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NACADA

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Academic Advising  
Administration:  
Essential  
Knowledge  
and Skills for  
the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Chapter 7

## HIRING

Derek Van Rheenen

*Good hiring decisions pay dividends and play a major role in retaining students. Poor hiring decisions can disrupt initial training, affect staff morale, place a heavy burden on advisor development programming, create ongoing personnel headaches, and jeopardize student persistence and success. To build an outstanding staff, administrators must define the specific work done and to be done in the office: What is the organizational mission and what jobs fulfill it? What are the organizational primary goals and functions? Do unit personnel work with a particular type of student (e.g., undeclared)? Are major budgetary or demographic changes forcing staff changes (e.g., decreases, more diversity)? Understanding these program elements affects position descriptions, recruitment, and selection of the best job candidates.*

Effective advising administrators invest in human resources by selecting quality staff, professionally developing them, and using the resultant proven and promising individuals to build effective teams. This institutional investment in people is an essential part of management; the selection of staff simply initiates professional development. Thus, good hiring practices preclude good management. To hire the best candidates, the advising administrator must accurately define job requirements and develop a targeted job description. These documents will help the administrator recruit and select the best talent available. To summarize, good hiring does not happen by chance; in this chapter, I provide an overview of the hiring process for administrators making their first hire to those who have employed staff for years.

### Job Descriptions

#### *Reviewing Job Descriptions*

A well-crafted job description, which spells out the essential functions and required qualifications of a job, is a prerequisite for hiring the best candidate for a specific position. Advising administrators unclear about the specific and necessary functions of a job will find that they will stumble on the first step of successful management. They must understand the value and features of a good job description and its vital connection to supporting the mission and goals of an organization. If the primary goal of advising is broad student development and learning

(Creamer, 2000; Darling & Woodside, 2007; Habley, 2000; White, 2000), with student persistence and retention more specific objectives (Astin, 1993; Nutt, 2004; Seidman, 2005; Tinto, 1987), then all positions within the organization—whether for administrative, advising, support staff, and student posts—should be designed to work toward these desired outcomes.

Thus, the job description, foundational to effective management, provides the basis for performance standards and appraisal as well as an explicit plan for the professional development of staff. Advising administrators should not recruit or select advisors and other staff until they have reviewed the existing job description of an open position, assessed whether the primary functions meet the current and future needs of the organization, and determine whether changes are needed in the job description to better reflect the direction of the organization and institution.

#### *Reassessing with an Organizational Chart*

With a broad stroke, advising administrators are able to map their organization by reviewing the various permanent and temporary positions that comprise the organization. An organizational chart, outlining staff members and their respective responsibilities, provides a visual overview of the way the human resources meet organizational goals and mission. Even experienced administrators should repeat this reflective analysis each time they

undertake the hiring process. By contextualizing each job within the organization through the chart, they can reassess whether the position is essential, repetitive, or obsolete.

### *Creating Job Descriptions*

Job descriptions describe a personnel position designed to meet organizational needs. Therefore, most include a short paragraph or two articulating the purpose or goals of the department within which the job exists. A job description for an advisor should describe the position itself rather than any specific individual who might fill it. The document should be concise and easily understood by anyone reading it; that is, writers of good job descriptions avoid using excessively vague language that might apply to all potential applicants and overly specific terminology that might exclude otherwise qualified candidates. An ideal job description serves as a helpful training document for a new employee within the organization. While goals for an advisor may change over time and be specific to a department or student population, advising job descriptions tend to be relatively constant and generic.

The most important features of an advising job description include a description of the general nature of the work performed and the specific duties, responsibilities, or functions of the advising position. Essential functions are noted first, followed by supplemental ones. The job description should illustrate the percentage of time the advisor is to devote to each part of the job. While many employees take on a wide range of duties and responsibilities, the essential or primary functions (i.e., those that comprise the highest percentage of time) of a position typically determine job classification and salary level. Rather than breaking down each distinct task or duty into a small increment of time, most job descriptions articulate the essential and supplemental functions into reasonable numbers (typically fewer than 10 and often fewer than 5) work categories performed. For example, the essential and supplemental functions associated for an administrative assistant might look as follows in the job description: payroll/personnel (40%), purchasing (35%), benefits counseling (15%), and other duties (10%). "Other duties" might include the distribution of building and office keys, general cabinet replenishment, and additional

support functions as assigned or requested. The essential functions, however, are payroll and purchasing, accounting for 75% of the time investment expected for the position. Despite other important responsibilities, the primary or essential functions of a professional advisor are counseling or advising students.

