**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**BACKGROUND**

As EMS strives to meet both our own diversity and Affirmative Action goals and those of the University, the Associate Deans and EMS HR have pulled together some action items and thought pieces which will help us move towards a more diverse and inclusive environment. The process and ideas described over the next 5 pages focus on the staff hiring process and will be one component in a comprehensive initiative to recruit and retain diverse staff and create a welcoming and inclusive environment. Additional components will include onboarding of new staff, faculty, and administrators; and the staff performance management process (formerly known as YOU@PSU).

Overall, the procedures detailed below are straight forward and have already been implemented by EMS HR. The overall purpose of producing this guide is to further develop a mindset amongst our faculty and staff who are involved in search committees or serve as hiring authorities. This guide is meant to complement and advance the central OHR staff hiring process by focusing on actions that address diversity and inclusion. This guide steps the reader through each phase of the staff hiring process and lets them know what specific things they can do (with EMS HR’s assistance) to address diversity and inclusion.

**CHECKLIST FOR SEARCH COMMITTEES:**

* Hiring Manager/Department leads should contact EMS HR for help with the job [posting](#Posting) language and any hiring requirements/approvals ([hiring exception request](https://app.ohr.psu.edu/hiring_exception_requests/index.cfm)).
* Hiring Manager should coordinate with EMS HR and assigned Recruiter for a kick-off meeting
* Hiring Manager should review the [committee](#Committee) section.
* Search Committee should review the [resume](#Resume) screening process.
* Search Committee should review the [interview](#Interview) process.
* Search Committee should review the [selection](#Selection) process.

**HOW CHANGES TIE TO STRATEGIC PLANS**

The College of Earth and Mineral Sciences is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence as a guiding principle and a strategic priority for the college.

* [The strategic goals of the College of Earth and Mineral Sciences, as well as our five departments and three research units, that serve to guide our decision-making as we train future leaders and advance earth, energy, and materials sciences and engineering](https://www.ems.psu.edu/about/who-we-are/mission-vision-values-and-strategic-plan)
* [EMS’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resources](https://www.ems.psu.edu/diversity)

Additionally, these recommendations are in alignment with University goals and expectations for recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce:

* [Advancing Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity | Our Commitment to Impact (psu.edu)](https://strategicplan.psu.edu/plan/foundations/inclusion-equity-diversity/)
* [*Penn State Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence*](http://equity.psu.edu/diversity-statement)
* *[Building on our Foundation: DEIB Report 2023](https://equity.psu.edu/equity-at-penn-state/deib-report/view)*

**CHANGES TO IMPROVE DIVERSITY THROUGH STAFFING**

**Staff Search Process:**

* When EMS HR is notified a search will be conducted, HR and the hiring manager discuss conducting a process emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Aspects of the discussion includes how to recognize diversity and inclusive excellence as integral to the position; conduct an inclusive search process; avoid implicit bias; avoid inappropriate or illegal questions; and contribute to the College’s and University’s strategic goals of creating an environment of inclusive excellence.
* EMS HR and the assigned recruiter will proactively assist in conducting the most inclusive search process possible.
* Search committee training includes discussion of principles of inclusive excellence as integral to success in the position, implicit bias, best practices for inclusive search, illegal/inappropriate topics, and HR resources available.

