

## **AU Policy on Senior Administrator Searches in Academic Affairs**

### **Concept**

This policy applies to the positions of academic unit deans, University Librarian, Dean of Faculty, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Dean of Graduate Studies, and Vice Provost for Research.

The selection and appointment of these senior administrators is one of the most important responsibilities as these leaders will have an important influence on the management and future direction of American University. Associated with this responsibility comes an expectation of thoroughness in the search process and full review of a candidate's experience and background prior to the offering of a senior post.

Senior administrator hires must be consistent with the university's commitment to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and nondiscrimination. American University is deeply committed to a diverse workforce and its officers must demonstrate that they have taken rigorous steps to fulfill those commitments.

Generally a senior administrator search is national in scope and involves a widely distributed advertisement for the position in those publications associated with the field or area. Whenever possible and when resources are available, searches for senior administrators will involve an experienced search firm to assist the internal search committee. At a minimum, a specialist in conducting reference checks examines how the candidate handles controversy and conflict, works with others and under pressure, values shared governance, and manages workload - all of which are essential information required for informed judgments in these search processes. Finally, all senior administrator hires will undergo full background checks prior to hiring.

### **Procedures for Search Committee Construction and Selection of Members**

The purpose of the search committee for a senior administrative hire is not only to screen and recommend candidates, but to represent American University to prospective candidates. At the same time that American University scrutinizes candidates, but the best candidates will be carefully examining the university. Therefore, the committee should be deliberately comprised of members with clear insight, judgment, and assessment. These are committee members that are respected in the university community and can represent the university well. A search committee for such a position may range in size depending on the position. While it may not be possible to have a representative from every involved teaching unit or constituency, members of the search committee will be charged with balancing the concerns of all who will be affected by the hire.

In all senior academic administrator searches, the final decision on search committee membership and on the selection of the senior administrator hire rests with the Provost. However, it remains the responsibility of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to periodically review procedures to ensure effective faculty consultation in the selection of

a senior administrator hire and that committee diversity and representation are accomplished.

*A. Search Committees for Academic Unit Deans*

Each academic unit will establish procedures for selecting or electing up to three fulltime faculty members to serve as the academic unit representatives on a search committee for the dean of their academic unit. These procedures will include establishing an academic unit search formation committee (or selecting an existing academic unit committee to be the search formation committee) whose members must be available throughout the year and are responsible for:

- serving as a liaison with the Provost when the dean's position becomes available, and
- ensuring that, within ten (10) calendar days following the announcement of a search, the academic unit presents the Provost with the names of three faculty members for the search committee selected according to the unit's procedures

With the opening and authorization to fill an academic unit dean position, the Provost will consult the search formation committee to determine the structure of the search committee. The Provost will finalize the structure of the search committee including its composition of faculty, and staff. Customarily, personnel who are direct reports to the dean are ineligible to serve on a search committee, but may have voice to the committee members during a search. As is customary, one undergraduate student and one graduate student, and a dean from another academic unit also will serve on the search committee.

*B. Search Committees for Dean of Faculty, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Dean of Graduate Studies, and Vice Provost for Research*

With the opening and authorization to hire senior administrator positions other than academic unit dean positions, the Provost will consult with constituent representatives to determine the structure of the search committee. The Provost will finalize the structure of the search committee including its composition of faculty, staff, and students. Customarily, personnel who are direct reports to the senior administrative officer are ineligible to serve on a search committee, but may have voice to the committee members during a search. As is customary, one or two students may serve on the committee as appropriate to the purview of the position.

### **Finalizing Search Committee Membership**

The Provost will announce the opening of the position to the university community, describe the anticipated structure of the committee, and ask that nominations to the search committee be submitted to the Faculty Senate leadership. Any member of the community

may self-nominate or submit names of candidates who have expressed a willingness to serve on the search committee. All nominees must confirm in writing that they are willing and able to serve on the search committee.

For academic unit dean searches, the Provost, in consultation with the search formation committee, will select the remaining search committee membership from the pool of nominees. For all other searches, the Provost will select the search committee from the pool of nominees. In both cases, attention will be given to the different constituencies and diversity, especially race and gender representation. The majority of the search committee membership will be full-time faculty. Customarily, these faculty will also be senior faculty.

### **Procedures for the Search Committee**

When the search committee is formed, the Provost will announce its membership to the university. The Provost will convene the members of the committee and provide their charge. At the same meeting, or shortly thereafter, the Dean of Faculty will provide the affirmative action charge, along with information on relevant policies. The Provost, after consulting with the members of the search committee, will select a chair who will have overall responsibility for managing the process. The committee members will receive and review all candidate documentation and will interview and select the pool of semi-finalists. Whenever possible the committee members will provide opportunities for constituencies to meet the finalists and solicit feedback about candidates from appropriate constituencies. Each of the different university units may involve specific selected constituencies in the interview process, however, not only do members of the unit(s) in which the hire takes place have the opportunity to meet candidates and provide feedback, but those in allied units who may work in collaboration should also be given the opportunity to meet and interview finalists. In order to provide such opportunities, a candidate who is a finalist for a senior academic administrator position may make several visits to the campus.

The search committee will normally recommend up to three candidates to the Provost; however, their precise charge will be given by the Provost and will be determined by the quality of the semi-finalist pool. For an appointment that includes faculty status, the Provost will obtain a recommendation on tenure and rank from the senior faculty of the teaching unit in which the senior administrator will be appointed. Final selection and offer negotiation with the finalist(s) remains the responsibility of the Provost.

### **Exceptions**

These are the customary procedures. In highly unusual circumstances senior academic position searches may require a more expedient process which will be determined by the Provost in consultation with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. Further, the search committee with the approval of the Provost may also identify alternative procedures in maximizing the opportunity to attract the best senior administrator to the University.