

Updated January 4, 2016

## **Basic Principles for Searching and Hiring (MPP and Staff)**

### ***THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROCESS***

Every search conducted for a new employee shapes the future of the Tseng College (ExL) and the University. Each search has the potential of adding to the range of key talents, capabilities and working styles essential for ExL's success. If not given the time, attention and careful thought, there is a risk of making a bad match between candidate and position in ways that hamper ExL's success. Further, each candidate for a position is an individual who entrusts a part of his or her professional future to the members of the search committee.

It is important that all applicants for a position be treated with a high level of respect, kindness and courtesy at all stages of the search, from acknowledgment of receipt of an application to final communications letting applicants know they are a successful or unsuccessful candidate. The search committee chair and ExL human resources analyst (HR) bear primary responsibility to ensure this.

### ***ENSURING A SEARCH IS IN KEEPING WITH TSENG COLLEGE GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES***

The ExL HR analyst and the analyst's supervisor (the executive director of business operations and finance) are responsible for ensuring that supervisors conducting searches and search committee chairs follow the relevant University HR guidelines. These ExL General Principles are given a high level of support throughout the process. As the internal expert on the search process, the ExL HR analyst is responsible for working with the relevant supervisor and the search committee chair to ensure that all phases of a search, from the development of a position description forward, are managed well, that the appropriate internal consultation takes place, and that all guidelines are followed. The ExL HR analyst has the responsibility of completing all relevant documents required by University HR, including using the University online Recruiting Solutions process, and following up on a timely basis to make sure these materials are received and processed smoothly and quickly through the University HR process.

The executive director of business operations and finance will be responsible for ensuring that the ExL HR analyst provides full support to searches and always acts in full compliance, formally and informally, with these ExL General Principles, University HR guidelines and best practices for service excellence. The executive director of business operations and finance is also responsible for directly working with a supervisor and with University HR leadership whenever a search raises

questions or requires unusual strategy in recruiting or hiring. The executive director of business operations and finance has primary responsibility in ExL for the relationship between ExL and University HR.

The supervisor and the search chair are responsible for ensuring that the search follows these ExL General Principles, seeking the help and advice of the ExL HR analyst throughout the process, and ensuring compliance with University and HR guidelines.

The area lead/senior team member who is responsible for the unit in which a search is occurring bears final responsibility for ensuring that the search is done in compliance with these ExL General Principles and in keeping with the vision, plans and goals of the college. As the individual most familiar with the links between a particular unit and the larger college vision, plans and goals across units, the area lead/senior team member is well positioned to work with a particular supervisor to shape each search in keeping with a broader college perspective and a focus on both current needs and the future of the college.

The dean is responsible for making final hiring decisions within ExL. The dean is also responsible for reviewing searches and for ending searches that fail to comply with these ExL General Principles or University HR guidelines at any stage of the search. The executive director of business operations and finance, working with the ExL HR analyst, is responsible for monitoring each search at all stages and alerting the dean of any possible concerns as soon as they are discovered.

### ***FAIRNESS, EQUITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY***

Any search conducted within ExL will be fair and open. The members of the search committee must give consideration to each applicant in light of the talents, skills, experience and working context of the values, mission and goals of the Tseng College. Those in supervisory positions who make judgments for hiring from among the finalists recommended by the search committee must be committed to a fair and open search and hiring process. The dean will immediately end any search and disband the search committee if there is a breach of fair process or confidentiality.

ExL searches will be conducted in keeping with all University HR guidelines for fair and equitable searching, screening and hiring. Search committee chairs, working with the ExL HR analyst, will ensure that all committee members have access to University search and screen guidelines and have been instructed to review this material.

Committee members should not accept or consider communications and/or materials (e.g. emails, letters, phone calls, etc.) that are received outside of the standard Careers@CSUN application process. Applicants must submit all application materials via the online application process.

At no time is it acceptable for any member of a search committee to make remarks that violate the University's commitment to equity in hiring with regard to, but not limited to, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual preference, disability or national

origin.

