Maintaining Consistency and Equity in the Virtual Interview Process

Consistent online experiences for all candidates helps keep your committee organized, reduces the opportunity for bias, and helps ensure a more compliant process. Here are a few tips for you to consider as you build your virtual interview process.

Maintain Consistent Stakeholder/Search Committee Participation

- The same people who would meet with candidates in-person should also meet with candidates during online interviews. For example, if the interviewee would normally meet with the Department Chair individually and with the Search Committee as a group, the same should be true of the online interview process. If an individual from the search committee or a stakeholder group is not able to participate in an online format, this change and the rationale should be documented in the search file. This is the same approach as with any circumstance where the composition of the committee might change for some reason.
- Ask the candidate if they consent to recording the open forum, research presentation, teaching demonstration, and other elements of the interview (nonprivate meetings) that all stakeholders, particularly voting stakeholders are unable to attend.

Ensure Substantially Similar Interview Schedules/Agendas

- The length, order, questions, and types of interactions (formal interview and stakeholder meetings) should be maintained as similarly as possible to in-person interviews. Formal interview questions, or question theme areas, and the basis for the evaluation of responses (i.e., a rubric) should always be created in advance of an in-person or virtual interview. Deviation from the set schedule should be documented with a reasonable justification for the change.
- Informal discussions that previously would have occurred between a candidate and the committee or stakeholder groups in situations, such as over coffee or lunch, are most prone to a process perception bias as informal discussions may feel more "formal" in an online setting. To mitigate the potential difference in perceptions of certain communication and behavioral competencies, stakeholder groups should be reminded of the possibility for such biases and time for informal exchanges should be scheduled and noted for committee and the candidate.

Source: Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC) Virtual Recruitment Toolkit, adapted from University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Maintain an "Interview Day" Contact/Guide

- During in-person interviews, it is common to have individuals who help candidates stay on time, navigate different meeting locations, and answer basic questions about life at the university or college.
- If a contact/guide would have been involved in the process, an individual should still be available to support the candidate in ensuring they have all of the appropriate links for the separate online meetings that will be hosted and to help communicate to college/university officials if some interviews have gone over time or if there are other issues of which they should be aware.
- When sending the agenda to a potential candidate, a best practice would be to include the links for each "meeting room" at the outset of the process.

Evaluate the Candidate and not the Technology/Medium

- A candidate's issues with the technology, internet connections, background scenery (some candidates may not have easy access to dedicated quiet space), or familiarity with a technology should not be factored into the selection decision. In most instances, such issues are not job-related and would not have been a consideration for in-person interviews.
- Common non-verbal communication factors may be more difficult to assess and/or become a point of hyper- focus in an online format. Specifically, perceptions about a candidate's "eye-contact" and level of engagement with the audience will be different in an online format and interviewers should be sure to evaluate candidates on the content of their answers and presentations, not their online performance acumen.