Recruitment Tips: Starting Critical Meetings
For: Search Committee Chairs
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Each meeting of the search committee is critical to the success of the recruitment, evaluation and hiring process; it also presents the opportunity for ongoing group cohesion leading to full and honest participation of the group’s members. Attending to these aspects and making sure the official procedures and best practices are conducted confidentially and transparently is the role of the search chair, no matter the eventual outcome of the search process.

It is important for the search committee chair to reference this checklist each meeting.

Indeed, there are a few critical moments in the lifecycle of a search committee during which the chair can focus on process and minimize bias. These especially include final evaluation/recommendation meetings when fatigue and emotions can be high during final decisions about which interviewees should be offered a job.

The search committee chair can help reset and focus the committee members for the task at hand with a statement such as the following (suitable for the evaluation meeting, for example):

"During this meeting we will be discussing the qualifications of candidates for a position in our department, using the established criteria to provide structure to our conversation. It’s an exciting moment for us to envision the future with a new colleague, and so I’d like to remind you about a few important points:

- Let’s stay mindful of how easily biases and stereotypes in faculty recruitment and evaluation can arise.
- How will we address potential biases if they creep in or if one of us thinks we are straying from the criteria?
- Does everyone have a copy of our evaluation rubric and understand how we are considering the criteria?
- It’s important to remember that our search process is being conducted confidentially, until we’re ready to make an official announcement.
- Are there any questions about our process?"

Research shows that being reminded that tools exist to mitigate bias and that the group has established criteria can support the members of an evaluation team to stick to the rubrics and evidence thereby minimizing stress, emotions and snap judgements from having oversized impacts on the decision making process.

For support on how to address bias in real time, reference materials from bias bystander intervention programs. Suggested responses may fall in the categories below. Contact ADVANCE for more information.

- Questioning/Interrupting
- Arouse Dissonance
- Disagree
- Pivot/Advocate
- Express emotion/saying ‘ouch'