BEST PRACTICES: APPLICANT POOL MANAGEMENT

The University's vast research enterprise depends heavily on federal grants and contracts. In order to remain eligible for these funding sources, we must be able to demonstrate to the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs that our hiring practices are nondiscriminatory.

How do we do that? First, by accurately and fairly reviewing the applicant pool. Second, by systematically dispositioning applicants to document decisions made about them.

Set Clear and Job Related Evaluative Criteria

1. Your job description should have clear minimum and preferred qualifications (see "Best Practices: Job Descriptions").

2. Create an evaluation matrix against which you will review applicants. This should be aligned with your preferred qualifications and any relevant experience and strengths that would add value to your department. This creates a basis for organized committee discussion.

Start With a Manageable Pool

Determine how many applicants there are. If it is not feasible to consider all applicants, use the following techniques to narrow the pool.

- Use a data management technique such as only reviewing applications received in the first 20 days.

- Disposition anyone not meeting minimum qualifications in the applicant tracking system right away.

- Assume that an applicant's failure to respond to two or more contact attempts at any point in the review process indicates disinterest.

- Eliminate anyone whose expression of interest (cover letter) contains unacceptable contingencies (e.g., salary requirements, desire to work remotely) or reveals a misunderstanding of the nature of the position.

Whatever technique you select, you must document it, and apply it consistently throughout your recruitments.

Applicant Material Review

1. If you wish to blind the review process, have a colleague not on the search committee blind names, addresses, and self-reported demographic data or personal affiliations before the review process begins.

2. Each committee member should enter every applicant who is in the applicant pool into the recording matrix. Any applicants who meet minimum qualifications should be scored. Those that do not meet minimum qualification should be designated as such and should not be scored.

3. When meeting to discuss applicants, don't look to reach consensus. Your goal should be the most qualified candidate who will add value. Keep in mind that consensus can sometimes be the enemy of diversity.

4. Throughout the process, encourage discussion of applicants, and create a safe environment for expressing opinions. Practice adaptability, open-mindedness, and inclusion.

5. Be careful of value judgments, such as assuming an applicant with an Ivy League degree is superior to one with a community college transfer to university, or that a highly qualified applicant is not really interested.

6. Record the reasons why applicants were screened out or moved forward in Talent.

7. After the committee has decided which applicants not to consider further, promptly disposition them. Applicants deserve to know where they stand.

8. If your initial round did not yield enough potential interviewees, repeat the data management technique you applied originally (e.g., again selecting every fifth application or the next 10 days' worth of applications). Update your documentation.

Remember

- The search process must be confidential. Any breach could jeopardize the entire search. Practice integrity: Be honest, respectful, and just.

- If you put it in writing, even in an email or preserved instant message, it is a public record that may be requested.

- The hiring authority must preserve all search records for three years.