

STAFF HIRING GUIDE

October 24, 2005

Introduction

This guide is a resource for those responsible for hiring staff at Drake University. The focus of this guide is on strategies for making the recruitment, interviewing and selection process more effective. Process and procedures may vary by department. Questions about variations should be directed to Human Resources at 271-3133.

Section 1 – The Interview and Hiring Process

Recruitment

- Review the job description carefully. Make sure it accurately reflects the duties and requirements of the position.
- To assist with the screening process, it is recommended that the job description and job posting include both job requirements and preferred criteria.
- To further our efforts of diversifying the applicant pool, Human Resources will work with you to ensure opening information is disseminated broadly. Human Resources has identified several recruiting resources (many of them no-cost) designed to reach a broad and diverse audience of potential candidates.

Screening Applicants

A pre-established process for sorting applications should be established and followed. Here is a recommended approach:

Step One: Determine which applicants have the required qualifications for the position. Send a letter to those who do not meet minimum qualifications, notifying them they are no longer under consideration. Send a letter or e-mail to those still under consideration (see sample letters).

Step Two: From the list of qualified applicants, determine which applicants have “preferred” skills or experiences as listed in the advertisement or job description. Review experience, education and skills to distinguish among qualified candidates.

Step Three: If necessary, use telephone interviews to determine a list of finalists.

The Interview

- Schedule in-person interviews well in advance. Describe where the applicant should park and where to go for the interview.
- When setting up in-person interviews, communicate the hiring range to the candidate. (For hiring range information see the Drake University Staff Compensation Guidelines). You may also want to emphasize the value of Drake University’s benefits package (or direct them to the HR web site for details). This step will help ensure the compensation package is acceptable to the candidate before you proceed with an interview.

- Inform the applicant of each individual with whom he/she will meet.
- Answer as many questions as possible prior to interview.
- Prepare a set of interview questions prior to the interviews that are job-related. Use the same or similar questions for each candidate.
- Prepare open, behavioral and hypothetical questions covering the essential functions of the position. Do not ask questions with legal risk (See Section 3).
- Leave time for the candidate to ask questions.
- If the candidate has questions about benefits, refer the candidate to Human Resources or the Benefits portion of the Human Resources web page. Make sure to emphasize some of the unique benefits to working at Drake University (tuition rebate, holiday break, sense of community and focus on life-long learning).
- Do not make statements that can be construed as promises or guarantees, either express or implied.
- Ask all candidates, but especially those slated for interview, to complete the Applicant Survey Form found on the Human Resources web page at <http://www.drake.edu/asc/hr/applicantsurveyform.html>
- Question the answer! Seek contrary information to confirm or correct your first impressions. If the candidate recites an accomplishment, ask "Tell me about an occasion when things did not go well," or "and what did you learn from that experience?"
- Inform the candidate of the process and how long it will take before a decision is made.

Hire to Retain! That means giving an accurate description of the position and any unique challenges the successful candidate may face in the position. This will help job applicants more accurately evaluate their own job expectations and will reduce turnover associated with job disenchantment.

After the Interview

- Compile notes into a single file: keep for three years after the offer is extended.
- Search files should be maintained in the department conducting the search.
- When discussing the candidates internally focus on knowledge, skills and abilities. Do not discuss personal issues, traits or characteristics.
- Assess performance in the interview as it relates to the requirements of the position.
- Focus on prior performance – not just how well the person did in the interview.

- Ask the final candidate's for permission to check references.
- Conduct reference checks prior to making an offer, using the same questions for each contact and each candidate again focusing on job performance. Here are some examples of questions that can be asked during a reference check conversation:
 - What are the candidate's strengths? What are the candidate's weaknesses?*
 - Describe a time you were particularly impressed by the candidate's work. What area might the candidate need further development opportunities in order to succeed?*

Reference Checks Provide Important Information

Make sure you conduct a reference check on a candidate before extending him/her an offer. For staff candidates, reference checks are normally conducted after the interview to confirm information already provided by the candidate in the interview and application. If a candidate asks that his/her application be kept confidential, it is recommended that we honor this request UNTIL that particular candidate reaches the "finalist" stage. At that point, reference checks of current employers may be necessary.

The Offer

- Because applicants are considering other job offers, it is prudent and courteous to inform the unsuccessful applicants of the results of the screening and interview as soon as possible.
- The offer is a good time to set the stage for future employment. Accordingly, the direct manager or the Department Director, Dean or Vice President should generally extend offers.
- Do not make assurances during offer discussions about future promotions, salary increases or other compensation or benefit arrangements.
- Offers of a salary outside the normal hiring range for the position are rare. You must secure approval to hire outside of the hiring range from Human Resources prior to making such an offer. Contact Gary Johnson at 271-4804 for more information.

