Guidebook Four: Conducting Interviews

The purpose of the Conducting Interviews guidebook is to provide committee members the necessary steps, best practices, and checks for conducting a thorough, inclusive, equitable, and defensible search process. These practices meet our federal Affirmative Action/Equal Employment obligations and provide strategies to mitigate unconscious bias in the interview stage. Tools are provided as hyperlinks throughout this guide.

Developing the Interview Process

- Identify the interview stages and format (i.e., HireVue, video interview followed by a campus interview)
- Develop a set of interview questions tied to the position qualifications
- Develop a rating process/interview rubric and feedback form
- Determine which campus partners will interview finalists. Use the same interviewers (as possible) throughout
- Use an Open Forum Feedback Form to ask questions and solicit feedback
- Discuss and implement strategies for reducing bias in the interview process
- Schedule interviews, providing at least **48 hours** for candidates to respond
- Provide detailed information to candidates prior to, during, and following the interview process so they feel welcomed, informed, and prepared including:
    - The types of interviews (HireVue, video, in-person)
    - Expected interview length
    - Presentation/workshop material candidates should cover
    - Technology the department will provide
    - Accommodations information for candidates with disabilities making it easy for candidates to request accommodations and being proactive in implementing ways to make a search process accessible for candidates utilizing the Universal Design Principles document and working with the ADA Office
    - Contact person for follow-up questions or emergencies
    - Travel, hotel, and transportation logistics for in-person interviews
    - A day-of interview itinerary
    - Names and titles of the interview committee and other campus constituents involved in the interview process
    - Finalist selection process and identification of who will make the final decision

Developing the Interview Format

It is important that the interview process be well organized and provide each candidate the opportunity to share their qualifications and skills. The interview process should make candidates feel included and supported.

Include These Elements in the Interview:

- Welcome the candidate and introduce the committee
- Provide an opportunity for the candidate to describe their qualifications for the job and how the position relates to their career path.

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- Ask consistent, legal questions, utilizing a rubric to evaluate candidates objectively
- Provide an opportunity for the candidate to ask questions
- Be prepared to answer questions from candidates related to mentorship and development, campus environment and culture, and department/position specific questions
- Provide next steps and the notification process including a contact person
- Thank candidates for applying and participating in the interview process

Provide guidance for individuals and groups involved in the interview process:

- Provide relevant interviewing documents to individuals and groups involved in the interview process. These include:
  - The Position Description
  - Essential functions needed to be successful in the position
  - The job posting
  - Interview questions (interview questions can also be provided during the interview to allow for candidates to also review questions as they are being asked)
  - Unlawful vs. lawful questions
  - An interview rubric or feedback form for evaluating candidates
  - The interview format and interview schedule

Check Appropriateness of Information Requests of Candidates

- If additional information needs to be asked of a candidate consult with the CU Boulder Affirmative Action Officer or the HR Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Recruitment Program Manager before making specific or unusual questions to ensure they are objective and do not unfairly discriminate against the candidate.

Communicate with Candidates Regarding Their Status:

- Notify candidates no longer being considered throughout the process rather than waiting until the end of the search. Reason codes are available in the CU Boulder job site. Templates are available through the CU Boulder job site that provide general reasons for not being moved forward. Candidates should not be given the specific reason for not being moved forward in the process. As a reminder, any criteria used to eliminate candidates must be job related and documented.

Provide Adequate Information to the Hiring Authority:

- The committee may recommend more than one finalist to the hiring authority. The search committee should provide the hiring authority with adequate information. This may include a search committee summary with information about each finalist (i.e., strengths, areas needing improvement, potential contributions, etc.), and application materials for each finalist including their CV, cover letter, letters of recommendations, references, any statements they were required to submit, and search committee notes about the candidates.

Developing and Administering Interview Questions

Develop a **core set of questions** based upon the criteria established in the position description to be asked of all candidates.

