



Office of Human Resources

TENNESSEE TECH

Search Committee Guidelines

I. Introduction

Tennessee Tech is committed to creating an academic environment that supports a diverse and inclusive campus community. The University strives to create an environment that fosters personal and intellectual growth by attracting exceptional faculty and staff from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. In an effort to achieve this goal, it is essential that Tennessee Tech conduct thorough searches when filling vacant positions. This document will serve as procedures for the University and assist departments in conducting fair, equitable, and expansive searches.

II. Scope

These procedures apply to regular full-time faculty positions (e.g. tenure/tenure-track, and lecturer) and any administrative professional position that is classified as a pay grade AD45 or higher. The Associate Vice President for Human Resources or Provost (for faculty searches) may approve an exception to these procedures in special cases.

III. Search Resources

Multiple resources are provided to assist search committees and can be found here:

<https://www.tntech.edu/hr/toolkit/scguide.php>.

IV. Role of Search Committee Chair

The **Search Committee Chair (Chair)** should be selected from the department conducting the search and should be committed to diversity and inclusion. The Chair is a voting member of the search. The Chair will

- Consult with Human Resources and the Director of Affirmative Action to review search processes and recruitment plans.
- Ensure understanding and compliance with applicable laws and Tennessee Tech policies.
- Consult with Administrator/Department Head to select a diverse search committee.

- Elect one (1) search committee member to serve as the Equity Representative.
- Create a plan for conducting the search, including how and when meetings will occur, how meetings will be conducted, and how topics of discussion will be raised.
- Work with the search committee members to create a proactive recruitment plan to generate a broad and inclusive applicant pool, including soliciting suggestions from colleagues to identify qualified individuals who might not otherwise apply for the position. [See Recruitment Resources](#)
- Instruct all search committee members on confidentiality requirements of candidates' application materials and the search process.
- Serve as main contact person and maintain all records associated with the search process.
- Provide instruction to the search committee members.
- Conduct/assist with reference checks.
- Serve as liaison between search committee and candidates.
- Arrange travel for interviewees including any disability accommodations needed for the candidate. It is acceptable to have an administrative support employee complete this task.
- Guide the search committee members in voting procedures.
- Write the search committee narrative and submit a recommendation to hire to the Administrator/Department Head. If necessary, provide the pros and cons of each candidate.
- Maintain a record of all search committee meetings.
- Collect all records from committee members and forward to the hiring Administrator/Department Head who retains such records according to Tennessee Tech Policy.
- Inform applicants in a timely manner if they are no longer under consideration for a position.

V. **Role of Search Committee Members**

Search Committee Members (CM) may be elected or appointed and should come from a variety of backgrounds and departments. Search committee members should include individuals with a demonstrated commitment to increasing diversity and access in higher education. Whenever possible, the search committee should represent a diverse cross section of individuals, including men and women, and majority and minority group members. The Administrator/Department Head and Chair should identify and appoint a minimum of three (3) committee members. CMs should represent the hiring department and should include at least one (1) CM from another department. It is strongly recommended that at least one (1) CM be from a diverse background. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for someone outside of Tennessee Tech to serve on a search committee. CMs are the only voting members in a search (in addition to the Search Chair). CMs will

- Attend and participate in meetings scheduled by the search committee chair.
- Work with the chair to create a proactive recruitment plan to generate a broad and inclusive applicant pool, including soliciting suggestions from colleagues to identify qualified individuals who might not otherwise apply for the position.
- Assist with developing and carrying out the recruitment plan.
- Review all applicants for qualifications and complete the applicant matrix, as requested.
- Create interview questions and forward to the search committee chair, as requested.
- Participate in the interviews and provide constructive feedback to the committee as it relates to the candidates' qualifications for the position.
- Solicit constructive feedback from the campus community including faculty peers, employees, department heads, etc. It is appropriate to utilize surveys.
- Maintain confidentiality of all committee proceedings, identity of the candidates, and all communication with the candidates.
- Conduct reference checks as requested by the Search Committee chair.

VI. **Role of the Equity Representative**

The **Equity Representative** should be a senior faculty/staff member serving on the committee, but not the committee chair. The role of the **Equity Representative** is to ensure that best practices are followed throughout the search and that an active,

affirmative, and equitable search is conducted. The **Equity Representative** is encouraged to consult with the Director of Affirmative Action prior to the first formal meeting of the search committee.

VII. Confidentiality

Confidentiality safeguards the integrity of the search process and protects the privacy of the applicants. All members of a search committee have access to confidential application materials on a need-to-know basis. All members of the search committee, with access to search materials, are ethically bound to the highest level of confidentiality. Specifics of the search committee deliberations should not be discussed with anyone outside the search committee with the exception of those who have a legitimate business need. The requirement for confidentiality extends to all aspects of the search, including written and verbal communications.

Application materials including cover letter, resume, CV, references, etc. may not be distributed to individuals outside the search committee (excluding executive positions). The search committee may redact appropriate private and confidential information and allow employees outside of the search committee to review the application materials in a secure location. Search committees may release candidates' application materials for executive positions provided that the candidate has been informed prior to distribution.

VIII. Conducting the Search

Human Resources (via your HR Generalist) can provide a list to guide the search committee through the hiring process.

IX. Advertising Requirements

Human Resources will post the vacant position with HigherEdJobs and the local newspaper, as applicable. The department must advertise the vacant position in a minimum of two (2) additional sources. Human Resources has created a website with suggested sources, but the department may advertise in any legitimate source.

X. Responding to Applicants

Applicants will occasionally reach out to CMs regarding their application status. CMs can and should respond to the applicant. It is also appropriate to notify candidates when they are no longer being considered in the search process as the HR notification is not sent until a candidate is selected for the position.

XI. Reference Checks

The search committee must contact a minimum of three (3) professional references prior to submitting the search narrative and recommendation of top candidates.

Personal references are not considered professional, absent extraordinary circumstances.

Reference checks should be conducted after the interview process has been completed and the committee is seriously considering the candidate(s). It is inappropriate to contact references prior to the interview process. The search committee may elect to require reference letters as part of the application process; however, HR discourages this practice as can lead to adverse impact on protected categories.

XII. Responding to Unsolicited Applications

Departments will occasionally receive unsolicited application materials for positions that have not been advertised or have already passed the screening date. These letters should be acknowledged, but it is important to not make any commitment that implies the department will accept and review his/her application materials. It is appropriate to notify him/her that all positions are posted on Tennessee Tech's website and only application materials received through a job posting will be considered.

XIII. Closing the Search

The Search Committee is responsible for making a recommendation to the Administrator/Department Head. The Administrator may request a recommendation in any format that is reasonable (e.g. top candidate only; top three; ranked, etc.). Once the Search Committee completes the recommendation and a successful candidate has accepted the position, HR will notify remaining candidates of the position status and thank them for their interest. **It is acceptable and recommended that the Search Committee Chair reach out to interviewees that were not selected for the position.**