Faculty Searches during COVID
Best Practices

1/11/21

General Guidelines

- If an exception to conduct a search is granted, academic units should use Zoom or other virtual tools for interviews whenever possible to prioritize the health of candidates and interview participants and their families.
- Interviews should be as consistent as possible for each candidate and ensure that evaluation of all applicants is based on the extent to which applicants meet the criteria for the position.

Guidelines for Virtual Interviews

General Guidelines

- Remind candidates and committee members to treat the interview as though it were “in-person”
- Appoint a moderator for group meetings; name them as alternate host in Zoom
- Use a waiting room for the candidate or use a different Zoom link for each candidate to ensure candidates do not inadvertently “Zoom bomb” one another
- Consider turning off the chat function; candidates can see the chat (this is particularly important if using one Zoom link for all interviews)
- Interviews should not be recorded
- Provide ample breaks for search committee members and candidates

Additional Considerations for “Airport”/Search Committee Screening

- Offer to conduct a Zoom test with each of the candidates prior to the interview; have a phone connection available
- Have a pre-meeting with the search committee meeting to go over logistics and protocol
- Identify a way to conduct polls via Zoom or some other format

Additional Considerations for Virtual Small Group Interviews

- Give the moderator instructions about their role
- Consider keeping interview size to no more than 8-10 participants when possible so that the candidate can see the faces of the interviewers
Virtual Town Hall/Large Interview Session Considerations

- Ensure the candidates can share their screen if they have a PowerPoint; ask for any PowerPoint in advance as a back-up
- Consider the format you want – Zoom meeting vs. Zoom webinar (in a Zoom webinar, you do not “see” anyone)
- Appoint a moderator to introduce the candidate, monitor the chat if applicable, and manage Q&A
- Options for questions:
  - “Raise hand” feature
  - Moderator reviews the chat function and asks questions
  - Questions sent to moderator’s email
- Consider having technical support available

Before a Campus Visit/On-Site Interview Can Be Scheduled...

- First round virtual interview must have been conducted and positive
- Consider only bringing candidates to campus who have a strong likelihood of offer or have accepted an offer
  - Carefully consider whether it is necessary to see someone in person to make an offer for a position
  - If not brought to campus, give them opportunity to visit prior to making a decision
  - If multiple finalists, all should participate in the same format (either in person or virtual)
- Assess the availability of meeting space given physical distancing guidelines
- Appointing authority and search committee must be in agreement regarding participants, parameters, and agenda for the visit
- If the previous criteria are met, speak to the candidate to determine if candidate...
  - has had COVID symptoms
  - is waiting for a test result
  - has had exposure or has been identified as a close contact by a contact tracing process
  - lives in or has traveled to one of the states identified by DOH from which travelers should quarantine
- If appropriate, proceed with scheduling onsite visit. If candidate cannot travel due to health and safety considerations, interview may continue virtually or rescheduled for a later date.
  - Reminder: Be sure to ask the candidate if any accommodations are needed for the visit
Visit Guidelines

Travel Considerations

- Candidate must follow University-Affiliated Travel guidelines
  - Review PA Department of Health guidance
  - Practice social distancing and hygiene recommendations before and during travel
  - Obtain masks and hand sanitizer
- On-campus interviews with international candidates should be held virtually with campus visits postponed until Penn State permits international travel.
  - International travel requires approval from Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost
- Candidates must sign a “COVID Acknowledgment for Individual Interview Candidates” (available upon request to the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs or from Risk Management)

On-Campus Visit Considerations

- Appointing authority is accountable to ensure that candidate and all attendees follow Penn State’s health and safety guidelines
  - Ensure physical distancing of at least 6 feet between all attendees at all times.
  - All participants must wear masks. Consider having extra masks on hand.
  - Avoid handshakes and other forms of physical contact.
- Encourage attendees to complete the Symptom Tracker on Penn State Go. Check with HRSP to determine if attendees need to complete the Return to Work process.
- Allow/encourage others participate virtually if they prefer.
- Non-employees who attend any meetings/events must be approved by unit executive per visitor guidelines.
- If a realtor conducts a tour, ensure they’re familiar with Penn State’s health and safety guidance. Work with the realtor to determine if virtual tours are a possibility.
- If a meal is included, it should be served in individual portions; avoid open food options.
  - Consider allowing the candidate to dine alone.
  - No offsite dinners unless approved by the dean/chancellor.
- The interview process should be for candidate only and would not include other family members unless approved by the appointing authority.
- Inform candidate that in the event they experience COVID symptoms or test positive within 14 days following the onsite visit, expectation is that the unit would be notified and similarly, we will inform them if someone they met with tests positive for COVID.
Recording Candidate Interviews and Presentations

- Interviews should never be recorded. Only candidate presentations (via Zoom or in person) such as ‘job talks’ or other public presentations should be recorded.
- Candidate presentations can be recorded if the candidate agrees, but units should consider the possibility of an inequitable process if one candidate agrees to have the presentation recorded and another does not agree.
- If there are likely to be issues with confidential research that may give rise to data security or export control issues, then the presentations should not be recorded. Again, consider not recording any interviews if even one candidate cannot have the presentation recorded.
- If the search committee records videos of candidate presentations or interviews, all copies (including those hired and those not hired) must be retained as follows, from the conclusion of the search: 3 years if the successful candidate hired is a U.S. citizen or 5 years if the successful candidate hired requires visa sponsorship/does not have U.S. citizenship.
- Recordings retained must be stored in Kaltura (see below).
  - All Zoom recordings are automatically uploaded into Kaltura. See Kaltura settings below to enable appropriate access and use.
  - The head of the search committee or their designee is responsible for enabling appropriate access in Kaltura, after which either the head of the search committee, unit HR, unit academic affairs team, or the dean’s/chancellor’s office will be in responsible for retention and deletion.
  - Recordings may be retained at the unit level for a short period of time, e.g. one or two weeks, during the search period. After that, the files should be limited to the head of the search committee, unit HR, unit academic affairs, and dean’s/chancellor’s office, as appropriate.

Kaltura Settings:

- Kaltura automatically retains recordings for 3 years and provides a notification to users of that. If further retention is required due to litigation holds or the 5-year period above, the recordings can be easily downloaded. Recordings can also be easily deleted in Kaltura if they are no longer needed.
- Recordings must be set to “Private” under the publishing “Publish” settings so only the media owner and media collaborators (aka those it is shared with) can view it. Under the Kaltura “Collaboration” setting is where collaborators can be added or owners can be edited.