- Ask questions related to the requirements of the job including competencies and behaviors that support the qualifications being evaluated.
- Do not ask questions that are not job-related as these may potentially be discriminatory. Reference the [Lawful vs. Unlawful Questions](#) when developing questions.
- Ask the same questions of all candidates to ensure equity and to assist in comparing candidates at the final decision-making stage. It is acceptable to ask different questions based on candidates' CV, research, etc. However, the questions must relate to the position and the candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities. Questions should **_not_** probe for characteristics such as fit, style, and comradery.
- Consider using the **critical behavior interviewing** technique, which identifies a candidate's potential based upon past behaviors rather than hypothetical questions. The idea is that past performance is the best predictor of future performance. Critical behavior interview questions may be useful to learn more about a candidate's teaching experience, diversity and inclusion work and commitment, and soft skills. See [Sample Faculty Interview Questions](#) for suggestions. Ask questions that require the candidate to describe specific experiences and examples of past performance related to job competencies.
  - Example: Please give an example of a goal you reached in a former position and describe how you were able to achieve it.
  - Example: When you did "x" or were faced with "x,"? How did you handle the situation?
- It is acceptable to ask follow-up questions or probe candidates to provide examples rather than philosophical or theoretical responses. If the answer you receive does not fully address the question, rephrase, ask for more specifics, and /or ask what the outcome was.
- The [Human Resources Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Recruitment Program Manager,](#) the [Campus Affirmative Action Officer,](#) and a [Human Resources Professional Recruiter](#) can provide guidance regarding interview questions that are legal and focus on candidates' qualifications and potential, as well as information on how to explore a candidate's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Developing and Utilizing an Interview Rubric

- Utilizing an [Interview Review Rubric](#) promotes consistency and clarity regarding qualifications, assists in determining how qualifications will be measured, and identifies what constitutes a strong/top candidate

- The rubric should be based on objective and measurable job relevant criteria drawn from the position description

- Reference the [Criteria Evaluation Best Practices Matrix](#) for best practices when evaluating candidates.

Determining the Type of Interview

Various types of interviews may be used depending on the department and the position. The following describes common types of interviews.

1. Screening interviews

Screening interviews may take place at conferences, professional meetings, informational interviews, etc. It is important to utilize the same best practices provided for search committee interviews. Consistent, legal questions, and use of a rubric to evaluate candidates will help maintain objectivity and will aide in defending the process. For a screening interview, be sure to:

- Provide a detailed description of the position (along with the job posting or position description if possible)
- Assess the applicant's interest in working in Boulder, at CU, and in the position
- Take careful notes related to the applicant's qualifications and skills
- Encourage the applicant to ask questions
- Keep in mind that candidates are also interviewing us, and this is an opportunity to recruit them

2. Semi-Finalist interviews

Providing for a semi-finalist video or phone interview provides an opportunity to screen candidates prior to bringing them on campus, which saves time and money. A semi-finalist interview may be desirable for a couple of reasons:

1) To give the search committee an opportunity to learn more about candidates. This is an inclusive strategy that allows a larger group of candidates to interview and demonstrate their skills for the position. For example, the committee may interview eight to ten candidates if implementing a semi-finalist step versus three to five without it.

2) To allow candidates to elaborate what is in their application materials.

The semi-finalist interview could entail twenty-to-thirty-minute phone or video interviews with at least five minutes of transition time between, and search committee time for discussion following the final interview.

- Double-check phone numbers, links and contact information for phone or video interviews. Clearly communicate interview information to candidates should they need to initiate contact for the interview. Reference the [Sample Candidate Interview Schedule.](#)

3. Campus interviews

- Review your department policy regarding interview logistics and expenses
- Determine and confirm interview dates with finalists
- Tend to details needed for travel to campus including:
  - Giving as much advance notice as possible to candidates with the interview date, plan, location, format, and technology resources to be provided, and a point of contact for accessibility information (provided to all candidates)
  - Providing a general format of the questions

- o Providing a list of who will be present during the interviews
- o Sharing travel logistics (flight confirmation, transportation, meals, hotel information) as well as on campus logistics
  - If flight, hotel, and transportation is not funded by the department, notify candidates. If possible, allow for candidates to opt into video interview if they do not have the funds to travel on their own.
  - Arrange for host(s) to meet candidates, pick them up, drop them off, etc.
  - Set interview schedule logistics
  - Reserve room space, determine presentation and equipment needs
  - Provide campus map, visitor guide, parking information, clear directions to interview space and restrooms in the building, and a phone number to contact if needed
- o Establish the same/similar interview environment for all candidates (i.e., same opportunities for interactions, similar/same meeting rooms, etc.)
- o Provide sufficient break time for candidates between interviews including restroom breaks
- o Provide time for candidates to meet with individuals or university groups by asking ahead of time if there are additional people they would like to meet
  - This can be an opportunity for candidates to meet with campus partners who can serve as helpful colleagues based on shared identities or commonalities
- o Provide CU Boulder swag and/or departmental materials to candidates such as a notepad, pen, sticker, window decal, pin, etc.
- o Provide an interview itinerary. See the following example: interview itinerary.