When hiring faculty members, managers, supervisors, or other staff, advising administrators must clearly communicate the essential functions of each position. These employees may advise students as one of their responsibilities, but it may not be the primary function of their job. As required by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2010), essential functions should be highlighted with an asterisk or some other denotation, identifying the physical, environmental, and mental demands of the position, so any corresponding and necessary accommodations can be made.

### *Job Qualifications*

Just as they outline the general and specific functions of an advising position, job descriptions also include the required skills, competencies, and knowledge necessary for the work to be performed. The administrator writing the description must clearly define the required qualifications for an advising position before proceeding with the recruitment and selection process. They should include the required level of education or training (and necessary licenses or certificates) and years of experience the candidate can claim in a specific field. For example, if the candidates for an advising position are expected to have a student development background or counseling degree, the job description should explicitly list the relevant experience and education as required qualifications.

Because they establish the proper classification of a job through an accurate account of the kind of work expected and the salary level of the position, job descriptions are connected to performance standards and serve as the basis for evaluation and appraisal.

To offer consistent descriptions of job families and their corresponding classifications, many institutions, often through human resources (HR) departments, seek to clarify job standards, performance management, and career development for numerous on-campus employees. This centralization process has led to more uniform institutional

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expectations for jobs with similar functions, such as advising, and are sometimes referred to as the *generic scope* of the job. This effort to standardize job descriptions often allows administrators and supervisors to include the unique set of duties and responsibilities expected within a particular department, known as the *custom scope* of the job. The custom scope may range from the type of students primarily served, for example, low-income or first-generation matriculants; students with disabilities; or lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender students, to the type of advising undertaken, such as college, major, or career. The specific needs of students may translate into particular skills and competencies required of staff (Darling & Smith, 2007; Reinartz, 2000; Self, 2007; Vallandingham, 2007). If advising administrators seek specific skills and competencies in potential hires, they should note this in the recruitment process. Therefore, advising administrators must work closely with HR when developing a job description for a given advising position, particularly as the department embarks on the recruitment and selection process.

### Recruitment

#### *Attracting the Best Candidate*

Most campuses expect administrators to use distinct hiring forms and processes for creating job requisitions or posting hiring notices. The person charged with communicating the job opening should check the institution's HR website to determine the necessary forms to use and the proper steps to take. The procedures in the hiring process, the order in which they should be completed, and the terminology used will vary from one institution to another.

Therefore, those new to the process should consult a campus expert who can help coordinate the recruitment and selection process. Often an advising administrator finds no better allies than the institutional HR experts, as they can assist managers and supervisors in hiring and developing the best possible team. Even experienced administrators should consult with their HR department on campus when hiring, as laws, labor contract agreements, and institutional practices may have changed since the last hire.

#### *Hiring Laws and Guidelines*

Prior to the recruitment and selection process, advising administrators must familiarize them-

selves with critical hiring laws and guidelines. Both federal and state mandates legally prohibit discrimination against job applicants on the basis of age, sex, race, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, or national origin (among other characteristics). *Equal employment opportunity* (EEO), a term used by the U.S. Federal government, refers to employment practices that ensure nondiscrimination. For more information, I recommend readers go to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2004) websites: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/index.cfm> and [http://archive.eeoc.gov/abouteeo/overview\\_laws.html](http://archive.eeoc.gov/abouteeo/overview_laws.html).

Other critical hiring laws and guidelines include those outlined in the ADA, which protects qualified individuals with disabilities, who with or without reasonable accommodations can perform the essential functions of a job position. When posting a job requisition, administrators need to know that the ADA requires that the essential functions of a job be highlighted (Allred, 1991). Information about ADA rights and laws can be found at the U.S. Department of Justice (2010): <http://www.ada.gov/publicat.htm#Anchor-14210>.

