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CCCC Statement of Best Practices in Faculty Hiring for Tenure-Track and Non-Tenure-Track Positions in Rhetoric and Composition/Writing Studies

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Since the 1980s, as composition has grown as a scholarly field, the composition job market has grown correspondingly in both size and complexity. Specifically, over the fourteen years since AY2000–01, ads seeking expertise in composition and rhetoric have consistently made up 30 percent or more of all job ads placed in the English edition of the *MLA Job Information List*—the most of the ten scholarly specializations offered in the English *JIL*. In addition to searches that departments announce in the *JIL*, numerous part-time and non-tenure-track hires are made throughout the academic year and over the summer. The practices described here apply to both tenure-track and non-tenure-track positions. The purpose of this statement is to provide guidance on best practices in hiring processes for positions in composition and rhetoric, and its intended audience is faculty members serving on hiring committees.

This statement is divided into the following sections:

- Best Practices for Forming the Search Committee
- Best Practices for Writing the Position Advertisement
- Best Practices for Ensuring a Diverse Candidate Pool
- Best Practices for Submission of Application Materials
- Best Practices for Managing the Search Timetable
- Best Practices for First-Round Interviews
- Best Practices for Final-Round Interviews
- Best Practices for Hiring Writing Program Administrators
- Best Practices for Hiring International Candidates

Best Practices for Forming the Search Committee

- Search committees include at least one faculty member with expertise in composition and rhetoric.
- Search committees charged with hiring non-tenure-track candidates include at least one non-tenure-track faculty member on the committee. Department chairs request remuneration for NTT faculty for such work, if it falls outside their contractual duties.
- Graduate students participate in the search process and, when possible, on the search committee.
- Members of the search committee are expected to know and abide by their institutions' procedural, ethical, and legal guidelines for searches before reviewing applications or interviewing candidates.
- Hiring committees communicate often with candidates about the timetable of the search and any questions candidates may have about the position.
- When possible, all members of the search committee are available for all stages of the interviewing process.

Best Practices for Writing the Position Advertisement

The position advertisement contains the following:

- An accurate description of the title and department(s) of appointment.
- A description of areas of research interest that uses current descriptors from the field of composition and rhetoric.
- A clear description of duties involved in the position, including mentoring, advising, and writing program administration, if applicable. For non-tenure-track employees, the job ad makes explicit if duties such as service and advising are expected, and if so, whether those duties are accounted for through course reductions, employment distribution calculations (e.g., 80/20), or are expected in addition to a full teaching load.
- For tenure-eligible positions, the list of duties in the job ad clearly corresponds to the criteria for tenure and promotion.
- A statement of qualifications that accounts for considerations such as completion of the PhD and consideration of terminal degrees other than the PhD.
- A deadline for submission of materials that is at least one month after job posting. If circumstances require a shorter timeline, it specifies whether applicants may submit materials after the deadline and still be considered for the position.
- Contact information for the chair of the search committee.
- A clear timeline for the search—e.g., will candidates be interviewed on particular dates (at a conference) with decision thereafter or is the search ongoing until the position is filled?

Best Practices for Ensuring a Diverse Candidate Pool

Lack of diversity among faculty ranks often stems from problems in the search and hiring process. As explained in “Effectively Recruiting Faculty of Color at Highly Selective Institutions: A School of Education Case Study,” “Without formal and pronounced action in support of recruiting faculty of color, hiring processes for this population may be considered tenuous at best” (Gasman, Kim, & Nguyen, 2011, p. 213). Because many composition and rhetoric hires, however, are managed at the department level, there are ways that the search committee can help to ensure a diverse candidate pool.

- The search committee is composed of members representing diverse perspectives who share a commitment to diversity, including a discussion about what diversity means to committee members.
- At the time that the search committee is formed and the job ad crafted, the committee seeks out the Human Resources office on campus and, if applicable, the campus’s diversity officer to form strategies for recruiting diverse candidates that are in compliance with state and local policies. The committee investigates university policies related to “target of opportunity” and other incentives that allow for flexibility in hiring diverse candidates (e.g., hiring off official dates or allowance for additional lines when qualified diverse candidates are identified).
- The job ad identifies the institution’s commitment to diversity, student demographics, and job duties that relate to institutional goals on fostering diversity. The valuation of diversity is reflected in the job ad, both in the kinds of candidates sought as well as the kinds of expertise valued.
- In addition to usual places where job ads are posted, the committee considers targeted advertising and reliance on professional networks to cultivate a diverse candidate pool.
- At the time of the interview, the committee members are able to answer candidates’ questions regarding campus climate, student demographics, resources available for diverse faculty, questions about retention of diverse hires, and community profile.
- Search committees review the candidate pool at multiple times in the search process to ensure diversity.
- After the committee has made a preliminary list of finalists for first-round interviews, the committee goes back through the list of candidates to

determine if potential diverse candidates have been overlooked because the selection criteria do not account for the kinds of expertise they offer.

- At the time of the campus visit, candidates meet other tenured diverse faculty. This ensures a link between recruitment and retention. It is also advisable that they meet a range of graduate students, non-tenure-track faculty, and administrators who share and support their pedagogical and research interests. Candidates are asked if there are faculty members from departments or programs outside the hiring department whom they would like to meet.

Best Practices for the Submission of Application Materials

- Search committees minimize job-seekers' time and financial expense with regard to submitting application materials. With the initial application, searches request the least volume of materials possible. In most cases, a letter and CV will suffice.
- Following this first-round request, committees request institution-specific, though still not overly idiosyncratic, documentation. Insofar as they can, hiring committees seek to reduce the costs candidates incur to transfer files and materials connected with their applications.