Searches must be kept confidential at all stages. Anyone who accepts an invitation to join a search committee must also assume the responsibility of complete confidentiality. At no time before, during or after the search, should members of the search committee reveal the names and credentials of applicants, the comments made or questions raised by search committee members, others interviewing candidates or the candidates themselves.

It would be inappropriate after the search ends for committee members to mention other candidates to the successful candidate, discuss the positive or negative views of committee members with successful or unsuccessful candidates, or reveal the names of those who applied for the position and were unsuccessful.

Strict confidentiality of the search also ensures that each search committee member is free to give each candidate fair consideration and to raise any questions appropriate for the fair examination of relevant aspects of a candidate's experience, talents, skills, education, working style and other relevant features of the candidate's career and capabilities.

### ***CREATING A SEARCH COMMITTEE***

Generally, search committees will be made up of at least three but not more than nine members. Most search committees will have three to six members. Larger membership may be required for senior positions in ExL since those positions interact with greater number of units and positions in ExL. The dean's permission should be sought for appointing search committees with larger numbers if a supervisor deems it important for the position.

If the supervisor wishes to consider an unusual committee configuration (such as including members outside ExL or a more extensive use of stakeholders and field "experts"), the proposed approach should be discussed with the relevant area lead/senior team member and the dean. The executive director of business operations and finance will ensure it is in compliance with University HR guidelines.

The dean has the final responsibility for appointing search committee chairs. The chair is responsible for developing a proposed membership for the search committee. Since ExL is a collaborative and interactive college, each search committee should have broad representation from the various units in ExL that work most closely with the position and/or depend most heavily upon the performance of the person in the position. A chair may also propose individuals from outside ExL to join the search committee. This may be advisable for positions that interact with other units on campus, or where special expertise is needed.

The supervisor responsible for the vacant position can serve on the search committee but does not have to do so. If the supervisor of the vacant position is not a member of the ExL senior team, the member of the senior team responsible for the unit can serve on the search committee, but is not required to do so.

Working with the supervisor of the vacant position and/or the area lead/senior team member, the search committee chair will propose a composition of the search committee and seek the approval of the dean. The dean must review and approve the proposed composition of the search committee before any ExL search can move forward. The dean's written approval should be given before the chair moves to invite the proposed committee members. If a proposed member of a search committee reports to a supervisor other than the one leading that search or the dean, that staff member's supervisor should be consulted to ensure that the supervisor is aware of the pending invitation to serve on the search committee.

The ExL HR analyst will serve as HR support for each search. The ExL HR analyst may attend the first meeting of each search committee to explain all required procedures. The HR analyst will share and review the "Basic Principles for Searching and Hiring" document with the committee. The HR analyst will maintain a separate set of files for each search and will work with the chair of each search committee to ensure that all documents are completed and appropriately filed. The retention period of any search file is three years from the date of concluding the search as per University HR guidelines.

The search committee chair is responsible for requesting and scheduling meetings and interview times from the members of the search committee, leading the process of developing criteria and screening candidates, working with the ExL HR analyst, requesting applicants' applications and resumes, reviewing and collecting feedback from the group committee members, summarizing findings in a concise format, and presenting the finalists to the dean of the College for final consideration.

### ***DEVELOPING CRITERIA AND SCREENING THE CANDIDATES***

The supervisor will meet with the search committee at the first meeting, whether or not that supervisor is a member of the search committee, and help the committee understand the demands of the positions, the working context and/or the interaction between positions.

ExL focuses on selecting candidates based on well-considered criteria that capture the experience, degrees, skills, abilities and working styles needed for success in the position. It is necessary for the search committee to include the desired qualifications, in addition to the minimum qualifications, as per the University standards for interviewing at the outset of the screening. It is not necessary to rate applicants on more than six criteria; however, complex positions may require consideration of more factors. Regardless, all candidates must be reviewed using the same criteria. Once the committee has developed screening criteria, the chair gives the draft to the supervisor of the position for review (if the supervisor is not serving as chair of the committee or a committee member) to ensure there is a match between what the supervisor is seeking and the focus of the committee's screening. If there is not a match, the supervisor should meet with the search committee to provide clarification about the role as well as the key requirements for it.