Affirmative action, another federal government effort, was created to ensure equal employment opportunity. Executive Order 11246 prohibits federal contractors from discriminating against employees and requires them to implement affirmative action plans to increase the representation of women and minorities (Reklaitis & Tarasevich, 1996). More information on affirmative action can be found at the U.S. Department of Labor (n.d.) websites: [http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/ca\\_11246.htm](http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/ca_11246.htm) and <http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/hiring/affirmativeact.htm>.

Current state-specific laws and guidelines concerning hiring vary. Therefore, to ensure the department is operating in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations, administrators should consult the HR department.

#### *Targeted Recruitment*

Targeted recruitment demonstrates a good faith effort to help the institution meet its EEO objectives through outreach to historically underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. Targeted recruitment helps ensure representation of these groups in the applicant pool by advertising in publications that serve these under-

*Even experienced administrators should consult with their HR department on campus when hiring, as laws, labor contract agreements, and institutional practices may have changed since the last hire.*



represented populations. Advising administrators should also keep abreast of the changing demographics (Keup & Kinzie, 2007; Upcraft & Stephens, 2000) by state and institution to ensure that these trends are reflected in the applicant pool through targeted recruitment. Administrators who wish to promote equity and inclusion on their campus can demonstrate their commitment to diversity through their hiring and promotion practices.

#### *Job Posting Period*

After confirming the job and payroll title, the major duties and responsibilities of the position, and the required and desired qualifications of applicants, advising administrators should work with their HR department to determine the posting period for the requisition. The three general options include a) recruitment with a firm closing date, b) recruitment with a first-review date, and c) open-until-filled recruitment. The best hiring option often depends on the current market, the time of year, and the type of job or position to be filled. Some departments and institutions prefer one option over another. Because advisors work closely with students, the time of year for hiring an advisor will often correspond to the academic calendar.

A thorough, well-crafted job description informs a concise job requisition with a clearly defined period of recruitment. The requisition should target a well-qualified and diverse applicant pool through the use of a variety of advertising methods. Once again, the institution's employment analysts and the campus HR department can be of tremendous value in helping administrators select the best and most affordable method of advertising both internally and externally. The employment unit on most campuses often must preemptively review any advertisements sent externally (newspapers, journals, magazines, etc.) or electronic sources (server lists, bulletin boards, etc.). The NACADA Position Announcements, <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/PositionAnnouncements/index.htm>, is an excellent recruitment and advertising resource for advising administrators.

To evaluate the relative effectiveness of advertising placement, the administrator needs to know how applicants learned about the open position. They can gather the information during the interview process by simply asking all candidates where and how they learned of the job for which they are applying. The required application materials should include a solicitation for this information, thus providing

a formalized and uniform method of determining advertising effectiveness. Without these data, advising administrators cannot conduct a full cost-benefit analysis of their advertising decisions.

While a short posting period for recruitment or a very limited range of advertising placements may save money in the short run, the pool of applicants may be weaker, requiring administrators to extend the recruitment period and spend more than initially budgeted. As always, a well-crafted plan for hiring, based upon data drawn from previous searches, will tend to yield the most qualified applicants. In addition, word of mouth continues to be a highly effective method of advertising for an open position. Experienced administrators recognize that communication with fellow advising colleagues, both locally and beyond, will not only produce strong candidates in a cost-effective way, but they appreciate that networking and communicating with professional colleagues also provides valuable advice about the most effective methods of advertising in specific print and electronic media sources.

*A thorough, well-crafted job description informs a concise job requisition with a clearly defined period of recruitment.*

#### **Candidate Selection**

##### *Selection Criteria and Committee*

Once the job requisition or posting has been advertised for a set period of recruitment, the administrator should assemble a selection committee. Depending upon the size of the campus and the scope of the open position, the committee may be comprised of faculty members, staff, students, and subject-area experts external to the campus community. Selection committees should neither be too small, thus limiting the diversity of perspective, nor should they be so large that regular and consistent meetings prove impossible. Dates and times for meetings and interviews should be set and agreed upon before interviews begin to encourage full participation of all committee members. While the size of a selection committee may depend on the job advertised, most campus committees are comprised of three to eight members. For certain high-profile administrative jobs, a professional search firm may be commissioned to help recruit the best possible pool of qualified candidates. The selection committee should be chaired by a respected and highly organized individual who can meet an objective and conduct the professional search. The chair ensures that the search committee receives and understands clear and specific selection criteria, as these represent the standards by which all candidates will be evaluated.

