



Research Foundation for SUNY/Buffalo State Search Committee Guidelines

The Research Foundation for SUNY is a private, nonprofit corporation. As a **separate** employer from the University, the Research Foundation is charged with personnel related responsibilities such as staffing, recruitment, compensation and benefits programs, general personnel administration as well as employee relations and development. In performing these functions, the Research Foundation is subject to all federal and state laws applying to **private** employers.

The Research Foundation for SUNY is committed to complying with Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EEO/AA) laws and regulations while ensuring that the overall objectives of the project/program with regard to searches and recruitment are met. Therefore, an affirmative action search and screening procedure is established by a properly assembled search committee and utilized in the recruitment process of full time (.5 FTE or greater) employees of the Research Foundation. An employee may be hired to fill a vacant spot on a temporary basis while a search is being conducted. The temporary position is to last no longer than six months and the temporary employee may apply.

What is Affirmative Action?

Affirmative Action (AA) refers to policies that take factors including "race, color, religion, gender, or national origin" into consideration in order to benefit an underrepresented group, usually as a means to counter the effects of a history of discrimination. The Research Foundation for SUNY is a federal contractor that falls under the scope of AA and the federal and state laws governing contractors.

What is a Search Committee?

A Search Committee is a group of individual stakeholders from various areas and levels within an organization that come together in a structured and coordinated manner to screen, evaluate, and recommend potential candidates for employment.

Purpose of a Search Committee

The purpose of a Search Committee is to work collaboratively with the committee chairperson and Research Foundation to recruit the most qualified and suitable candidate for the vacancy within a specific project/program. As a member of a search committee, you play a significant role in achieving this goal thus influencing the objectives of the project/program and organization as a whole. On behalf of the Research Foundation for SUNY, thank you for your service!

Steps in the Search Process

- Defining and formalizing the position
- Forming the search committee
- Approvals – Principal Investigator (PI) and Research Foundation (RF)
- Recruitment-advertising strategy
- Evaluating candidate materials-screening methods
- Interview preparation
- Interviewing
- Reference checking
- Making a recommendation
- Making an offer
- Closing the search

Nondiscrimination in Searches

Search committee members must not discriminate against applicants on the basis of any of the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Color
- Marital status
- Religion
- Ancestry
- Sexual orientation
- National origin
- Sex
- Citizenship
- Physical or mental disability
- Race
- Status as covered veteran
- Medical condition (cancer-related or genetic characteristics)

Interviews

Question Types - A mix is recommended for the matrix

- Informational Questions - Facts, yes or no answers
- Situational Questions - What if, what would you do?
- Behavioral Questions - When, how did you?

Questions the Search Committee Can Ask

We recommend you ask the approved questions from the matrix provided by the Search Committee Chairperson. However, sometimes an interview conversation may take another direction, which can inadvertently navigate you into uncharted waters. If a candidate discloses unsolicited personal information during their interview, do not question them about it further unless there is a job-related reason to do so.

The following questions can be asked only when there is a bona fide, job-specific reason to ask them. Consistency is key, so if asked of one candidate, they should be asked of all candidates.

- Do you have any responsibilities that would conflict with the job's attendance or travel requirements?
- Are you able to work in the United States on an unrestricted basis?
- Are you able to perform the duties on the job description with or without reasonable accommodations?
- Do you have any conflicts that would prevent you from working the schedule discussed?
- What languages do you speak or write fluently? (*only if directly related to job qualifications*)
- Would you have any problem working overtime, with frequent state-wide travel requiring a valid drivers' license or working weekends?

Questions the Search Committee Should Not Ask

- Are you a U.S. citizen?
- Where were you born?
- What is your birth date?
- Do you have a disability?
- Are you married?
- What is your spouse's name?
- Do you have any children?
- Do you have childcare arrangements?
- What church do you attend?

Duties as a Member of a Search Committee

- Endeavors to fully participate in each stage of the review process based on the identified job-related criteria.
- Works collaboratively to determine the most qualified candidate(s) for recommendation based on the skills and relevant experience of each.
- Provides professional and unbiased opinion of interviewees based upon the duties and qualifications established in the job description and documented interview evaluations.
- Documents each interview accordingly using a pre-established interview matrix written by the search committee with RF assistance if needed.
- Seeks to treat all candidates equally.
- Adheres to nondiscrimination guidelines and affirmative action obligations. More information at: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/practices/index.cfm>
- Respects the confidentiality of each candidate. Information about candidates is not to be shared outside the discussion with committee members. This includes information found on the application or resume. It's also important that you do not release the names of candidates, their current employers or discuss individual interviews outside the committee circle. This could result in putting the candidate in jeopardy with their current employer.
- Remains objective and avoids discrimination of any kind.
- Immediately discloses any instance where the consideration of an applicant could be considered a conflict of interest. For example, a search will be posted for an Administrative Assistant and the committee chair learns that his or her daughter wants to apply.

During the Interview Process

- Introduce committee members.
- Describe the format of the interview – give example – “We will be asking you specific job related questions as a group. Time will be provided toward the end of our meeting for you to ask any questions pertaining to the vacancy. Feel free to take notes during this time.”
- Let the applicant do most of the talking.
- Keep the process on track.
- Observe nonverbal behavior.
- Take notes using the provided matrix. *
- Leave time for the candidate to ask questions.
- Describe the remainder of the search process and the approximate time frame. Do not make promises that cannot be kept. If you tell a candidate that you will get back to him/her by a specific date, be sure to follow through. If the time-frame changes, be sure to notify the candidate(s).
- Thank the candidate for their time.

*Be careful when taking interview notes. Be sure to use the approved matrix. Interview notes should be returned to the committee chairperson and then forwarded to:

Stephanie Gruarin
Research Foundation for SUNY
Human Resources
Buckham B206
Buffalo, NY 14222

Interview notes are kept on record for auditing purposes and should be based on objective observation of each candidate. Your notes should consist of information that is relevant to the process. For example, a written comment on a matrix such as “Master’s earned in 1970!” could be interpreted as age discrimination.

Remember, communication about the search process in general is an important aspect of your role, even though you are limited in providing data about specific applicants. Please do not hesitate to consult with the committee chair or Research Foundation Human Resources Associate, Stephanie Gruarin, gruarisl@buffalostate.edu or if any questions arise regarding this process.