Each member of the search committee must evaluate each applicant in writing, using

the criteria established by the search committee. These written screening documents/forms from each committee member must be submitted to the ExL HR analyst at the end of the search for retention.

### **REFERENCE CHECKING**

Each search committee must do a complete and in-depth check of references for each finalist and experience stated on resumes or CVs. Generally, a minimum of three relevant professional references must be checked, and five references if the check of the first three references reveals any weaknesses or serious questions, and five references for any senior position. The search committee chair must discuss any deviation from this approach with the member of the senior leadership team responsible for the unit making the hire, who will seek approval from the dean.

The search committee may use the CSUN HR approve reference questionnaire as a guide for the reference process, provided by the ExL HR analyst. As an alternative, the search committee may elect to develop reference questions. The written record of the responses from references should be shared with each search committee member and the supervisor. The chair of the committee, or the designated member of the committee, should make the reference check calls.

It is recommended that these references should include at least one direct supervisor, a peer professional and, for more senior positions, a subordinate or client.

If a candidate failed to provide such references, the search committee chair can ask the ExL HR analyst to request them from the candidate. Reference checks can be made before or after a candidate is called in for a second (finalist) interview with the search committee. References must be checked before finalists are presented to the dean for a recommended hire.

Only those candidates that are seriously considered as finalists should have their references checked. Generally, any candidate that cannot provide a minimum of three relevant professional references should not be considered as a finalist for the search. Negative outcomes from reference checks should be taken seriously and warrant careful consideration in determining finalists.

### **THE INTERVIEW PROCESS**

Generally, a minimum of three people should be interviewed for each search. All those candidates who meet all the criteria outlined at a level appropriate for high levels of performance in the position should be interviewed. In many cases, it may be useful to interview more than three candidates for a position to ensure the best match between qualified candidates and the position.

*If a search committee wishes to interview fewer than three finalists, the committee chair must be consulted with the supervisor, the relevant member of the senior leadership team, and the executive director of business operations and finance, who*

*will obtain a written permission from the dean.*

Search committee members making hiring recommendation to the dean, and all other ExL group interview committee participants, must read the CSUN guidelines about what one can and cannot ask candidates during a search. The ExL HR analyst is responsible for ensuring that all who interview the finalists, individually or in groups, receive those guidelines (or a link to them with a guiding email) before the interview occurs.

One or two finalists in any search may be interviewed by a broader range of ExL staff, particularly those units and/or positions in the college that will work most closely with the new hire and/or who will depend on the performance of the new hire to get their work done well. It is beneficial that views of the key stakeholders, across unit lines, be taken into account by the search committee before it makes its final recommendations.

The search committee chair, working with the supervisor (if he/she is not a member of the search committee), should determine who will interact most often with the individual in the position, and those "stakeholders" should have a chance to meet and interview (individually or in groups) the selected finalists for the position.

In all cases, finalists must be interviewed in a one-on-one context by:

- the supervisor
- and if she/he is not the direct supervisor, the area lead/senior team member responsible for the unit in which the position is housed, and
- the dean

The views of all three should be shared with the search committee before the final hiring decision.

***All candidates invited for interviews should be treated as respected and honored guests of ExL.***

The search committee should ensure that each candidate is hosted well by the committee and that his or her needs are looked after. Candidates should find their interview experience with ExL to be pleasant, well planned and professional.

### ***THE HIRING PROCESS***

The search committee should prepare a written report making the hiring recommendation to the relevant member of the EXL senior team who, in turn, will present the recommendation to the dean. This report should assess the strengths and limitations of each of the top two or three candidates in terms of the demands of the position and the overall advancement of ExL, not necessarily *rank* the final candidates.

If the supervisor is not on the search committee, she/he should review the search

committee's findings with the search committee chair, and the observations and/or recommendations of the supervisor regarding the finalists should be included in the search committee report. If the member of the ExL senior team responsible for the unit making the hire is not on the search committee, he/she should review both the search committee's findings with the search committee chair and the observations and/or recommendations of the supervisor. The observations and recommendations of the relevant senior team member regarding the finalists should also be included in the search committee report.

