

Recommendation for Dean and Associate Dean Search Procedure

May 14th, 2025, approved by the University Senate

Search committees are advisory members responsible for screening and selecting qualified candidates for open positions. The search committee process should be structured to break down bias and assist in bringing the best possible talent to the University. Discussions within search committees are typically confidential. In accordance with the university's goals to represent its community, the committee recommends two to three highly-qualified candidates to the Provost and Senior VP for Academic Affairs. The Provost makes the final recommendation to the President.

The University Senate recommends that the Administration adopt specified, common practices and guidelines for Dean searches that are conducive to a search committee charged with coming to a consensus on candidates in an independent and self-governed manner.

In support of the establishment of such a practice, we recommend:

A. Detailed and Documented Practice for Dean Searches:

- a. A working group, with faculty and/or staff representation from the Dean-administered unit, to draft the job description.
 - i. The job description should be informed by the Dean-administered unit's written plan, e.g. strategic, action, academic program, etc.
- b. Recommend best practices and clarity for selecting an independent search committee and chair composed primarily from the Dean-administered unit and those who represent diverse views and disciplinary backgrounds, such as,
 - i. Solicit input from the Dean-administered unit's faculty, staff, librarian, and student leadership for recommendation of committee members from the stakeholders in the unit.
 1. While it may not be possible for the committee to include a representative from every teaching unit or constituency, the committee's members will be charged with anticipating and balancing the concerns of all those affected by the hire.
 - ii. Committee members external to the Dean-administered unit should be selected with careful consideration and should not compromise the independent nature of the committee. They should include,
 1. One Dean, or Associate Dean from another unit.
 2. One chair/faculty/staff/librarian from another unit.
- c. Clear guidelines and responsibilities for the committee to follow throughout the search process.

- i. The committee's selection of the top candidates should be guided by the Dean-administered unit's written plan, e.g. strategic, action, academic program, etc., and job posting.
- ii. University central leadership, e.g., Provost, should plainly share their vision for an ideal candidate with the committee members.
- iii. Utilizing i.& ii., benchmarks should be established and a corresponding rubric created by the committee chair and members.
- iv. An expected timeline for the search should be provided to the committee, and meeting dates should be set out following the timeline with advanced notice (*See example, Virginia Tech guidelines, linked below*).
- v. Reasons for the failed search will be communicated to the leadership, barring confidential information.
- vi. The Chairperson of the committee, in coordination with the Provost's office staff, shall be responsible for the following,
 - 1. Coordinating the committee's meeting schedule
 - 2. Record keeping
 - 3. Distribution of relevant documentation and directives from the administration, e.g., Provost's office
 - 4. Manage committee meetings in an equitable fashion to ensure all perspectives are given consideration, e.g., allocate time to each committee member for views and discussion
 - 5. Coordinate with the Provost's office for scheduling candidates' in person campus visits
 - 6. Provide updates to the Provost's office regarding the work of the search committee.

B. Advance Notice and Inclusive Scheduling:

- a. Ideally provide a minimum of one week notice for key dates during times for broad participation such as common hours or during times in a department that there isn't a lot of teaching, and approximate times to the campus community for stakeholder group meetings and open campus presentations.
 - i. Share these dates with the search committee and the college or division's administrative leadership team to ensure the inclusion of all faculty and staff and to include the oversight of critical stakeholders.

C. Stakeholder Engagement:

- a. Conduct stakeholder small group meetings, open campus presentations, and follow-up surveys to gather feedback and broad input.

D. Transparency and Communication:

- a. Ensure regular updates from the Provost's office or designate a Senate liaison serving on the search committee to provide regular communication and a pathway for stakeholders to share their concerns and ask questions.
- b. Grant the search committee access to all relevant documentation and specify how these results will influence the final selection process.
 - i. If any information is withheld, provide a clear and specific reason for doing so.

E. Failed Search Procedures:

- a. The Provost shall give an appropriate explanation to the dean-led unit to inform the faculty and staff for future searches.
 - i. Identify the key reason the search failed, e.g., institutional factors, unqualified candidates, candidate withdrawing.
 - ii. Allow the search committee members an opportunity to provide feedback.

Rationale:

The University has conducted dean searches across various units in a somewhat ad hoc manner.

Dean search committees should operate with standardized timelines and procedures, adhering to [Montclair State University Policy on Search Committees](#), involving faculty and staff from the relevant departments ensures that those with the most profound understanding of the area's specific needs, challenges, and goals have input in selecting a leader who can effectively support and guide the department. This inclusive approach promotes transparency, collaboration, and trust between the administration, faculty, and staff. A clear, structured process that consistently engages key stakeholders will result in better-informed decision-making and more substantial alignment between leadership and the academic community.

By adopting these practices, the University will ensure an inclusive, transparent, and effective process for selecting Deans.

The included recommendations are meant to clarify and define practices outside the university's Human Resources processes, and not meant to supersede their authority.

Resources:

American University [American University Procedures for Dean and Vice Provost Searches](#)

SUNY Empire State [Dean/Associate Dean Search Committee Guidelines | Policies, Procedures and Guidelines | SUNY Empire State College](#)

Virginia Tech [Search Process for College Deans and Academic Vice Presidents Updated September, 2014](#)

Yale University [Best Practices for Conducting Faculty and Leadership Searches](#)

Florida International University [Search and Screen Process for Deans](#)

UC Berkeley [Dean Searches](#)