

Faculty Search Committee Chair's "Quick Start" Guide

The document has been designed to help search committee chairs as they plan and run an efficient search. ADVANCE recommended practices are aimed at reducing evaluation errors. More detailed information can be found in the [UD ADVANCE Faculty Hiring manual](#). Different departments/colleges/disciplines may have different policies, norms, and conventions surrounding faculty searches. Be sure to familiarize yourself with policy documents (if any) issued by your college.

The organization of this document is meant to match the broad steps that one would take as they lead a search. To supplement this document, you can access example resources from recent faculty searches across UD [here](#) (UD login needed; this folder will be updated as we receive more examples). We hope these examples will assist committee chairs in developing and implementing best practices that work within the context of their department and discipline.

Recommended practices for leading a search.

- Plan meetings at times when all committee members can attend.
- Create an agenda – or set of goals – for each meeting.
- Take steps to ensure that all voices are heard. This may involve asking for the input of each committee member individually before you speak on a topic.
- If needed, have time limits for discussion topics. But don't let these limits quash important discussion. You may sometimes need to find an additional time to meet.
- Record decisions in meeting minutes or follow-up emails.
- Keep in mind that some committee members may not be experienced or may be unfamiliar with the norms and practices surrounding searches. If this is true of one or more of your committee members, mentor them along the way.
- Don't try to do everything over email. Important decisions should be discussed in meetings.

Checklist.

- [The committee is charged](#). This often involves a meeting with a college-level administrator. In this meeting, you should learn the charge of the committee from the college perspective, plus specific details related to the administrative side of the search, such as your budget, administrative or HR contact, procedures for posting ads, working with Talentlink, etc. You may want to confirm the search budget with your department chair.
- [Attend a UD ADVANCE Faculty Recruitment workshop](#). The provost and deans' offices have specific policies regarding the frequency with which one must attend a workshop if they plan to serve on a search committee.
- [Clarify the charge of the committee](#). For example, is it to provide a ranked list of finalists for a departmental vote? Is it to identify which candidates to bring to campus?
- [Establish ground rules](#). For example, surrounding confidentiality, who may or may not contact candidates, voting procedures (consensus versus majority).
- [Establish a broad timeline](#). For example, application deadline, deciding on the semi-finalist list, conducting virtual interviews, creating the finalist list, campus visits, etc. Some chairs schedule all committee meetings at this point, which saves on administrative work later in the search. A strategy for determining the timeline may be to decide when you want to hold interviews and work backwards.