4. Open forums

Open forums can be helpful in ensuring that a diverse group of campus partners and colleagues are part of providing feedback from diverse perspectives. When campus partners are asked to participate in an open forum or presentation to provide feedback regarding finalists, it is important to provide them with an Open Forum Feedback Form for the search committee to review later.

- It is important that open forum participants are provided guidance regarding questions that are legal and not legal to ask via the Lawful vs. Unlawful Questions resource.
- Clarifying the open forum participant's role which is to provide feedback to the search committee is also important.
- Have a moderator (the Search Chair or search committee member) available to introduce the candidates, field questions, and intervene when and if illegal questions are asked.
- Provide campus partners with the position description and/or job posting, CV, cover letter, and any other required applicant documents such as a diversity and inclusion statement.
- Lastly, to protect candidates' privacy, be certain to redact personal contact information from materials distributed at open forums (such as a finalist's personal home address, personal email, cellphone number, etc.).

Utilizing Inclusive Practices

- Avoid scheduling interviews on religious holidays and holy days. Reference the following site for [diversity-based holidays for guidance](#).

- Utilize [universal design principles](#) when possible, to make a candidate's experience both welcoming and accessible.
- Be hospitable, friendly, and relational and be considerate of a candidate's potential anxiety.
- Be open to a variety of cultural differences in body language and verbal and nonverbal communication (eye contact use of pauses, etc.). There are many cultural cues that diverse candidates use as a sign of respect that may differ from one's own understanding. Being mindful of this ahead of time will allow the committee to be open and to focus on the interview responses.
- Allow candidates the opportunity to discuss and demonstrate what they can offer the department and university. This practice allows candidates to engage in dialogue and develop friendly rapport rather than having to perform under pressure.
- Allow for silence in the interview. This gives candidates time to formulate more robust responses and accommodates a variety of styles.
- Have a committee discussion before starting the interview process regarding ideas and words such as: "fit," "gut feeling," "I could see myself working with this person," etc. These terms/ideas need to be carefully examined to determine if they apply to job related criteria before making decisions about candidates.

Reducing Bias

Review the [Potential Influence of Unconscious Bias](#) handout and the following list of unconscious biases to mitigate judgements that may lead to inappropriate decisions.

- *First Impressions* - Making decisions about a person's candidacy based on their first/initial interaction
- *Affect bias* – rating a candidate higher because the interviewer likes the candidate
- *Physical characteristics* or appearance – rating a candidate higher or lower based on their age, attractiveness, style, etc.
- *Cultural Noise* – Focusing on socially acceptable responses from candidates that appeal to a search committee member but are not consistent with the candidate's application materials or other responses.
- *Similar to me effect* - Rating candidates higher who are most similar to the interviewer
- *Halo/horn effect* – Allowing a search member to focus on one point they highly value while overlooking all other information; this can work against a candidate (horn effect) or work in favor of a candidate (halo effect)
- *Contrast effect* – Comparing candidates to one another based on non-job-related information

Considering Diversity in the Interview

- To identify individuals who can contribute to diversity and inclusion, probe for the following:
    - Contribution to addressing diverse learning styles
    - Experience with and commitment to understanding and addressing barriers facing historically minoritized or underrepresented groups
    - Experience serving and mentoring historically underrepresented populations
    - Contributions in areas of primary research
    - Communication and collaboration among diverse communities demonstrated throughout the application and interview process

Candidates and Accommodations

Individuals with disabilities may require accommodations during the recruitment process. While CU Boulder may not ask about a candidate's disability, we encourage applicants to request a disability accommodation if needed. The ADA Director or Human Resources may be able to assist in this process. Candidates may be asked to demonstrate or address how they can perform essential functions of the job, with or without an accommodation. If questions arise about whether a candidate can successfully perform the essential functions of the job, the committee should not make an assessment on its own and should contact the ADA Coordinator for additional guidance about how to evaluate these requests at 303-492-9725 or adacoordinator@colorado.edu

Utilize the [Universal Design Principles for Accommodations](#) Guide when possible to make a candidate's experience both welcoming and accessible.

Addressing Power Dynamics Among Search Committee Members

- Search committees often include faculty who have positional and political power. It is important to have diverse search committee members including a range of positional levels (including junior faculty and graduate students). Addressing power dynamics during committee meetings can diminish the formation of unconscious power alliances that can influence candidate decisions. Techniques to address this may include asking students, junior faculty, and/or newer faculty to share their thoughts first before other, asking committee members to change who they are sitting next to at each meeting, or utilizing a different facilitator at each meeting.

Sources:
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