Most job searches require applicants to submit a vita or resume and a cover letter. However, by requiring candidates to write responses to specific questions, the committee can evaluate an applicant's communication skills, often a desired, if not required, qualification for the job. The selection committee should determine the content of these prescreening questions so they complement the interview process. For example, by asking applicants to outline their advising philosophy, the committee utilizes an effective method of comparing potential candidates as well as determining whether they are a good fit with institutional and departmental goals and objectives. Depending on the job, these written responses should help selection committee members assess each candidate's qualifications in relation to the position's primary duties and responsibilities. These application materials, and only these materials, should be used in the review and selection process. All prospective applicants should receive the same opportunity to submit supplemental materials and no additional materials, outside of those specifically requested, should be accepted.

With the selection criteria firmly understood by all prospective applicants and selection committee members, the application review becomes a relatively predictable process and the most qualified candidates emerge. A number of prescreening methods help to bring forth the best candidates. On some campuses, localized or centralized HR personnel provide this function. Some units authorize a subcommittee of the larger selection committee to reduce the applicant pool by determining the most qualified candidates for further review.

Predetermined rubrics for scoring candidates help committee members screen applicants initially as well as evaluate candidate interviews. It should include the required and desired qualifications of the job, allowing members of the selection committee to note immediately whether applicants possess the necessary qualifications for the position. If they do not, applicants should be notified as early as possible that they have not been selected for the job.

For targeted recruitment, all involved in the prescreening and full committees must consider the representation of minorities or individuals with disabilities. In the most comprehensive method of prescreening, all selection committee members review all applicants for potential hire. Depending on the scope and level of the job, as well as the number of applicants, this method may be inefficient and

unnecessary; however, this more time-consuming approach may also prove the most equitable.

### Planning for Interviews

Prescreening advising position applicants often leads to a list of well-qualified candidates for the job. Selection committees then evaluate this list to determine which applicants to interview to gather additional information about their abilities and work experience. In addition to specific questions to ask the applicant, the administrator will need to decide the best means from various types and methods of interviews. In challenging economic times, when hiring must be done on a limited budget, many advising committees use phone and video conferences rather than in-person interviews, at least in the initial screening of candidates. While these distance-access methods limit the tangible and intangible experiences of direct human interaction, they offer a cost-effective way to evaluate a wide range of applicants regardless of their location.

Whether interviews are conducted live or remotely, each candidate should be asked a predetermined set of questions. The queries should illuminate the applicant's skills and abilities related to the criteria necessary to perform the job. Interviews should be conducted in a quiet and private location, free of interruptions and distractions. Committee members should have at least 15 minutes between interviews to take notes and reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the applicant as well as review the next candidate's application materials.

*Predetermined rubrics for scoring candidates help committee members screen applicants initially as well as evaluate candidate interviews.*

### Types of Interviews

Today, the most common interview on campuses involves a panel approach in which a small group of campus representatives (faculty members, staff, students), offering a variety of perspectives on candidates' competencies relative to the required qualifications for the job, question the potential hire. If the job requires technical or subject area expertise, the panel should include someone who possesses such expertise. Panel interviews are most often conducted by the selection committee.

Individual interviews offer a one-on-one format in which the manager or supervisor meets with the candidate and may take place at the latter stage of the selection process. Sequential interviews consist of a series of panel or individual interviews, providing a larger group of campus constituents the oppor-

tunity to evaluate a candidate. Final candidates often participate in sequential interviews so that the selection committee gets widespread campus feedback, which is important in the evaluation and selection process.

### *Interview Questions*

Interviews consist of two primary types of questions: a) open ended and b) behavioral. Open-ended questions allow candidates to provide information and offer ways of thinking about specific topics. Examples of open-ended prompts include, "Tell us about your advising experience and philosophy," or "Describe an excellent advisor." Closed questions, conversely, tend to be factual or technical in nature, often requiring a simple "yes" or "no" answer, such as "Are you familiar with the NACADA Statement of Core Values for Advising?"