Best Practices for Managing the Search Timetable

- Departments update candidates each time the committee reaches a new stage of the hiring process that makes a cut in the candidate pool, except when Human Resources offices or other administrative entities explicitly dictate otherwise.
- Whenever search committees wish to solicit additional materials, candidates have at least two weeks to submit them.
- During the first-round interview, search committees provide an honest account of the timeframe for subsequent decisions (e.g., for campus visits).
- When an offer is made to a candidate, the candidates are given at least two weeks to respond to the offer.

Best Practices for First-Round Interviews

The expense and stress of traveling to a conference for in-person first-round interviews are well documented. Given this, search committees carefully consider whether the benefit of meeting candidates in person outweighs the potential drawbacks, not only for committee members but for candidates themselves. For both in-person and phone/video interviews, candidates are informed ahead of time who will be present, as well as what general format the questions will follow.

Best practices for in-person interviews include:

- Committees plan ahead carefully to ensure that access needs for all candidates are met, using the principles of Universal Design.
- If the interview room is not well labeled, committees might consider posting a sign with the room number on the outer door, and/or stationing a person near the room to help candidates reach the location.
- Committees are familiar with barrier-free ways to reach the interview space (for example, they know where the nearest elevator is located, as well as the nearest escalator or stairwell).
- The space in which interviews take place is as roomy as possible, with space for a scooter, wheelchair, person on crutches, or person with a service animal to move around.

Best practices for phone or video interviews include:

- Candidates know who will be interviewing them, and in a virtual medium, committee members provide more frequent reminders of who they are. For example, during a phone interview, a committee member might say, "This is [name] speaking now. I'd like to ask . . ."
- Committees plan ahead of time to select a venue and equipment that enable everyone to appear on camera at the same time; the practices of having only

one person visible or passing a laptop from hand to hand have been reported by candidates to be disorienting and unhelpful.

- In virtual media, committee members attend carefully to sending visual cues that they are listening while candidates speak; for example, they may wish to make a point of looking into the camera and nodding as often as seems appropriate.
- Most campuses have a dedicated space for video conferencing; search committees contact their campus IT department well ahead of time to learn about the best options for well-designed video interviewing or phone interviewing.

Best Practices for Final-Round Interviews

The following practices pertain to both tenure-track and non-tenure-track searches, as the practice of bringing NTT candidates to campuses has become more common. Just as first-round interviews require attention to accessibility, so do final-round interviews.

- Regarding travel expenses, the obligation for explaining how these are incurred and resolved belongs to the institution and is addressed at the time the invitation is extended. Expenses are paid for up front by the hiring institution, but when this is not possible, procedures for reimbursement are articulated clearly and early in the process, as well as facilitated in order to ensure timely return of funds. Candidates do not pay their own expenses for on-campus interviews.
- Time for rest is built into a candidate's schedule every few hours.
- Prior to research presentations or teaching demonstrations, a faculty member from the hiring committee gives a speech introducing the candidate that clearly explains the candidate's areas of teaching and research and their value for a wide audience.
- Finally, hiring committees speak openly and positively about negotiation. During final-round interviews, members of the committee and institution make suggestions about kinds of support to ask for, or recommendations for language to use in negotiation if the candidate is offered the position.

Best Practices for Hiring Writing Program Administrators

- WPAs are hired with tenure at the rank of Associate or Full Professor.
- The committee provides candidates with a comprehensive written list of the responsibilities of the administrative post, including the minimum length of time the faculty member is expected to serve as WPA, and offers candidates the opportunity to negotiate these duties at the time of offer.
- The committee gives thorough information about how administrative work will be evaluated by the university for reappointment, tenure, promotion, and annual performance reviews, using the Council of Writing Program Administrators' statement "Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration" as a guide.

Best Practices for Hiring International Candidates

International faculty members have contributed immeasurably to the field of rhetoric and composition. International candidates are given full consideration for positions for this reason and as a matter of commitment to diversity. Before interviewing international candidates, the search committee consults with the International Student Services Office (ISSO) on campus or similar, or the appropriate responsible persons in HR in order to determine visa requirements and payroll procedures for international travel reimbursement. It is generally a good idea to consult with ISSO or HR in order to learn about the legal and financial complexities of hiring a foreign national, which involve a work visa sponsorship and may in some cases lead to sponsoring a permanent residency. For example, the typical work visa (H1B) for qualified international workers is active for up to six years, which is also the typical amount of time required to achieve tenure, meaning that the successfully tenured international faculty must secure permanent residency status in order to continue employment in the United States. Each of these steps involves financial commitments that the departments as well as the candidates must be prepared for; the residency-related processes may also involve an external law firm.

- Search committee members do not ask applicants if they are US citizens but may ask if applicants are authorized to work in the United States.
- Either the search committee or an ISSO or HR member clarifies during the search that the position comes with automatic visa sponsorship of a work visa (which is the responsibility of the university) and what the candidates' responsibilities, financial and otherwise, would be in securing their residency status if desired (for example, if the position is NTT, the university may not sponsor them beyond a work visa).
- Once the decision has been made to hire an international candidate, departments work along with ISSO and HR in order to clarify responsibilities and expectations regarding the documentation, visa sponsorship, and appropriate authorities handling the faculty's legal status, preferably in writing.
- When the hiring committee reaches a clear understanding of the deadlines, paperwork, offices, and financial responsibilities to be incurred during the faculty's employment by the university, they take measures to protect the faculty from possible administrative failures such as missed deadlines due to no fault of the faculty, as there have been cases in which faculty have lost or nearly lost their positions due to HR mishaps.

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