

**Guidance and Operating Principles for Department and Unit
Faculty Search and Screening Committees (On- and Off-Campus)
CALs-MAFES, CFR-FWRC and Extension**

Roles of Search and Screening Committees:

Faculty Search and Screen Committees are responsible for the evaluation of application materials utilizing the screening criteria from the position announcement to determine who will progress to the next stage of the interview process. The process may consist of assisting with the review of the position description, providing advice regarding outlets for advertisement, connecting with nominated or prospective candidates, the individual screening of candidates to determine semi-finalists and/or finalists, conducting phone, web-based or alternate pre-screening interviews to select a finalist pool, assisting with the interview and assessment process, hosting activities during on-site visits and contributing to and providing the Hiring Manager (typically the Department or Unit Head, Dean or Director) with an unranked finalist pool consisting of feedback that may include the acceptability of all candidates and their relevant strengths and weaknesses for hiring consideration.

Search and Screening Committee Chairs are selected by the Head(s) and are voting members of the committee. Preference is that the Chair be from the discipline area for the position being searched. The roles of the Chair are to call meetings, solicit feedback and guidance on the search process from members of the committee, assure that advertisements and the distribution of the position description are accomplished, schedule and oversee the interview process from pre-selection to on-campus or within-unit interviews, and guide the search process to a conclusion for presentation of all collected information, evaluations and assessments of interviewed candidates to the Hiring Manager. At that point the search committee's activities are suspended. The Hiring Manager then, in consultation with other relevant administration, makes the hiring recommendation for final consideration by the Dean and/or Director. If negotiation with candidate(s) of interest is successful and the position is filled, then the search committee is disbanded. If the negotiation with candidate(s) of interest is not successful, then the committee may be reactivated in support of further search activity, or the Unit Head(s) may re-elect a new committee for a new search at their discretion.

Relevant MSU Operating Policies and Procedures:

- MSU Faculty Handbook, page 9 (Updated June 2023)

Administrative, Faculty, and Professional Staff Appointments.

- All professional positions will be created and filled in consultation with the affected faculty, staff, and students and with the appropriate external constituencies.
- For [...] all faculty positions, search committees are required and will contain a majority of elected representatives of the faculty. Staff, students, and external constituencies shall be drawn from the affected units, as appropriate. Exceptions may be made for one-time, one-year appointments as approved by the appropriate vice president.

On-Campus (MSU) Faculty Search Committee Selection Processes:

The Department Head of the academic home department will conduct an election of all eligible faculty of the department with faculty status, which includes those faculty that may be in residence at off-campus R&E Centers, branch stations or other sites. Adjunct Faculty, Faculty Affiliates and Emeritus Faculty are excluded from the voting process for election to search and screening committees, though they could serve as an appointed or external member of the committee if deemed appropriate and relevant to the search and screening process. In keeping with the MSU handbook that search committees “will contain a majority of elected representatives of the faculty”, typically three faculty will be elected, and then two additional members are appointed by the Department Head (or when needed the relevant Dean or Director, as appropriate). The appointments may be used to achieve equity if elected members do not accurately represent all facets deemed appropriate to the particular search, to involve staff or students in the process, or to add additional expertise from external stakeholders or other groups pertinent to the search process.

A five-member committee is typical but could be expanded to a seven- or nine-person committee if additional expertise is needed to incorporate additional faculty from varied disciplines, involve stakeholders, or other reasons as needed by the search. Regardless of the final number of committee members desired, the majority of the search and screening committee must be from the elected faculty.

Off-Campus (R&E) Faculty Search Committee Selection Processes:

There is an expectation that the R&E Center Head and the Department Head of the academic home will work together as part of the search and screening process for replacing faculty based at off-campus R&E Centers, branch stations, or other sites. The process starts with the R&E Center Head conducting an election of all eligible faculty in residence within the unit R&E Center and its branch stations (typically 2). The Academic Home Department Head then conducts an election of all eligible faculty of the department with faculty status, which includes those faculty that may be in residence on- and off-campus (typically 2 additional). Adjunct Faculty, Faculty Affiliates and Emeritus Faculty are excluded from the voting process for election to search and screening committees, though they could serve as an appointed or external member of the committee if deemed appropriate and relevant to the search and screening process. If an R&E Center faculty member has been elected to the search committee by the R&E Center election, they will be removed from the election of the Academic Home faculty since they are already a member of the committee and would not assume two positions on the committee. Once equal numbers of committee members are elected to the committee from the Academic Home and the R&E Unit (typically 4, as per above), then the R&E Center Head working with the Academic Home Department Head will appoint the remaining member, or members, of the committee from the remaining faculty of the academic home department.

For example, if two-members are elected from the Academic Home and two-members elected from the R&E Center, the remaining appointment will be from the Academic Home department as determined by both Heads. If the R&E Center Head and the Academic Home Department Head cannot agree, the appointment will be made by the relevant (based on budgetary appointment) Dean and/or Director. In this scenario a 5-member committee is seated.

If additional representation or expertise is desired (e.g., external stakeholders, additional faculty expertise, etc.), R&E Center Heads and Academic Home Department Heads can appoint additional members provided that the majority of the committee is still from the elected faculty.

For example, if two-members are elected from the Academic Home and two-members elected from the R&E Center, the remaining appointment will be from the academic home department, but the two Heads could agree together to appoint up to two additional members (4 elected and from 1 to 3 appointed). Again, both R&E Center Heads and Academic Home Department Heads must agree on the number and selection of appointed persons, otherwise the relevant (based on budgetary appointment) Dean and/or Director will make the appointments.

Selection of the designate Committee Chair is at the discretion of the relevant Head(s) to determine the most appropriate elected or appointed committee member to serve as Chair. Heads should assure that an on-site representative on the committee, as Chair or otherwise, or an R&E staff member, can facilitate the search process logistics. Preference for determining a Chair should be to the area of discipline for the position being searched and someone who is in residence at the R&E Center or branch station where the position will be housed. Where both of these can't be met, Heads shall assign co-chairs, for example, to have a non-discipline co-chair with a regional presence and a co-chair with the discipline focus (that may not be at the off-campus location); or some alternate scenario as determined by the relevant Heads. In cases where Heads can't agree on a search committee Chair, or alternate arrangement, the appropriate Dean/Director will appoint a chair from the committee or an external non-voting Chair.

The R&E Center Head, in consultation with and concurrence by the Academic Department Head, makes the hiring recommendation for final consideration by the Dean and/or Director.

As in any process, exceptions may exist (e.g., cross-appointed, or dually appointed faculty, interdisciplinary faculty, etc.). Any deviation of this guidance on the structure or process of search and screening committees should be approved by the relevant Dean and/or Director (typically as relevant to budgetary appointments).

Angus Catchot
Director: MSU Extension

L. Wes Burger
Director: Forest and Wildlife Research Center
Dean: College of Forest Resources



Scott Willard
Director: Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station
Dean: College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Date: 11-07-2023