Behavioral questions require candidates to evaluate and analyze situations to provide reasonable options or solutions. Interviewers utilize behavioral questions most often in competency-based interviewing, a method of inquiry that helps identify the skills and abilities of applicants performed in previous job settings or hypothetical situations. These questions allow the committee to assess the transferability of competencies to the job for which the candidate is applying, utilizing past experience to predict future behavior. An example of a behavioral question is, "A parent calls you about her child's academic and degree progress; what do you tell the parent?"

Scenarios fall into the larger category of behavioral questions, requiring candidates to respond to a given situation and articulate a plan of action toward a resolution. The plan often reveals the applicant's philosophy of advising. An example of a scenario is as follows: "A student comes into your office and says that he wants to pursue a highly selective major that requires an aptitude in math that, based upon his test scores and grades to date, the student does not appear to possess. How do you advise this student who is adamant about pursuing this course of study?"

Advising administrators must determine the questions that will elicit the desired information from interviewees. For example, Chalmers (2005) provided a list of questions relating to the four important competencies of verbal communication, analytical problem solving, tolerance, and motivation. To determine whether a candidate is able to use a systematic approach for identifying the elements

of the problem and to render possible solutions (analytical problem solving), Chalmers suggested asking applicants to "describe a situation where you were confronted with a complex problem, the process you used to analyze it, and the solution or solutions you found." Other questions for these four competencies can be found at <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/Advisingissues/Hiring.htm>.

When interviewing for a professional advisor, the committee will ask questions that primarily address the candidate's practical experience and theoretical understanding of advising students. When hiring academic faculty members with advising responsibilities, the hiring committee should include a member who will ensure that the screening and interview process includes advising as a stated responsibility of the job and should pose queries devoted to the philosophy and practice of advising students.

*Behavioral questions require candidates to evaluate and analyze situations to provide reasonable options or solutions.*

### *Illegal Interview Questions*

Some questions can be asked of job applicants, others cannot. In general, questions should pertain to the candidate's potential skills, knowledge, and abilities as related to the open position. Questions related to age, national origin, race, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, medical condition, or disabilities are prohibited by law. A list of prohibited and permissible questions can be found at *Careers and Workplace* (2001): <http://www.usatoday.com/careers/resources/interviewillegal.htm>. To turn potentially litigious questions into legal alternatives,

see *HR World Editors* (2011), <http://www.hrworld.com/features/30-interview-questions-111507/> and *Job Interview Questions* (2011), <http://www.jobinterviewquestions.org/questions/illegal-questions.asp>.

### *Interviews in Progress*

When conducting the meeting, the interviewer should create a comfortable climate, free of distractions and interruptions. Whenever possible, the interviewer should introduce each candidate to the work location, particularly if the interview will take place elsewhere on campus. In panel interviews, the committee chair should not seat candidates as if they are being interrogated rather than interviewed. Circular or U-shaped seating arrangements help put applicants at ease. Each candidate should receive a copy of the job description in which the essential functions of the job are highlighted and they should

be asked if they can perform them.

The lead interviewer can establish rapport to make candidates feel welcome, perhaps acknowledging some item within their application materials. Candidates are generally more comfortable if they have clear expectations of the interview. Thus, at the beginning, the chair should describe the format and structure of the interview, such as the number of questions as well as the kind of queries that will be asked. Applicants should be told that they will have an opportunity to ask their own questions about the position and the hiring and selection process, and they should be encouraged to take notes and told that the committee will also be writing down responses during the interview.

Like the use of prescreening rubrics for efficiently wading through a stack of applications, scoring rubrics or rating sheets for interviewers may also be an effective method of evaluating candidates. They may be broad in scope, focusing on first impressions, strengths, and areas of concern, or they may be quite specific, related to the interview questions and the desired competencies in an ideal candidate. Because applicants who are interviewed should possess all of the required qualifications for the job, the interviewers seek to differentiate a more nuanced understanding of each candidate and the qualities he or she would bring to the job and the organization. However, they should recognize that the style of response may reflect cultural differences not the level of qualification for the job.

