

John A. Logan College

Search and Hiring Policies/Procedures: An External Review

Introduction

On December 12, 2008 Dr. John Washburn from Southern Illinois University Carbondale met with representatives of John A. Logan Collage (JALC) to discuss search and hiring policies and procedures. The meeting included representation by a JALC Board Member, the President, the three Vice Presidents, the Director of Personnel, and the Board Attorney. The meeting was intended to review hiring policies and practices designed to encourage selecting personnel who will provide a high level of competence and compatibility in their role at JALC.

The meeting also provided the opportunity for discussion about issues/concerns associated with existing JALC personnel selection policies and procedures. At the conclusion of the meeting, Dr. Washburn was asked to conduct an external review of the existing policies/procedures and make recommendations for further discussion. This report identifies issues/recommendations associated with Dr. Washburn's review of the following:

- Board Policy No. 5110 – General Hiring Policy
- Administrative Procedure No. 501 – Procedures for Hiring Non-Teaching Professional Staff
- Administrative Procedure No. 502A – Procedures for Hiring Full-Time Faculty
- Administrative Procedure No. 601 – Procedures for Hiring Operational Staff
- Administrative Procedure No. 601A – Procedures for Hiring Maintenance Staff
- Administrative Procedure No. 601B – Procedures for Hiring Campus Safety Staff

For the most part, the policy/procedures are well-written and concise. However, two substantive issues have been identified as a result of the external review that requires some level of action/discussion.

Issue No. 1: Streamlining Search and Hiring Procedures

The review of administrative procedures suggest the important need to streamline search and hiring practices to address the following two areas of concern:

First, recommendations for hire should proceed in an orderly manner from the search committee through the appropriate administrators to the President, who then recommends to the Board for ratification. Also, mid-level administrators (Chairs, Deans, Associate Deans, etc.) need early and

sustained involvement in the search and selection process including service, where appropriate, on the various committees and in the interview process. The duties of the Personnel Office are intermingled with various administrative procedures. If one charts the approval process from the initiation of a vacancy announcement through making a recommendation to the Board for hiring, there appears to be an inordinate number of steps required for approval. For example, to hire a Custodian, there are 13 levels of approval required to make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees for hiring a new employee.

Second, the administrative procedures describe a three-level screening process for review of applications. The Personnel Office is involved in all three levels, which may affect Search Committee perceptions of their involvement in making recommendations to hire new employees. A two-level screening process by the Search Committee would appear appropriate, with the first level being used to identify applicants not qualified for a position and those submitting incomplete applications. The second level of screening by the Search Committee should identify applicants who are qualified and who should be interviewed and applicants who are qualified and should not be interviewed. There are a number of reasons why a qualified candidate might not be interviewed. For example, a candidate's specialization area may overlap with those of current members and would not fit with the need of the unit as advertised, the candidate may have insufficient professional experience compared with the candidate selected for interview, the candidate may have insufficient technical competence in the required area, etc.

Recommendations:

1. Establish a campus-wide task force (staffed by the Personnel Director) and charged with reviewing the Search and Selection Process and Procedures for faculty and non-teaching professional staff and make recommendations for change through the appropriate Vice President to the President and Board of Trustees. Operational, campus safety, and maintenance staff should be dealt with separately in accordance with union procedures where applicable.
2. Establish a Board sub-committee or of the whole as deemed appropriate, with participation from the President and Vice Presidents, charged with reviewing the General Hiring Policies and the recommendations made by the campus-wide task force.

Issue No. 2: Board of Trustees Role in the Hiring Process

The Illinois Community College Act requires the Board of Trustees "to make appointments and fix the salaries of a Chief Administrative Officer, who shall be the Executive Officer of the Board, other administrative personnel, and all teachers." The general policy of the JALC Board of Trustees reserves "the creation and elimination of full-time positions and salaries" to the

Board of Trustees. While this is an appropriate role for the Board, the search procedures require that upon a completion of the interview process the Board receives “three unranked names” of individuals being recommended to the Board for employment. In practice, this suggests that the role of the President, Vice Presidents, and other administrators and faculty has been diminished, which may result in ambivalence or disinterest on the part of those most affected by the decisions. At issue here is the Board of Trustees’ role in the search and selection process.

It appears possible that by submitting three “unranked” names to the Board for approval, that the best candidate for a position might ultimately not be the one selected for employment.

Ultimately, mid-level administrators involved in the search and selection process with early and sustained involvement, are best able to make judgments and pinpoint the compatibility and competence of the best candidate to hire for a position at the College.

Recommendations:

1. In a retreat setting, the Board as a whole should discuss its role in the hiring and selection process and consider a procedure wherein the President recommends a candidate for employment for ratification by the Board. The Board should hold administrators accountable for the search and selection process so that only in rare cases would the Board fail to ratify an appointment.
2. The Board’s discussion of this issue should be formalized and incorporated with the recommendations of the campus-wide task force (see previous recommendation) charged with reviewing search and selection procedures for JALC.

Summary

Two issues and subsequent recommendations have been made in this review. However, on December 12 there was discussion about the existing JALC interview process/procedures that are not described in the Board hiring policy and various administrative procedures. It is important that the interview process not result in “homogeneity of perspective” by choosing a compromise candidate or by choosing a candidate who is most articulate, assertive, or affable in the interview. Some level of training may be necessary for mid-level administrators chairing search committees to help them more effectively assess the competence and compatibility of prospective employees.