Section 2 – Interview Questions

Well thought-out key questions can provide the maximum amount of useful information from a brief conversation with the candidate.

- **BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS** ask about what the candidate is doing currently or has done in the past. It asks for examples of current or past performance, based on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. Phrase questions in the present or past tense, but not the future tense. Here is an example: *Tell me about a time when you led a project to successful completion. What went well? What would have done differently?* While behavioral questions sometimes feel awkward, they provide the best evidence of actual performance. **Accordingly, it is strongly recommend that at least 50% of interview questions be behavioral.** See a complete list of sample behavioral questions below.
- **OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS** encourage the candidate to give more than one or two word responses that require an explanatory response and allow a candidate to show communication skills in an indirect way. Open-ended questions begin with: what, how, why, describe, explain, tell me. Example: *"Describe your experience in meeting deadlines."* Or, *"Tell me about your current responsibilities."*
- **HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS** ask the candidate to respond to new or unfamiliar situations, providing insight to the candidate's ability to analyze and solve problems. *"What would you do if a student demanded you release confidential information to you?"*
- **COMFORT QUESTIONS** are questions asked the candidate to put them at ease. Typically, it is good to start and end an interview with comfort questions. Examples: *Tell us why you are interested in this position. What positive professional experiences have influenced you the most?*

For Additional Guidance . . . Human Resources is available, upon request, to provide information and advice on interviewing techniques and protocol. Call Human Resources to schedule an appointment.

SKILL	SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS
ADAPTABILITY	<p>Tell me about a situation in which you have had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to the working style of a colleague in order to complete a project or achieve your objectives. What did you do?</p>
ANALYTICAL SKILLS / PROBLEM SOLVING	<p>Describe a project that demonstrates your analytical abilities. What was your role? What special skill did you bring to the project?</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation. To whom did you make the recommendation? What was your reasoning? Was the recommendation accepted? If not, why?</p> <p>Tell me about a situation where you had to solve a difficult problem. What did you do? What was your thought process? What was the outcome? What do you wish you had done differently?</p> <p>Describe a time when you or your team had a flawed analysis. What was the flaw? How did you correct the situation?</p>
ATTENTION TO DETAIL	<p>Describe a situation when a project you were working on required particular attention to detail. What did you do? Was it successful? Is there anything you would have done differently?</p> <p>Tell me about a time when your attention to detail really paid off.</p> <p>Give me an example of a time when if you could go back and do it all over again you would have paid more attention to detail? What would you have done differently? Since that time, have you changed the way you approach situations?</p>
COMMUNICATION	<p>Tell me about a recent successful experience in making a presentation? How did you prepare? What was the result?</p> <p>Have you ever had to "sell" an idea to your classmates or co-workers? How did you do it? Did they accept your idea?</p> <p>Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa). How did you handle the situation? What difficulties did you face? How did you deal with them?</p> <p>Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.</p>
GOAL SETTING	<p>Give me an example of an important goal, which you have set and tell me how you reached it. What steps did you take? What obstacles did you encounter? How did you overcome the obstacles?</p>

	Tell me about a goal that you set that you did not reach. What steps did you take? What obstacles did you encounter? What would you have done differently?
INITIATIVE	<p>Describe a project or idea (not necessarily your own) that was implemented primarily because of your efforts. What was your role? What was the outcome?</p> <p>Describe a situation in which you recognized a potential problem as an opportunity. What did you do? What was the result? What do you wish you had done differently?</p> <p>Tell me about a time when your initiative caused a change to occur.</p> <p>What was the best idea you came up with during your professional or college career? How did you apply it?</p>
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	<p>Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. How/why was this person difficult? How did you handle it? How did the relationship progress?</p> <p>Describe a situation where you found yourself dealing with someone who didn't like you. How did you handle it?</p> <p>Describe a recent unpopular decision you made. How was it received? How did you handle it?</p>
INTEGRITY/HONESTY	<p>Discuss a time when your integrity was challenged. How did you handle it?</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you experienced a loss for doing what is right. How did you react?</p>
PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION / TIME MANAGEMENT	<p>Describe a situation that required you to do a number of things at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?</p> <p>How do you prioritize projects and tasks when scheduling your time? Give me some examples.</p> <p>Tell me about a project that you planned. How did you organize and schedule the tasks? Tell me about your action plan.</p>
TEAMWORK	<p>Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you worked with a classmate or colleague who was not doing their share of the work. How did you handle it?</p> <p>Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or help others to compromise. What was your role? What steps did you take? What was the result?</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you had to work on a team that did not get along. What happened? What role did you take? What was the result?</p>

Section 3 – Legal Issues and Hiring

The Drake University non-discrimination statement reads as follows:

The principles of equal access and equal opportunity require that all interactions within the University be free from invidious discrimination. Drake University therefore prohibits discrimination based upon race, color, national origin, creed, religion, age, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or veteran status.

