

Search Committee Roles and Responsibilities 2025-2026

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Human Resources

Training Overview

The purpose of this training is to define the roles and responsibilities for search committees and interview panels. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities help to ensure fair and consistent practices for the recruitment, interview and selection process.

There are four main sections to this training:

1. Pre-Test
2. Search Committees and Interview Panels
3. Search Committee Structure and Roles
4. Importance of K-State's Principles of Community

Objectives



As a result of this training, participants will:

- Understand K-State's recruitment, interview, and selection processes.
- Learn the roles and responsibilities of search committees and interview panels.
- Understand the importance of K-State's [Principles of Community](#) throughout the recruitment process.
- Acknowledge the importance of maintaining confidentiality to ensure the credibility of a fair and consistent search process.

Pre-Test

It is helpful to assess a participant's understanding of a search process at Kansas State University. Please complete this pre-test which consists of eleven questions.



1. Kansas State University [prohibits discrimination](#) on the basis of a person's race, color, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, ancestry, disability, genetic information, military status or veteran status.

True



False



TRUE

As a federal contractor, Kansas State University is legally obligated to prohibit discrimination.

Equal Employment Opportunity guarantees the right of persons to apply and be evaluated for employment opportunities without regard to race, color, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, ancestry, disability, genetic information, military status or veteran status.

2. If an applicant has an unusual name, it is okay to ask an applicant where they were born to determine their nationality and citizenship.

HELLO MY NAME IS

True

☐

False

☐

FALSE

Any questions related to age, race, national origin, gender, religion, marital status, political beliefs, disabilities, ethnicity, religion and family could lead to bias.

3. It is legal to ask candidates, “Are you able to perform the essential functions of the job, with or without a [reasonable accommodation](#)?”

True

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False

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TRUE

Kansas State University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to its employees and applicants for employment to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to all employment opportunities.

For additional assistance on reasonable accommodation requests, please contact the university ADA Coordinator at 785-532-6277.

4. When a job requires travel, after-hours or overtime work, it is permissible to ask female applicants about their spouse or child care arrangements.



True

☐

False

☐**FALSE**

Questions to candidates should only be job-related and not used to learn personal information. Do not assume that candidates have children or ask if they have proper child care plans. Instead, ask directly about availability. For example, "Are you able to work some evenings and weekends?"

5. Search committee members should review all applications based on pre-determined, job-related criteria.

True

☐

False

☐**TRUE**

Search committee members are accountable for their recommendations to the hiring manager and are expected to actively participate in each step of the hiring process.

To maximize transparency and to ensure consistency in the hiring process, search committee members should screen applicants based on the selection criteria.

6. Any documents related to the search must be uploaded into the applicant tracking system (PageUp).



True

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False

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TRUE

All documents related to the search process must be retained in the system of record, which is the applicant tracking system (PageUp). The search chair will collect any documentation related to the search from the search committee members. Search documents may include rubrics used to evaluate candidates, candidate feedback survey summaries, PageUp candidate screening reports, and references for the selected candidate.

7. Claims of discrimination during the search process should not be addressed until after the search has concluded.

True

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False

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FALSE

Supervisors and administrators **must** report complaints to Civil Rights and Title IX immediately upon notification (including by email if after regular business hours),

keep complaints confidential, protect the privacy of all parties involved in a complaint and prevent or eliminate discrimination, harassment or retaliation.

[Civil Rights and Title IX](#)

220A Kedzie Hall

785-532-6220

civilrights@ksu.edu

8. These questions are not acceptable to ask during the search committee debrief:

- "Is the candidate acceptable for this position?"
- "Has the candidate demonstrated the potential to be successful in the position (or earn tenure)?"
- "Has the candidate demonstrated the ability to create a welcoming environment for all?"



True



False



FALSE

The search committee should develop questions to discuss before making a recommendation to the hiring manager.

Search committee members should evaluate candidates' entire application and should

not depend too heavily on one element of their materials such as letters of recommendations, the prestige of the degree-granting institution or a postdoctoral program.

9. Candidates identified with interview preferences should be prioritized over other candidates.

True

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False

☐

FALSE

Candidates with interview preference status must meet the minimum qualifications of the position and submit qualifying documentation. Candidates with interview preference status must be offered a first-level interview. Search committees should evaluate all candidates, including those with interview preference status, based on the minimum and preferred qualifications for the position.