**Defining and Posting the Position:**

* Determine competencies and characteristics necessary to effectively perform in the position, or which would be helpful. Ability to work effectively with diverse individuals and across cultural differences is relevant to any staff or administrative position. The ability to effectively advance Penn State and EMS diversity goals should also be considered. Examples include:
  + Valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion
  + Creating a diverse and inclusive environment within the office and for students
  + Proven experience and successful initiatives
  + Demonstrated commitment to fostering diversity
  + Able to work effectively with individuals from different backgrounds and cultures
  + Thrives in an inclusive environment
* Compose a position description that reflects diversity and inclusion. Include language that specifically reinforces the College’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and signals to candidates that experience in diversity and inclusion is highly valued and expected of all candidates. Suggestions include:
  + Proven expertise in working in cross-cultural settings and engaging with individuals from diverse groups.
  + Commitment to diversity and inclusion in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (job area).
  + Demonstrated commitment to inclusionary practices that support diversity across the College and the University.
  + “It is critical that the successful candidate have proven experience, skill, and ability to work with and engage with students, including diverse U.S. and international students, and have a comprehensive understanding of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [what this office does] which reflects understanding of issues surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.”
  + Additional suggestions are available from EMS HR.
* EMS HR ensures that appropriate diversity language is included in all job posts.
* Avoid using the word “diversity” as a synonym for “variety.” Be consistent in use of “diversity” and consider using expanded terminology such as “diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence.”
* Only list skills essential to the job rather than wish list items. Some applicants may interpret these non-essential, wish list items literally and as strictly required, which could then discourage them from applying for the position.
* Or add in the phrase “with or without accommodation” to show that accommodations are available if a candidate requires them.
* Phrases like “lift up to 30 pounds,” “hear a telephone ring,” “sit for extended periods of time,” or “thrives in bright environment” might deter applicants with disabilities.

**Search Committee:**

* Assemble a search committee with expertise in the competency areas the position requires, including diversity, equity, and inclusion.
* Search committees will, at a minimum, include one subject matter expert from the Dean’s Office staff (as applicable). For example, searches for MarCom positions will include the Director of EMS MarCom (or their representative), searches for Finance positions will include the EMS Financial Officer (or their representative), searches for Grad Coordinator positions will include the ADGER Grad Coordinator (or their representative), searches for Facilities-related positions will include the EMS Facilities Manager (or their representative), searches for IT-related positions will include the EMS IT Manager (or their representative), and searches for Academic Advisors will include the EMS Academic Advising Manager (or their representative).
* If possible, the search committee should include diverse representation and/or individuals willing to serve as “diversity advocates” in the search process. A diversity advocate will: lend expertise in evaluating candidates in relation to their ability to foster diversity and inclusive excellence; monitor process to ensure inclusive practices; ensure that diverse candidates are given full consideration; and identify any possible instances of implicit bias or ungrounded assumptions that may limit the viability of diverse candidates. The diversity advocate does not have to be a person from a diverse background. The EMS Diversity Council can serve as a source of trained diversity advocates and includes representation from each unit in the College. (Additionally, a university initiative is in progress to develop a group of trained diversity advocates available for service on staff and administration search committees, which may provide an additional avenue for identifying a diversity advocate for each search committee.)
* The search committee charge should include emphasis on developing a diverse pool and on including diversity candidates at each cut-off, as well as including candidates who have a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
* Search committees receive an overview of Penn State’s and EMS’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and to recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse staff and links to further information and resources. The diversity advocate and search chair should be conversant with these materials. Search committees may also receive information about EMS’s demographic profile.
* Overview information and links would include:
  + [*Penn State’s statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence*](http://equity.psu.edu/diversity-statement)
  + [Penn State Values](https://universityethics.psu.edu/penn-state-values)
  + Penn State Data Digest (click on “+” to break out by colleges)
    - [Full time employees, faculty, staff/admin by race/ethnicity](https://datadigest.psu.edu/faculty-and-staff/)
* Search committees should receive and discuss information about implicit bias. The search committee chair and the diversity advocate should participate in implicit bias training prior to review of candidates. Ideally, all search committee members would have the opportunity to participate in implicit bias training.
* Consider awareness of any biases for applicants with a disability before the interview process begins by emphasizing the following:
  + Assess candidates by specific job skills rather than signs of sociability such as eye contact, amount of smiling, strength of handshakes, charisma, charm, or appearance (dress, hairstyle, etc.). Be aware of your primary bias and the tendency to judge candidates based on your first interaction with them.
  + Be accepting of stimming, fidgeting, posture issues, eye contact reluctance.
  + Allow candidates to disclose on their own terms rather than pressuring anyone to do so. Some people may choose not to disclose at all, while others may wait and disclose later.
* Search committees should determine the most important criteria for the position, including diversity, equity and inclusion expertise relevant to the position, prior to review of candidates.
* Search committees should determine how they will evaluate candidates’ responses to diversity related questions to ensure substantive response in terms of relevant experience and demonstrated commitment to inclusion and equity.
* Search committees should utilize their professional networks to identify and recruit underrepresented applicants who would contribute to the college’s diversity profile and goals.