This statement applies to any employment decision, including hiring.

In an effort to avoid claims that hiring decisions were discriminatory, the following table entitled “Questions With Legal Risk” was developed. While asking a question listed on the table is not “per se” unlawful, it could be used as evidence of a discriminatory intent and, therefore, should not be asked during an interview.

Subject	Questions With Legal Risk
Age	Any question which implies a preference for employees under age 40. Requirement that applicant state age, date of birth or provide proof of age in the form of birth certificate, etc. unless a minor.
Children (See family)	Statements such as "Do you have any children?" and "How many?"
Citizenship	Whether applicant is a citizen. Any inquiry into citizenship, which divulges applicant's ancestry, national origin, birthplace, or present citizenship. It is also illegal to require a birth certificate or naturalization records before hiring.
Disabilities	Overt questions which could tend to divulge disabilities or health conditions which do not relate reasonably to fitness to perform the particular job.
Family	Specific inquiries concerning spouse, spouse's employment or salary, children, childcare arrangements, or other dependents.
Language	Inquiries about an applicant's native tongue. <i>Inquiry as to how foreign language ability was acquired.</i>
Marital Status	Whether the applicant is married, single, divorced, separated, engaged, or widowed.
Military	Type or condition of military discharge. Whether applicant has experience in other U.S. armed forces.
Name	Questions about original name if the name has been changed by court order or marriage. Inquiries which could divulge marital status, lineage, ancestry, national origin, or descent.
National Origin	Inquiries into applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, birthplace, or native tongue. Inquiries about national origin of applicant's parents or spouse.
Organizations	Requirements that the applicant list all organizations, clubs, societies, and lodges to which he or she belongs.
Race	Any inquiries concerning race or color of skin, hair, eyes, etc.
Religion or Creed	Inquiries concerning applicant's religious denomination or affiliation, church, parish, pastor, or religious holidays observed. Applicants may not be told that any particular religious groups are required to work on their religious holidays.
Residence	Names or relationships of people living with applicant. Whether applicant owns or rents a home. Specific inquiry into foreign addresses that would indicate national origin.
Sex	All inquiries that suggest gender plays a role in decision-making. Questions about child rearing responsibilities. Any questions that would elicit information about sexual orientation, gender identity or that could be used in allegation of discrimination.
Illnesses or Injury	You cannot ask if they have ever had a work injury or ever filed a worker's compensation claim. You cannot ask if they have ever had a serious illness or if they need medical or disability insurance.

At times, a candidate may bring up a topic, such as the availability of childcare or domestic partner benefits. When a candidate does so, it is appropriate to provide them with requested factual information. You may also refer them to Human Resources with any such questions or inquiries.

Additional Resources

Iowa Workforce Development provides information on legal hiring practices at <http://www.iowaworkforce.org/region1/successinter.htm>

The Iowa Civil Rights Commission web site also provides information on employment discrimination <http://www.state.ia.us/government/crc/.htm>

Section 4 - Sample Letters

1. Letter to send to applicant still under consideration.

Dear _____:

I am pleased to inform you that your application for the position of _____ will receive further consideration. We will be in contact with you in the next few weeks to (describe the next stage of the process).

In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at _____.

2. Letter to send to applicant who is no longer under consideration.

Dear _____

We have selected the applicants whose qualifications most closely meet the requirements for the advertised position. This letter is to inform you that your application is no longer under active consideration.

I appreciate your interest in Drake University and the time you have taken to apply for this position. We wish you the best in your professional endeavors.

Sincerely,

3. Sample letter to acknowledge receipt of application

Dear _____

We have received your application, current resume, and list of references for the position of _____. We are happy that you are interested in Drake University and our department. You can visit the Drake University web site for information about the University at www.drake.edu. You can learn more about benefits at Drake University from the Human Resources web page at www.drake.edu/hr

The review of applications for the position will begin on _____ and will continue until the position is filled. We anticipate identifying finalists for the position by _____.

We invite you to complete a voluntary applicant survey by going to www.drake.edu/hr. This information is part of an ongoing assessment of our recruitment methods. Your response will be kept confidential. Aggregate data will be shared with the hiring manger once the search is complete.

Thank you for your application and interest in Drake University.

Sincerely,

4. Letter to send to unsuccessful finalist

Dear _____:

This is to let you know that we have now filled the _____ position at Drake University.

As you know, you were in the small group of semi-finalists we kept under active consideration until the very end. We appreciate the time you devoted to us during this process.

We wish you the very best in your professional endeavors.

Sincerely,