In closing the meeting, interviewers should thank candidates for their time and interest in the position. As Chalmers (2005) noted, one of the best closing questions to ask candidates is, "If I met your current (or former) boss on the street, what would she or he say about you using only five adjectives?" She pointed out that condensing their best skills and abilities into just five adjectives, the candidate demonstrates the propensity to think quickly and shows the ability to see another's viewpoint. Once all of the questions have been asked of the applicant, the candidate should be given the opportunity to ask questions or add additional information relevant to his or her job application. Finally, the interview should explain the next step in the process, including any possibility of further interviews, when the decision will likely be made, and how the candidate will be informed of the decision. Committee members should complete their notes and scoring rubrics following each interview rather

than relying on memory at a later time.

### Reference Checks

A thorough selection process should yield one or more top candidates for the job. Even if only one candidate appears qualified, the hiring administrator must check references regardless of the impressiveness of the applicant's qualifications. Reference checks may reveal information about an applicant's past behavior that has nothing to do with skills, knowledge, and abilities, but may impact the ultimate hiring decision. Failure to check references can also result in serious legal consequences for the institution. If an employee engages in violent or harmful behavior similar to an incident during previous employment, and a reference check would have revealed this information, the institution can be held legally responsible for negligent hiring.

However, campus managers and supervisors who provide employment references on current or former employees must be aware that untrue, incomplete, or misleading information may cause a different kind of liability, negligent referral. A California appellate court in *Randi M. v. Livingston Union School District* (1995) found that, "A statement that contains only favorable matters and omits all reference to unfavorable matters is as much a false representation as if all the facts stated were untrue."

Perhaps as a result of lawsuits, at least 30 states have adopted reference-check immunity laws. These laws generally offer protection to employers who provide job references for current or former

employees. For example, California Civil Code § 47 ("Civil Code," n.d.) (which deals with communication of privileged information) was revised to offer greater protection for employment references that are factual and given without malice. In general, candidates are more than willing to provide references when applying for a job for which they seek employment. The prospective employer hopes that references will be truthful and free of subjective impressions that lack objective support.

Typically, the hiring administrator is responsible for checking references and asking applicants if their current supervisor can be contacted. If the applicant already works at the hiring institution, the administrator should check the applicant's personnel file as well as references. Candidates must have the opportunity to provide the same number of references, usually three or four professional references.

*Committee members should complete their notes and scoring rubrics following each interview rather than relying on memory at a later time.*

When conducting reference checks, the responsible person should use a written questionnaire form with room to take notes next to the list of questions. This form will document the reference-check process. Hiring administrators should develop a set of job-related questions that specifically target the competencies needed for the position and ask each reference consistently about them.

Because most reference checks are conducted over the phone, the individual undertaking this important task must clearly introduce her or himself and the reason for the call. After affirming the reference has time to talk, the caller should briefly describe the position for which the candidate has applied. After confirming the relationship between the individual providing the reference and the applicant, the caller should verify basic data such as job title, duties, salary, and dates of employment. The caller can ask about the candidate's performance, attendance, conduct, and reason for termination of employment (e.g., release during probation, dismissal, or layoff, if applicable). Former supervisors of applicants tend to provide the most comprehensive data about the candidate's demonstrated skills, knowledge, and abilities. If the applicant has not provided a former or current supervisor as a reference, the administrator may seek out these people. In fact, I recommend checking more references than those listed on an applicant's vita or resume; however, the caller must use the same procedure for all potential hires. The time following up on references is well worth the investment before making a job offer.

### **Making an Offer**

Once the hiring committee has conducted interviews and the reference checks are completed, it can select the candidate who best meets the required qualifications for the job. The process of making an offer can vary substantially from one institution to another in terms of a) the person who makes the final decision; b) the specific steps completed prior to making the offer, c) personnel who writes the offer letter, and d) the benefits or compensation that are open for negotiation.

If the recruitment and advertising for the position has been thoroughly and thoughtfully executed, the candidate's expectations of salary should be in keeping with the amount offered. However, even when the expected salary range has been realistically advertised, the administrator should expect

to negotiate with the potential hire. As each job is designated a payroll title and salary range, most institutions base the wage relative to the midpoint of the salary range. Thus, in addition to assessing the level of salary that a department or institution will allow (and can afford), administrators must be cognizant of the salaries of current staff who perform like functions within the department and on campus so that the administrator considers candidate's qualifications while preserving staff equity and morale.