**CV/Resume and Application Screening Process:**

* Candidates should be screened in relation to the criteria listed in the job posting, including meaningful criteria related to diversity, equity and inclusion.
* Candidates otherwise meeting at least minimum qualifications and having a strong diversity profile should be given close consideration.
* Search committees/Recruiter should endeavor to include candidates with a diverse background in short list for interview, and, when second round interviews are conducted, in that pool as well.
* Assigned Recruiter will proactively provide assistance in identifying candidates that should be considered based on meeting minimum position qualifications and being an underrepresented minority, person with a disability, person with a military background, or person who would be a dual-career hire. Committees will NOT be told which of these they are, just the names of individuals.
* EMS HR may call for a search to be broadened if there is not diversity in the candidate pool and in the initial interview list.
* EMS HR will track trend data across searches and will recommend modifications to this process as needed.

**Interview:**

* The interview should clearly signal to all candidates that EMS and the hiring area highly values active commitment to inclusive excellence and expects any incumbent to actively advance diversity, equity, and inclusion goals, and that proven experience in this regard is a plus.
* Give an outline of what will happen during the interview in advance. This can reduce anxiety and distraction for candidates and allow them to feel more confident going into the process. If you will be interviewing via Zoom, let candidates know they can request breaks or to turn off their camera during the interview, if they need those accommodations.
* Consider providing written questions/topics to all interview candidates before the event. This helps the candidate to focus and better prepare for the interview by knowing what to expect.
  + Ideally, having a more conversational approach rather than a “question-answer-next person question” approach may be more beneficial to determining the most qualified candidate.
  + It is ok to ask follow-up questions, if an answer provided either raises a new point you would like to consider or to ask the candidate to better clarify their answer.
* The interview should include behavior-based questions specific to the candidates’ demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Professed commitment alone is not sufficient. A few examples:
  + Diversity and inclusion are defining characteristics of this position. Briefly describe how you would support these values as a staff member.
  + Give us an on-the-job example of how diversity and inclusion are important to you.
  + What have you done to further your knowledge with those with a different background than yours? Have you included diversity in your professional development? How have you demonstrated what you have learned?
  + What kind of leadership efforts have you made in the past, and would you make in this position to ensure a commitment to inclusivity and belonging within/throughout the organization?
  + Have any students ever complained to you about sexual harassment or discrimination in any work with professors or staff? If so, how did you respond?
  + Describe how you, as a staff member, function and communicate effectively and respectfully within the context of varying beliefs, behaviors, and backgrounds?
  + What opportunities have you had working and collaborating in diverse, multicultural, and inclusive settings?
  + In previous work experiences, what has been the greatest obstacle in developing a multicultural-competent staff? Describe a situation in which you utilized your multicultural skills to solve a problem.
  + What do you see as the most challenging aspects of an increasingly diverse academic community? What initiatives have you taken to meet such challenges?
  + What are some specific things you are going to do within the next two years to further your development in cultural competency?
* To accommodate individuals who may find interviews overstimulating, it is important to provide an opportunity for candidates to follow up with additional responses after the interview is over. This allows them to provide more thoughtful and articulate insights that may not have emerged during the live interview, thereby fostering a fair and comprehensive evaluation process. At the end of the interview, be sure to provide (or reiterate) the candidate with your contact information.
  + This could be helpful to any individual, regardless of disability, to elaborate on their answers and provide the search committee with additional details that may be important. And it provides us with a sample of their writing ability to assess.
* Consider offering alternative evaluation options during the hiring process, such as requesting sample work or providing other opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their skills in a practical context. This approach allows candidates to directly showcase their abilities by completing tasks (such as putting together a PowerPoint presentation or using/developing an Excel spreadsheet).
* Ask specific, concrete questions based on experiences. Some candidates may find abstract questions or hypothetical scenarios confusing and difficult to interpret.
* Offer opportunities for breaks, or to step away to decompress, throughout the interview.
* Make lunch or other unrelated social events optional. Focus on specific skillsets rather than if a candidate “seems like a good culture fit.” Assessing candidates on sociability and “culture fit” can introduce bias and draw attention away from the question of which candidate is best qualified for the position.
* Conduct interviews in quiet, peaceful environments (applies to both in person and virtual interviews).
* Provide timely decisions regarding position openings.
* Suggested Training: Interviewing Techniques - <https://psu.csod.com/ui/lms-learning-details/app/course/1f8c4f6e-7320-5c3f-8080-a2473435cf3e>
* Additional examples of effective interview questions, including questions relevant to diversity, Equity, and inclusion, are available from EMS HR and assigned recruiter.
* Ideally candidates’ answers in relation to questions that are not diversity-specific will also reflect their commitment to and experience with diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging.
* Evaluation of candidate responses should be based on the substance of the candidate’s answer in terms of experience relevant to or demonstrative of a commitment to inclusion and equity; substantive answers should go beyond celebrating difference, holidays, and foods. Responses should not be used as a means of assessing the candidates’ ability to respond under pressure or recover from a question they did not know how to answer.
* The search committee diversity advocate, EMS HR, and EMS Associate Dean for Educational Equity can assist committees with differentiating substantive responses to diversity related questions.

