Faculty Hiring in a Virtual Environment: Ideas, Tools, and Best Practices

UW Office for Faculty Advancement
UW ADVANCE Center for Institutional Change
Overview

- Part 1: The hiring process in virtual spaces: general concepts and key questions
- Part 2: Running efficient and effective committee meetings online
- Part 3: Planning virtual “on campus” visits with final candidates
The Hiring Process in Virtual Spaces: General Concepts and Key Questions
General Concepts / Key Questions

What *can* be the same, and what *must* be different when hiring in online environments?

> Everybody is online -- and most likely working from home (and on laptops)
  – No impromptu run-ins to chat about things
> Technology is now an active participant in your process
> Potential advantages and disadvantages of hiring online
> Fostering equity and inclusion in an online environment
General Concepts / Key Questions

Make what is currently *implicit* in your hiring process *explicit*.

- What are you trying to achieve at each stage in the hiring process?
- What should be reproduced from your “typical” process?
- What should be left behind or radically altered?
What are the essential components of your hiring process?

> Make intentional decisions about what is critical to your decision making.
> How will you collectively determine what is essential?
> What do you not know from the initial application materials that you need to know in order to move on to the next phase of selection?
Running Efficient and Effective Committee Meetings Online
Same/Different Online

Understanding diverse roles on any committee

> Committee chair / facilitator
> (NEW) Chat monitor (could be rotating role)
> Scribe / note-taker (could be rotating role)

> Appropriate roles for student members
> Appropriate roles for support staff
The importance of preparatory work prior to decision meetings

> What work is done by individuals outside of meetings?
> What work is done as a group together?
> Do you need to actively establish trust?
> Do you need to train any committee members?
> Does your unit understand the hiring process?

Prep time investments pay off later
Making the Implicit Explicit

Managing meetings in Zoom

> Set clear meeting agendas and goals
  – You may need a timer
> Establish committee norms and expectations
> Address issues of power up front

> Develop strategies for
  – Actively engaging committee members
  – Encouraging “sidebar” conversations
  – Inviting disagreement and feedback
Committee Meeting Essentials

Prior to assessing applications

> Reviewing the committee’s charge
> Creating a clear assessment plan and timeline
> Affirming consensus on evaluation criteria (rubrics)
> Norming evaluation standards (rubrics)
  – Evaluation scale
  – Markers of excellence
  – Markers of potential
> Review sample set?
Committee Meeting Essentials

**During the assessment process**

> Frequency of check-ins

> Encouraging active participation from all members

**During decision-making**

> Achieving consensus in virtual spaces

> Engaging leadership, the larger unit, and allies
  
  – no impromptu run-ins to chat about things
Planning Virtual “On-Campus” Visits with Final Candidates
What *can* be the same?
What *must* be different?

**Developing a comprehensive plan for the “visit”**

> What is essential? What might be left behind?
> Realities of working from home and across multiple time zones
> To record or not to record, that is the question
  - Be mindful of the potential for records requests
  - Consider candidate’s perspective
If you have a large pool, consider a “tiered” structure for campus visits

> Tier 1: Large group (~10), each candidate has a 2-hour “visit”
> Tier 2: Smaller group (~5), each candidate has an additional 4-hour “visit”
> Tier 3: Finalists (~2), each candidate has an additional 4-hour “visit”
What *can* be the same?  
What *must* be different?

**Pacing of interviews, presentations, and meetings**
- Inquisition-style interviewing vs. group conversation
- The importance of scheduling real breaks
- Behind-the-scenes roles
- Tech “breathing space” -- tech checks, back-up plans

**Virtual “lunches,” “dinners,” other casual events**
- What do you want to accomplish?
- Consider pressure on candidates’ schedules
- Consider time zone differences
The “all important” job talk

Multiple models to consider for the virtual job talk

> Live-streamed presentation with immediate live Q & A
> Pre-recorded presentation with live Q & A
> Pre-recorded presentation live-streamed with live Q & A

> Pre-circulated paper, live brief overview with live Q & A
> Pre-circulated paper, brief pre-recorded presentation with live Q & A
The “all important” job talk

“Traditional” job talk (30 - 60 minutes) or “Modified” job talk (15 - 20 minutes)?

> How much do you need to “see” to help you in your selection process?

> Templates for areas to address in briefer recorded talks
  – Completed vs. planned research
  – A theoretical issue vs. a case study or specific example
The “all important” job talk

Strategies for facilitating effective Q & A in virtual spaces

- Pre-screened questions
- Questions in real time: using the Chat function and assigning a Chat monitor
- Settings to manage audience activity (mute, remove, etc.)
Potential elements of “visits”

Prioritize based on decision-making needs

> Meetings with leadership (chair or director, dean, etc.)

> Meetings with faculty (clarity of purpose)
  – 1:1 vs. group meetings
  – Structured vs. unstructured meeting topics
  – Meetings with specific committees (e.g., unit’s Diversity Committee)

> Meetings with graduate students
Potential elements of “visits”

> Meetings with staff
> Meetings with campus allies, community partners, etc.
> “Touring” the unit and/or campus
  – Should you make pre-recorded videos?
  – UW level / Unit level / Individual
> “Casual” events
> “Safe spaces” for candidates to ask questions
Making what is *implicit* in your process *explicit*

**Querying candidates before the “visit”**

- Do they have adequate technology?
- What would they like to see or know?
- With whom would they like to meet?

**If using pre-recorded talks, be explicit about what is and is not being evaluated**

- Not important: lighting and occasional flubbed word
- Important: the scope of the talk or the precision of the analysis
Making what is *implicit* in your process *explicit*

**Articulating strategies for**

> helping candidates present their best selves
  > clear expectations for performance
  > reasonable demands on time

> helping our colleagues present their best selves
  > clear expectations for engagement
  > clear criteria for assessment
Advice from successful faculty candidates

Imagine the experience from the candidate’s perspective.

> Reduce the number of meetings
  – avoid making candidates repeat themselves over and over
> Reduce the length of meetings
  – how much time is necessary?
> Schedule real breaks
  – at least 30 minutes, preferably an hour or more
> Casual events and social opportunities are important
> A single “Zoom room” (link) helps with transitions
Final Thoughts

Reexamine norms/processes with a strategic, intentional, and simplifying lens

> Discover effective practices that could become norms in the non-virtual format

> Gain clarity on what is and what is not being evaluated
  – Communicate this clearly with your unit and the candidates

> Guiding questions underlining all of this:
  – What *can* be the same, and what *must* be different?
  – How can we make the *implicit* *explicit*?
  – What is truly *essential*?