10. You are serving on a search committee and have discovered one of the applicants is a close family friend. You've known each other for years, and your families even vacation together occasionally. You don't need to say anything to the search chair because you feel that you can remain unbiased.

True

☐

False

☐

FALSE

You must promptly disclose this relationship to the search committee chair. Even if you believe you can remain objective, the nature of your personal connection could reasonably be seen as a conflict of interest. The chair will work with you to determine the appropriate course of action, which may include recusing yourself from reviewing that specific applicant or from the search process entirely. Each situation is evaluated

on a case-by-case basis, but transparency is key to maintaining fairness and integrity in the process.

11. One of the applicants used to work in your department several years ago. You supervised them for a short period, but haven't had any contact since therefore you do not need to disclose this to the search chair.

True

☐

False

☐

FALSE

Any previous professional relationship—especially one involving direct supervision—must be disclosed to the search committee chair, even if the connection seems distant or limited. The chair will assess whether the prior relationship presents a conflict and will determine what, if any, adjustments should be made. In some cases, your continued participation may be appropriate with certain limitations; in others, partial or full recusal might be necessary. The goal is to ensure impartiality and protect the credibility of the process.

Total Number Correct: $\{gr://SC_e3TyQMUALA0U4QJ/Score\}$ out of 11.

How did you do?

Score	Results
11	Fantastic! You understand the recruitment, interviewing and hiring process.
8–10	Good job.
6–8	Okay. However, you are missing some key points.
0–5	See your Talent Acquisition Strategic Partner for assistance.

Interview Panel vs Search Committee

Search Committee and Interview Panels



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What is a Search Committee?

A search committee is comprised of individuals who will screen application materials to ensure minimum requirements are met, assess the candidates' ability to perform the job, answer questions, and provide an accurate depiction of the role.

Search committees are best used when:

- The position will be responsible to a variety of constituents,
- Interdepartmental cooperation is essential,
- The expertise from peers and subject matter experts are required, and/or

- Recruiting for faculty, dean, executive and senior staff positions reporting to a president, vice president, or dean and for many department head positions.

What is an Interview Panel?

An interview panel participates in the interview process and provides additional perspectives on the candidate(s) being considered for the position. If the decision is made to have an interview panel, the selected individuals may be involved in the interview process or participate in a meet-and-greet with candidates.

Two examples are:

1. A candidate for an office specialist position may meet with other peers or faculty in the department. These individuals may or may not participate in the formal interview for the candidate.
2. A candidate for an assistant professor position may interview with faculty members not on the search committee. The faculty will assess the candidate and provide input to the search committee.

What is the Difference in Responsibilities?

Both interview panels and search committees are important in the search process and this chart is beneficial to better understand the roles of each.

Responsibilities	Interview Panel	Search Committee
Complete Search Committee Roles and Responsibilities training	X	X
Maintain confidentiality throughout the search process	X	X
May provide input on the position description		X
Develop broad outreach plan to attract talent		X
Screen applications		X
Develop interview questions	X	X

Interview candidates	X	X
Conduct reference checks		X
Provide feedback on the candidates	X	X

Search Committee Structure and Roles

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Suggested Committee and Panel Structure

Search committees and interview panels should include:

- Representation of various perspectives,
- Individuals from other departments, department research staff, graduate students or professionals working in interdisciplinary fields with relevant experience, and

- A search committee comprised of 2–5 members familiar with the position (this includes the search chair). An interview panel is optional in the event the search chair wants to obtain additional perspectives from individuals.

Search Committee Member Roles

While many members who serve have prior experience, this does not mean that their experience is based upon sound practice.¹

Below are the search committee member responsibilities:

- Attend and come prepared to all scheduled meetings.
- Complete the **REQUIRED** online training: Search Committee Roles and Responsibilities.
- Maintain confidentiality throughout the search process even after the search has concluded.
- Recruit, identify, and outreach to potential applicants including applicants with differences in cultural experiences and a range of perspectives.
- Discuss the university's goals for fostering a culturally conscious and welcoming environment for all at the search committee's initial kick-off meeting.
- Screen applicants, including those with interview preferences, based on the minimum and preferred qualifications approved on the position requisition. If an applicant does not meet a minimum qualifications (including those with an interview preference), they should no longer be considered for the position. Resources related to interview preferences can be found here: [Interview Preferences](#).
- Develop interview questions based on the position announcement. Conduct interviews for candidates including those identified with interview preferences. Those with interview preference must be offered a first-level interview.
- Work with the search chair to gather any relevant search process documentation.

