviews:** The Search Committee should take the previously developed criteria as the basis to develop a set of interview questions which are carefully designed to elicit information beyond the CV. These questions should be used as a framework to interview each candidate so that valid comparisons of the “fit” of a candidate to the expectations can be made.

There are legal restrictions which must be followed. Note attached guide: “Questions You Can and Cannot Ask.”

The list of questions prepared should include a range of information, including

- spiritual commitment and maturity;
- vision of the mission of the university/academic unit;
- view of self in the role proposed;
- view of self as an academic;
- view of students (attention to experience with diversity is recommended); and
- view of personal responsibilities to self.

Generally, simply stated questions which are open-ended or seek the candidate to describe how they practice the role elements are helpful. Sometimes asking the candidate to give you an example or “case history” of how the person handles certain roles or responsibilities will give illuminating answers.

The content of the questions need to be developed by the committee members in session though they may be “polished” by one or more members for final committee adoption. These questions may then be formed into a interview notes form for the convenience of the members during the interview.

Candidates appreciate knowing the areas that questions will cover during the interview. It is not necessary to provide the actual list, however, as the committee may find it helpful to appraise how the candidate can respond with no advance notice.

Interview Arrangements: See also “Check Sheet for New Faculty Interviews”

An interview is a two-way opportunity: Andrews is evaluating whether the candidate is the right fit for our campus; the candidate is evaluating whether he/she might want to come to Andrews to work. It might be likened to a “courtship” situation. Thus, the quality of the interview plans and how we treat the candidate is important. During the interview, provide time for the candidate to ask the Search Committee questions (e.g. interview the Committee). The candidate should feel they have been well-treated at the conclusion of the interview process.

The interview arrangements for each candidate should be well planned. If the candidate is coming from off-campus, arrangements for travel (airport pickup, map of campus, local housing) are our responsibility. Andrews is usually responsible to reimburse the candidate for transportation and provide their lodging & meals (unless the candidate prefers otherwise). Give clear directions to the candidate as to times, places, and persons they will meet. A campus map is always appreciated if they are unfamiliar with Andrews.

**Search Committee interview:** All members of the Committee should be present at the selected time. Be sure that the room for the interview is unlocked and prepared. It is well if the Search Committee chair is present a little early to welcome the candidate into the room and seat them. Committee members should have agreed in advance to the questions to be covered and the questioning process (i.e. random, round-robin) which will be used.

**Other interviews.** Interviews on a campus visit include more than just the Search Committee. Each serious candidate should interview at minimum the following:

- a. The administrator to whom the department or academic unit reports
- b. The president and academic vice-president
- c. The entire faculty of the unit or department where the appointment is located.
- d. If the position will include graduate teaching, the Graduate Dean.
- e. For faculty positions, the Dean of Scholarly Research
- f. The benefits coordinator in Human Resources, who can explain benefits available.

**Demonstration of teaching skills.** The campus visit should also include an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate teaching skills. If possible, arranging for the person to give a class or seminar lecture with students present is highly desirable. This event should be attended by one or more of the Search Committee members to observe the teaching style and competence of the candidate. Following the event, feedback from students present should be solicited.

**Other activities.** Discuss with the candidate what other activities would be helpful. The candidate may want to explore the Berrien Springs area, experience a weekend on the campus, or have a social time with potential colleagues. If the situation is propitious, the person may want to make contact with a local realtor. One member of the Search Committee should function as the campus host for the visit.

#### Reaching a Ranked List.

At the conclusion of the formal interviews and campus visits, the Search Committee should produce a ranked list of preferred candidates (at least two) to present to administration.

To reach this outcome, the Search Committee should thoroughly discuss the findings during the interviews and experiences of the campus visit. Input from administrators who interviewed the candidate should be sought. Students should be asked their opinions of the teaching performance and other interactions. Sometimes, the conclusions are obvious during the discussions. If they are not, it is recommended that a secret ballot process be considered to produce the ranking so that each member of the Search Committee has a voice in the decision.

Following the discussions, a formal recommendation from the Search Committee to the Dean or administrative supervisor should be made. This recommendation should include the rank which is suggested, based on a comparison of the qualifications with the university's expectations of faculty achievement for a given rank. (See guidelines on promotion in rank.) A defined sequence will then follow to create a formal invitation from the institution for employment.

Some negotiations may ensue after the preferred candidate has received the invitation. To preserve flexibility, no formal announcement of the decision should be made to the campus or the other candidates until the preferred candidate has received the invitation and responded affirmatively. Once the offered employment has been accepted, the other serious candidates

should be contacted to thank them for their participation in the process.

The final decision to employ is made by the Board of Trustees upon the request of the university president who has received the recommendations of the faculty, the dean, and the academic VP.

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