Once a candidate verbally accepts an offer, the hiring unit should follow the conversation with a confirmation letter, including the agreed upon salary, additional terms, and start date (actual hiring processes vary from campus to campus). Regardless of the person who makes the offer—the advising administrator, a higher level campus administrator, or a representative from the institution's HR department—the campus hiring process must be followed so that all applicable laws, guidelines, and institutional expectations are met and so that documentation confirms that all candidates were treated uniformly in the recruitment, screening, interviewing, and final selection process.

### **Notifying Applicants**

The process of informing a nonhired candidate is almost as important as the selection of the final candidate. Timely communication throughout the application process demonstrates that the department and institution respect and invest in people. Prospective employees who see that the institution treats people respect-

fully will continue to be interested in employment on campus, even if they were not selected for the position for which they initially applied.

Many campus HR departments notify applicants who were not selected in the prescreening process. If application materials were submitted electronically, they often notify them by email. However, to the recipient, this form of communication can feel very impersonal, particularly if the process has taken longer than expected. If the recruitment and selection process has been extended, I recommend that applicants be apprised of the process and updated about when they might hear from the department or institution. Administrators should be aware of the correspondence sent by the institution to prospective employees for any positions within their department.

For candidates who have been interviewed but

*I recommend checking more references than those listed on an applicant's vitae or resume; however, the caller must use the same procedure for all potential hires.*

not selected, advising administrators may wish to communicate directly, either in the form of a handwritten note, phone call, or both. If possible, they should provide those not selected with useful feedback about the qualifications they did not meet, suggestions for acquiring these qualifications, or other available positions on campus for which they may be better qualified. These are difficult conversations, but candidates who have invested substantial time in the application and interview process will greatly appreciate administrators who take the time to treat them with such professional courtesy. The administrator may want to ask applicants to evaluate the hiring process to garner information on improvements for future searches.

### Documenting the Hiring Process

Just as documentation of academic and degree progress of students creates analytics for persistence and success, the hiring and professional development process of staff hiring proves critical. Without such a record, administrators cannot conduct a thorough analysis of best practices, and in the future, they or their predecessors will rely on anecdotal success stories and cautionary tales.

Federal law requires employers to maintain records of the selection process, including a list of all candidates who have interviewed for a position, the position description, and the reason for hiring or not hiring each applicant. The reasons for selection or nonselection must relate to the applicant's skills, knowledge, and abilities relative to the job-related selection criteria. Many institutions have specific forms for this use, which should be available through the HR department on campus. Targeted recruitment efforts are often noted in the closing files documenting the recruitment and selection process. The information provided on these forms will be used if the hiring process is challenged and an inquiry is filed. Federal guidelines require that these materials and any related documents be retained in the hiring department for a minimum of 3 years.

### Conclusion

Hiring is potentially the most important task facing advising administrators. It is often repeated and offers learning opportunities and practice toward administrator proficiency. Thus, it is the first step to good management. Throughout the entire hiring process, advising administrators should familiarize themselves with critical hiring laws as well as the particular forms and guidelines utilized by their respective institution and HR department. They need to connect with the HR and employment

specialist allies on campus, and they need to keep abreast of demographic trends and consider targeted recruitment in hiring a diverse staff, representative of the changing student population.

Initially, the recruitment and selection of the best possible candidate for a position requires the development of a well-crafted job description, which articulates the essential responsibilities and necessary qualifications for the job. A good job description enables hiring administrators to recruit, advertise, and create a clear set of selection criteria. A selection committee will utilize these criteria to prescreen applicants to determine the top candidates for possible interview. Well-designed interview questions will help reveal the candidates with the best skills, knowledge, and experience relative to the required and desired qualifications for the job.

Once a top candidate is selected, hiring administrators or campus representatives make the job offer, negotiating salary and other terms of employment. Effective advising administrators not only hire well; they also develop their staff and provide coaching, training, and ongoing feedback as part of the employee's career development.

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