¹ Lee, C.D. (2014). Search Committees: A Comprehensive Guide to Successful Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Searches. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Importance of Principles of Community

Importance of K-State's Principles of Community



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Commitment to a Culture of Belonging

Kansas State University is committed to maintaining a [community](#) that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person and fosters understanding and mutual respect for others. The university believes creating a culture of belonging among its many members strengthens the institution and stimulates creativity and the exchange of ideas.

Selecting a committee with a range of perspectives makes it less likely that the

committee will overlook talented individuals with non-traditional experiences.

Unconscious Bias

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Be Aware of Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias (or implicit bias) is often defined as prejudice or unsupported judgments in favor of or against one thing, person, or group as compared to another, in a way that is usually considered unfair.

Unconscious bias negatively impacts the ability to objectively assess an applicant or candidate's qualities. They become even more prevalent under time pressure.

It is important to set aside biases and preconceptions to fully consider all those who may be qualified for a position. When we become more aware of unconscious bias we are able to reflect on it and make better decisions. Please consult with the search chair or your Talent Acquisition Partner with any questions related to unconscious bias.



A simple way to identify your own unconscious bias is by taking this [assessment](#) by Project Implicit. It is completely confidential and your results do not have to be reported; the results are only for you.

Ways to Avoid Unconscious Bias

- Screen every candidate **fairly** and **consistently** based on qualifications identified prior to beginning the search. An interviewer who graduated from the same college may select a candidate who did so too, even though the candidate's qualifications are not best for the position. This is an example of similar to me bias.
- Search committees and interview panels must have a **documented, business-related reason** for candidates' ratings which relate back to the position description and/or position announcement. An interviewer may assume that a woman would not be able to successfully perform in a job that requires frequent lifting of packages weighing 50 pounds. This is an example of stereotyping bias.
- Each interview must be consistent in format and **comply with all applicable anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws**. Refer to [Civil Rights and Title IX](#) for guidance.

Consider the Candidate Experience

The search process doesn't end with recommending candidates for hire. Prompt communication on the status of an application or the position should be given to **ALL** applicants – not just the selected candidate.

Prompt communication demonstrates respect and courtesy, adds value to the candidate experience, and serves as a positive representation of Kansas State University. After all, each candidate is also interviewing K-State.

Confidentiality

Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality



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Conflict of Interest

While serving on a search committee, it's important to avoid potential conflicts of interest; if you have a potential conflict of interest, you must promptly disclose it to the search chair. This includes any professional or personal relationship that you may

have with an applicant or the applicant's immediate family. You and the search committee chair will determine a solution that is appropriate depending on the circumstances and the nature of the relationship with the applicant. It may be necessary for you to recuse yourself from part or all of the search process as deemed appropriate given the circumstances. Each potential conflict should be evaluated individually.

Confidentiality

The ultimate success of a search depends on the search committee's ability to conduct searches in an impartial, ethical, and professional manner. By serving on a search committee, you have access to confidential information provided by applicants who have expressed an interest in employment opportunities at K-State. This information should be treated with the utmost confidentiality during and after the search has concluded. A breach of confidentiality could damage the applicants' reputations and/or livelihoods, as well as reflect poorly on the search committee members and the university. If a search committee member creates a breach of confidentiality this may result in removal from the search committee and may impact eligibility to serve on future searches.

What does this mean?

As a search committee member, you must uphold the confidentiality of individuals who have expressed interest in applying for opportunities or who have applied for a position at K-State. It is your duty not to discuss identities of applicants, applicant ratings/rankings, number of applicants, the number to be interviewed, the quality and qualifications of applicants, any information regarding the committee's deliberation, statements made by any participants, or any other matters with anyone outside of the committee. Also, do not share any information used during the search process which includes search committee notes and candidate feedback survey results. This information and material can be shared and discussed with the hiring manager if they do not serve on the search committee or Talent Acquisition within Human Resources.

Independently conducting information searches on an applicant can cause qualified applicants to withdraw if they have concerns that the disclosure of their candidacy will

jeopardize their current employment. Work with your search chair or your Talent Acquisition Strategic Partner if you have questions on when outreach and/or research may be appropriate.