**Checklist**

**Before interview:**

* When reaching out about arranging an interview, give the candidate the opportunity to ask for any accommodations that they need, phrased in an affirming way such as "Is there anything we could do to help make your interviewing experience as successful as possible?" This wording does not require candidates to disclose anything they might not want to disclose but opens the door for everyone to ask for what they need.
  + Provide a list of possible accommodations (including but not limited to):
    - Guidance getting to and from campus.
    - An interpreter.(<https://sites.psu.edu/aaoffice2/welcome/access-disability/american-sign-language-asl-interpreting-services-2/procedure-for-requesting-a-sign-language-interpreter/>)
    - Enabling Closed Captioning for Zoom.
      * From your Zoom dashboard, click on the gear icon on the right side.
      * From the menu, select “Accessibility.”
      * Click the box next to “Always show captions.”
  + For in-person interviews, when offering hotels, ensure that options for disability accommodation are available.
    - Provide the candidate with the hotel’s contact information so, if needed, they can directly ask questions about accommodation without disclosing.
* Send a detailed schedule to the candidate before the interview day that lays out what they can expect (including but not limited to):
  + Clear directions to the interview room (ideally with visual cues) if in-person.
  + Length and format of interview.
  + Number of participants and their names/job titles.
  + Provide a dress code with examples and list anything the candidate should bring with them. The dress code should mirror our current office attire, since more professional attire may not be financially available to the candidates.
* Remind fellow interviewers to avoid primary bias before the interview and ask EMS HR about LRN (Learning Resource Network) resources if anyone wants to challenge their biases further.
* Provide a list of questions a couple of days before the interview. Also be open to requests from interviewees to expand on their answers in writing.

**During Interview:**

* Make sure closed captioning is turned on if using Zoom/Teams. Be prepared to provide an interpreter if requested.
* Provide meaningful opportunities for breaks, since meeting a variety of people and attending back-to-back interviews may wear more on some than others.  Some candidates might also have medical schedules unknown to you. Consider offering a return to the hotel room or time in a quiet, private space for breaks.

**Final Selection:**

* Search committees should avoid implicit bias, particularly in final selection (it may be helpful to review implicit bias training at this point).
* Hiring Manager should report to EMS HR and assigned recruiter the qualifications and experience resulting in the final rankings, including in regard to fostering a diverse and inclusive climate within EMS. If the top candidate does not contribute to the diversity demographics of EMS, a rationale should be provided.

Last updated: 10/23/23 – Updates highlighted in Yellow.