- **Identify 5-6 measurable evaluation criteria.** This full-committee discussion of what the committee is looking for in a successful candidate should occur early in the search. These criteria should be measurable and should align with departmental discussions surrounding the position. Ideally, the criteria will be referenced in the job ad.
- **Create an evaluation tool.** This is the tool that you will use to evaluate candidates. The tool should consist of evaluation criteria and measurement metrics. The committee should also discuss how to weight various criteria as well as a rating scale (numerical or $\sqrt{+}$, $\sqrt{}$, $\sqrt{-}$). Note: The committee may want different evaluation tools for different stages of the search process (creation of the semi-finalist pool, finalist pool, etc.).
- **Create a plan for active recruitment/broadening the pool.** Different disciplines have different needs and practices for broadening the pool. Choose those that make the most sense for your search. Here we provide some options. Contact colleagues at other institutions and ask them to suggest potential candidates. Faculty not on the search committee can do this as well. Be sure to ask specifically for the names of candidates from underrepresented groups (e.g., women in STEM or URM candidates). Follow up by contacting potential candidates and encourage them to apply. Cite their work and tell them why they are a good candidate for your position. Create -- and share with all your faculty -- a spreadsheet for recording the names of potential candidates. Ideally, this is a living document that is populated even when you are not hiring. [Here is an example spreadsheet template.](#)
- **Prepare the job ad.** Find out if your unit has required or recommended language that makes up part of the ad. Double check that the job ad reflects your evaluation criteria. For example, if contribution to a specific program or to DEI is important, include this in the ad. Make sure to ask for materials that might be needed to evaluate candidates against your evaluation criteria. For example, if teaching excellence is an important aspect of the position, you may want to ask for sample teaching materials in addition to a teaching statement. Highlight attractive features of the position, department, college, including diversity and inclusion language in the ad and consider mentioning [UD's family-friendly policies.](#)
- **To reach a diversity of applicants, be sure to distribute the ad widely.** Make lists of professional meetings, societies, and social media platforms and use them to recruit candidates.
- **Fair evaluation of candidates.** Keep in mind that some committee members may need guidance with this step. Help them think about ways to work through the applications efficiently. Have a discussion with the committee about optimizing conditions for evaluation (avoid rushing, distractions, hunger or exhaustion) and mix up the order in which committee members review the applications. Remind committee members to use the evaluation tool and remind them that the purpose of the evaluation tool is not to rank candidates in numerical order but to keep committee members focused on agreed upon evaluation criteria, rather than falling back on personal preferences or biases.
- **Create a semi-finalist list.** After committee members individually evaluate applications, the committee meets to discuss the candidates and winnow down the list. Many searches conduct virtual interviews with 10-12 semi-finalists. Some committees identify a semi-finalist list during a single meeting while others take a staged approach over the course of two or more meetings. In some cases, committee chairs may request evaluation summaries on each candidate be submitted before the meeting(s) to choose the semi-finalist list. In all cases, evaluation scores/rankings should be used to frame the discussion. Start by discussing the clear-cut cases. Keep or eliminate those candidates in which there is consensus. Carefully discuss the remaining candidates with reference to the evaluation criteria reflected in your evaluation tool. Keep the discussion in check and do your best to make sure all committee members share their perspective. Loop back to see if you missed anyone, especially if your semi-finalist list is not diverse.

According to the provost's [faculty recruitment protocol](#), the semi-finalist list must be sent to the department chair and dean's office via TalentLink for approval before any interviews are conducted.

- **Schedule virtual interviews.** Do your best to schedule these at a time when all committee members can attend. If this not possible, consider recording the interviews for later viewing. If you elect this option, you will need to get permission to record from the candidate. When scheduling the interviews, be aware of time zones and find out whether the candidate needs any special accommodation(s). Once the interview has been confirmed, send interviewee and interviewers the relevant information – names of interviewers, Zoom contact details, duration of call, what to expect and, if applicable, prepare.
- **Virtual interviews.** Work with the committee to develop a core set of interview questions to be asked of all candidates. Be aware that [certain questions are not allowed](#).
- **Create a finalist list (for campus visits).** This process is similar to creating the semi-finalist list. Once again, the department chair should solicit input from all committee members and make sure discussions are guided by the search criteria. The finalist pool must be reviewed and approved by the administration prior to the start of campus visits. Do not contact any candidates before the finalist pool has been approved.
- **Campus interviews.** Find out if the candidate needs special accommodations. Think broadly about who the candidate might want to meet with. Avoid over- or under-scheduling their day(s). Create a welcome packet with the following types of information – departmental graduate and undergraduate programs, policies related to faculty mentoring, UD ADVANCE family-friendly and dual-career brochures (visit the [UD ADVANCE website](#) or email ud-advance@udel.edu for copies, if available). Once the candidates are on campus, keep in mind [some questions are not appropriate or are illegal during an interview](#). Consider creating a questionnaire for each faculty member to fill out immediately after each visit to help standardized evaluative feedback. When the campus visits are over and it is time to vote on and discuss candidates, stay focused on the criteria for the position.
- **Closing the deal and beyond.** Now that your department has selected their preferred candidate, keep updated on the progress of the offer. When the candidate accepts the offer, welcome your new colleague to UD. If s/he is an assistant professor, consider checking with the department chair to make sure (a) formal mentor(s) is (are) assigned before the semester begins. It is never too early to start mentoring a new colleague to success!