

English Department Hiring Procedures

February 3, 2012

Applicant Pools

Search committee chairs will endeavor to follow College suggestions for diversifying applicant pools.

Everyone should encourage qualified applicants they know, especially applicants for senior positions, by writing directly to them about open positions and copying these notes to the search committee chair.

It's important to maintain the confidentiality of the applicant pool until finalists come to campus. It's always OK to ask if someone has NOT applied if you think you could help interest them in applying, but in general, especially in senior searches, the less information in wide circulation about specific candidates the better. With this in mind, department members who want information about applicants should ask the search committee chair, **NOT** Julie, for access to applicant files.

Any questions about the search or any requests for additional information from outside the College should be directed to the chair of the search committee. We want to minimize the potential for circulating conflicting versions of "privileged" information.

The search committee should try to interview approximately 10% of the applicants in the initial pool, by Skype or face to face.

If the numbers get too large, additional faculty members can be drafted to read files or help with interviews.

Campus Visits

Finalists should be given the same written information about what we expect of them during their campus visits and they should all be aware that we reserve the right to seek out information and references from sources beyond the referees they provide.

Finalists should have equivalent schedules. However, each should be offered the opportunity to meet with additional colleagues if they so wish. (Library, Mead Museum, CCE, etc.). It's OK for them to make differential use of such opportunities.

We need to ensure that a representative range of students meets with finalists.

Students, department members, and any other groups we invite to meet with finalists should endeavor to have roughly the same degree of interaction with each of the candidates. If a department member is out of town when a candidate visits, s/he can review the candidate's job talk online.

We will follow the same procedure for all candidates in recording talks and making them available to department members. We should not record the Q & A part of the talk. All recordings will be destroyed as soon as the search is completed.

As a rule, only the Dean or an administrative officer discusses details about individual benefits with candidates. This is especially important to keep in mind when conversing with senior candidates, since they may be able to negotiate unique benefit packages with the Dean, as many current senior colleagues do, when weighing outside offers. We don't want to send conflicting messages about what is and is not possible, based on our differing experiences.

Discussions of Final Candidates

Who participates

All tenured and untenured faculty in the department, Five College faculty with tenure in the department, and all department faculty members in phased retirement may participate fully in junior and senior searches.

Untenured members of the department will have full voice and vote in hiring decisions for senior candidates.

Colleagues who intend to vote should read the complete dossier of each finalist, attend (or listen to) all job talks, and endeavor to have roughly the same amount of interaction with each finalist. Dinners may be the exception, since not everyone can or should go to all.

Students, Five College colleagues, and other interested parties whose input we invite should submit their comments on the candidates to the search committee chair. However, they should not be present when the department meets to discuss the finalists.

Any colleague who participates fully in the interviews and the discussion but then decides to abstain from voting is entitled to do so. Senior colleagues on phased retirement or tenured jointly appointed Five College faculty, who choose not to participate in senior searches but who are required to participate in tenure decisions, must let the chair know in writing of their decision and of their willingness to be guided by the department's tenure recommendation.

Format for discussing candidates

At our first meeting we will go round the room (with an hour glass to keep time) and give all department members a chance to reflect on the merits of each candidate, trying not to repeat what others have said, but merely marking concurrence. Our goal in this first discussion is to speak to both our affinities and our discomforts with candidates, as well as our individual sense of criteria we consider for a particular hire. The chair of the search committee speaks last. We will end by sharing a report of student responses to these candidates.

At the end of that meeting we will take a **First Straw Ballot**, in which we each list unranked the four candidates we would most like to have as colleagues. We may need to repeat this procedure. This vote is meant to identify a group of candidates who would be acceptable to a majority of department members. No one person will have a “veto”. The question is, do we have a majority in the department happy to move forward with these candidates? The mantra is **ACCEPT DEFEAT GRACEFULLY**.

At our subsequent meeting(s) or **AFTER** we have taken the first straw vote, we will move on to ranking the remaining acceptable candidates. At this juncture it is appropriate to raise institutional considerations (field, retention, possibility of joint or target of opportunity appointments, administrative experience, etc.). This is also the time when the search committee chair reports on the administration’s input and on any input from joint-appointment departments. For multiple or linked searches, it may be appropriate at this stage to think about candidates in hiring clusters.

We agree that for a tenured hire a simple majority is sufficient for a recommendation to hire, in a context in which all candidates are deemed acceptable, even if we have individual strong preferences amongst them.

After discussion of institutional considerations we will hold a straw vote in which we each list unranked the two candidates we would most like to have as colleagues.

We will then take a final vote, in which each of us will rank the remaining candidates. In the case of linked or multiple searches we will use these rankings to work out the best cluster for English Department hires and possible joint hires, and as needed for clarity vote our affirmation on that decision.

If the department remains deadlocked in the “final” vote, we will reconvene to reopen discussion or to move to simply vote again, after everyone has had a little time and distance to reflect on their original choices.

Once we arrive at a recommendation, the procedures outlined in the first department search procedure document, about informing the Dean, informing the finalists, etc., come into play.