By clicking to highlight each statement, you are indicating that you have reviewed and will adhere to the following Ethics and Confidentiality Commitment:

- ☐ As a member of the search committee and/or interview panel participant, I accept my responsibility, shared by my fellow committee members and interview panel participants, to protect the integrity of the institution, and that of all applicants and candidates for the position.
- ☐ I acknowledge that only the Chair of the search committee is authorized to speak publicly on behalf of the university and the search committee and any media inquiries should be referred to the Division of Communications and Marketing.
- ☐ I certify that I am not a candidate for any position of which I am serving as a search committee member and/or interview panel participant.
- ☐ I agree to disclose promptly to the search chair any appearance of real or potential conflict of interest in a relationship between myself and an applicant candidate.
- ☐ I acknowledge that information management is a crucial component of the search committee's work. Through this work, I will acquire access to a wide range of important and confidential information developed and received about applicants, candidates, and their employing institutions. Recognizing the treatment of such information gives rise to serious and potentially negative implications for all applicants and candidates, their current institutions, and Kansas State University's credibility, I pledge my commitment to the following principles, subject to any and all legal rights and responsibilities:
 - ☐ I will respect the absolute confidentiality of all applicants and candidates. I will not reveal the identity or any other information about applicants and candidates during the search or after the search process has concluded.
 - ☐ I will be fair, honest, and responsible in my management of information germane to the search.
 - ☐ I will guard against inaccuracies, carelessness, bias, and distortion made by either emphasis or omission of information.
 - ☐ I will strive to treat issues impartially and handle controversial subjects fairly.
 - ☐ I will give accurate and complete reports on candidates to the search committee chair or co-chairs, if called upon to make such reports.
 - ☐ I will place the best interests of the institution ahead of all special and personal interests, and I will, to the best of my ability, exercise common sense and good judgment in applying ethical principles to the search process.

☐ I consider the letter and spirit of this statement to be a matter of personal responsibility.

Knowledge Check

I was at a department meeting and casually mentioned that our committee has received several strong applicants for the open position. I didn't name anyone or share any specific details. That's okay, right?

True

☐

False

☐

FALSE

Even general comments about the applicant pool—such as the number of applicants, the strength of the pool, or progress in the selection process—are considered confidential and should not be shared outside of the search committee. This type of disclosure could unintentionally influence others' perceptions and damage the integrity of the search. Any discussion of applicants or committee deliberations must stay within the search committee or Talent Acquisition.

Knowledge Check

I was curious about one of the applicants and looked them up on social media and LinkedIn to learn more about their background. I didn't share what I found with the rest of the committee. This is okay since I kept it to myself.

True

☐

False

☐

FALSE

No, this is not appropriate. Independently researching applicants outside of the materials they've submitted introduces potential bias and risks violating their

confidentiality. Even if you don't share the information, your personal impressions could influence your judgment. If you believe additional background information is needed, speak with your search chair or Talent Acquisition Strategic Partner. They can help determine the appropriate, ethical steps to take.

I understand that a breach in confidentiality may result in my removal from the search committee and/or interview panel which may impact my eligibility to serve on future searches. I also understand that should I be removed from the search committee and/or interview panel, all terms of this statement remain applicable and binding.

By typing your name below, you are indicating that you have reviewed and will adhere to the Ethics and Confidentiality Commitment as listed above.

Summary

Summary and Resources



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Hiring top talent at Kansas State University requires the search committee and/or interview panel to:

- Emphasize the importance of maintaining fair and consistent practices for the recruitment, interview, and selection processes.
- Learn the roles and responsibilities of search committees and interview panels.
- Understand the importance of K-State's [Principles of Community](#) throughout the recruitment process.
- Acknowledge the importance of maintaining confidentiality to ensure the credibility of a fair and consistent search process.

Talent Acquisition Resources

Your [Talent Acquisition Strategic Partner](#) can assist in the following areas:

- Assist in developing a position announcement (*i.e. job advertisement*)
- Assist in the creation of a strategic sourcing plan (*i.e. advertising strategy*)
- Attend kick-off meeting (*i.e. discuss process*)
- Screen applications and only forward qualified applicants to the committee

For additional guidance, please contact Talent Acquisition.

Phone: 785-532-6277

Email: KStateCareers@ksu.edu

Staff Directory: <http://www.k-state.edu/hr/about/staff.html>

PageUp Guides: <http://www.ksu.edu/hr/tools/managers/recruitment/ats/>

Social Media:



What information was most helpful?

Questions or comments?

How would you grade this session?



To record this training as complete, click "Next."
Your training record will be updated in HRIS within 48 hours.

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