If the search has been conducted in keeping with the CSUN HR guidelines and these Basic Principles, the dean will respect the findings of the search committee, unless there are serious questions or concerns. If there is disagreement between the findings of the search committee and observations and recommendations from the supervisor and/or relevant member of the ExL senior team not on the search committee, the dean will make the final decision about the hire in light of all the findings and recommendations.

The chair of the search committee is responsible for preparing the final report, including all the findings of the search committee (along with an observations and recommendations of the supervisor and/or the relevant member of the ExL senior team should one or both not be on the search committee), for the relevant member of the ExL senior team to present it to the dean for final review.

Once the dean has approved the proposed hire, the chair will work with ExL's HR analyst to prepare the appropriate hiring recommendation report for CSUN HR Recruitment Services. The chair will work with the ExL executive director of business operations and finance and the ExL HR analyst, who in turn will work with CSUN HR, to complete the process and make an offer to the top finalist.

Note: The search committee is not authorized to make a job offer, formally or informally, to the finalists. Job offers may only be made by CSUN Human Resources, by the Tseng College HR department (with the authorization of CSUN HR, or by the search committee chair, with the authorization of the executive director of business operations and finance of the Tseng College after receiving the approval of CSUN HR. ExL HR analyst may contact the finalist candidate and inform the candidate that she/he is being considered as a finalist to assist in the overall hiring process (background check and job offer).

***Once someone is hired to fill the position, the search process ends, and all in ExL are expected to respect the outcome and work collaboratively to help the newly appointed ExL staff member succeed in their new role.***

## **VERIFYING CREDENTIALS**

In keeping with CSUN HR guidelines, academic degree verification will be conducted for any instructional position. An official sealed transcript (s) will be requested, verified for the relevant degree and put in the candidate's personnel file. The executive director may also verify the degree via National Student Clearinghouse

when needed.

In all cases, even though an offer may have been made and accepted, if the candidate made any material misrepresentation on the resume or CV, including academic degrees earned, the basis on which the offer was made is no longer viable, the offer of employment will be withdrawn immediately. The executive director of business operations and finance would assist the supervisor with this process.

### ***WRAPPING UP AND KEEPING RECORDS***

The following is a list of materials that must be submitted to the ExL HR analyst at the completion of any search. These documents will be reviewed by the ExL HR analyst and consolidated to share with the dean and CSUN HR Recruitment Services for presentation of a job offer to the finalist candidate.

- Evaluation/scoring notes from each committee member for each candidate. These must be kept in ExL's HR files for at least one year.
- Letters sent to applicants and all other material submitted by each applicant.
- A written report of in-person and telephone interview questions, along with a clean master list of interview questions.
- A written report of in-person and telephone reference checks, along with a clean master list of reference questions.
- The written report of the committee's findings and recommendations to the dean making the final hiring decision - this should be in the form of a memorandum.
- A memorandum prepared by the committee chair and addressed to the dean stating the committee's findings and the recommendations of the supervisor and/or the relevant member of the ExL senior team member.

### ***IF THE SEARCH DOES NOT RESULT IN A HIRE***

If the search committee and the supervisor agree there are no applicants that are a good match for the position, it will be necessary to continue with additional recruitment efforts, or postpone or reopen a search. The supervisor, after a conversation with the search committee chair, should discuss options and proposed plans with the areal lead/senior team member, if this is not the supervisor for the position. The senior team member will then consult with the dean.

In general, all CSUN positions are now posted as "open until filled," so searches can continue without closing or reopening the search if ExL wishes to do so.

In some cases, the first round of the search may lead the supervisor and senior ExL leadership to believe that the position is not appropriately described or salaried to attract the candidates needed. Should this occur, the executive director of business operations and finance may pull the position from posting and work with CSUN HR to make needed changes before posting again.

Other reasons that may lead to the chair and/or supervisor determining that the search should be ended without hire are:

- there have been changes to the requirements for the position and, in turn, the position description since the position was first advertised;
- the committee has lost a number of good applicants as a result of a slow search or strong competition in the marketplace; or
- no candidates meet the criteria for the position.