



Classified Hiring Handbook

Fitchburg State University Classified Hiring Handbook

Introduction

The search and hiring process can be a very labor intensive and time-consuming task for the search committee and administrative offices, but it is also one of the most rewarding. The staff members who serve on the search committee will collaborate, share their experiences and expertise, to select a candidate who will ultimately meet the needs of the department, the university, and most importantly – students. Your willingness to work together and participate in this process is essential to the success of the search. This handbook serves as a guide to ensure consistency throughout the hiring process across departments.

As a university, we strive to recruit the most qualified candidates. Keep in mind that the search process has broader implications as well. An applicant's impression of Fitchburg State is based solely on the courtesy, timeliness, and professionalism of our communication as agents for the university. Furthermore, the ways in which searches are conducted reflect our individual, departmental, and institutional values.

The search and hiring process is taken very seriously and we demonstrate a strong commitment to affirmative action and equal opportunity throughout the process. Fitchburg State is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to all regardless of age, ancestry, color, creed, cultural background, genetic information, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, National Guard or reserve status, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. The search committee is charged with identifying a diverse pool of qualified candidates who will bring the skills, life experiences, and perspectives that can add to the quality and richness of our academic community.

Fitchburg State University Mission

Fitchburg State University is committed to excellence in teaching and learning and blends liberal arts and sciences and professional programs within a small university environment. Our comprehensive public university prepares students to lead, serve, and succeed by fostering lifelong learning and civic and global responsibility. A Fitchburg State education extends beyond our classrooms to include residential, professional, and co-curricular opportunities. As a community resource, we provide leadership and support for the economic, environmental, social, and cultural needs of North Central Massachusetts and the Commonwealth.

Affirmative Action Policy Statement

Fitchburg State University is committed to a policy of affirmative action, equal opportunity, non-discrimination and diversity. The university does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, disability, veteran status, marital status, or national origin in its educational programs, activities, admissions, or employment policies. Additionally, the university is committed to providing a working and learning environment for our students, employees and other members of the university community, which values the diverse backgrounds of all people.

Affirmative Action Commitment in the Search Process

It is the responsibility of the university's affirmative action officer to review the search committee members to confirm that the members represent a diverse panel. Search committees should reflect the diversity of the university and ensure that unbiased and nondiscriminatory interviews take place. In addition, the affirmative action officer may serve on any search committee in which an underutilization of protected class members exists. Committee selection may be subject to change if it is not representative of the diversity within the department.

FULL-TIME POSITION VACANCIES:

The president, divisional vice president and Human Resources will review vacated positions as they become available. Once the review has been completed, the decision to advertise and fill the role occurs. Human Resources will notify the department manager.

All AFSCME job descriptions need to be written on the contractual Form 30 per the AFSCME Collective Bargaining Agreement. *See Appendix A Form 30 template.*

Department managers are responsible for submitting the following pertinent information to the office of Human Resources for all searches (*See Appendix B for checklist*):

- Completed job description
- Search committees are not required for classified positions. However, if there is a search committee there should be three (3) members and complete the [Search Committee Composition](#) form <http://survey.fitchburgstate.edu/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=7IKL3o70> in order for HR to provide access to the search committee members.
- Managers who are hiring classified employees must give careful attention to the guidelines found in the AFSCME contract, Article 19, Section 1, 2 and 3 for filling positions and promotions.
- Advertisement - All postings will have a specified closing date. Positions are automatically advertised on the Fitchburg State University jobsite, as well as NEHERC, Higherjobs.com, North Central Chamber of Commerce and Central Mass Career Center. All advertisements include the university's Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer statement.

JOB SITE ACCESS (Interview Exchange)

Search committee members that do not have a job site login then they must request an account by completing the online form [Job Site Access](#) . A default login and temporary password from Interview Exchange will be sent to their fitchburgstate.edu email address for each committee member to finalize their accounts. If a committee member has an existing account, Human Resources will add the member to the specific search folder. Once an account has been established, it will be used for future searches.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance. The candidate's information, including the status of their application, must remain confidential throughout the process and thereafter. Search committee members may not contact the candidate individually or discuss the qualifications of a candidate outside of the search committee. Candidates have a right to expect privacy during the initial stages of the interview process. Confidentiality must be maintained until the candidate is invited to campus and accepts the invitation.

SEARCH COMMITTEE CHAIR

The search committee chair is responsible for the overall recruitment process for the position. The chair will serve as the primary liaison with Human Resources and committee members. They are responsible for providing direction to the committee in preparation of the search process. The chair also coordinates the phone/Zoom interviews, on campus interviews, drafts interview questions, schedules rooms for interviews, gathers appropriate material for hiring process, conducts reference checks, gathers outstanding candidate information, etc. or designates a committee member.

Applicants are able to track their status using the online employment system. It is important that the statuses are updated as decisions are made about each applicant (this includes applicants that withdraw, do not meet minimal qualifications, selected for interview, etc.). The search committee chair is responsible for updating the

applicant statuses throughout the hiring process in the job site. This must be completed for all candidates that are phone/Zoom and campus interviewed. Additionally, at the conclusion of the search the chair will work with HR to close the search. We encourage the chair to notify by phone the finalists that were selected for on campus interviews but were not the candidate selected for said position once the search has concluded. *See Appendix C for Search Committee Chair Checklist.*

Search Committee Members: All members of the search committee are charged with the responsibility of assisting in the review of candidates and vetting those applicants. The role of the committee is to establish three finalists for the position. These responsibilities consist of screening candidates for interview, participating in the interview process, and selecting the three final candidate(s). All applications will be reviewed to determine which candidates fully meet the minimal qualifications for the position. Additionally the committee will meet to address qualifications beyond the minimum that the candidates should possess to be successful in the role.

SEARCH MATERIAL & DOCUMENTATION

All materials relating to the search should be maintained electronically. The Office of Human Resources has created electronic forms that may be used and/or altered by the committee to assist with maintaining the search process. Materials should be organized in a manner that allows for easy access to the details of the search, and the final outcome. This will assist in preserving the search process in case there are any legal challenges. Search information is maintained for three years after the search has been completed. The search document/s should be sent electronically to Kelli Lundgren at klundgren@fitchburgstate.edu. *See Appendix D for Search Committee Meeting template.*

**The search committee must ensure that a consistent rationale is provided for each decision, reflecting the candidate's ability or inability to meet the standard qualifications of the position. Please be certain that when documenting the decisions for non-selection, the reasoning is consistent.

APPLICATION & SCREENING PROCESS

applicants must apply online at [Jobs at Fitchburg State](#) to be eligible for employment. If the committee directly receives a resume, it should be forwarded to Human Resources. Search committee members will utilize the job site to review candidates.

The committee will meet to address qualifications beyond the minimum that the candidates should possess to be successful in the role. Screening applicants is significant work, so a rating sheet helps in screening applicant material (*see Appendix E*). Information known about a candidate on a personal level, outside of the application materials submitted by the candidate, may not be used in the evaluation of the candidate. Search committee members are cautioned to limit their evaluation of the candidate to the material submitted, and ultimately, the information gained in the interview, viewed against the required/preferred qualifications. Some helpful hints for a better applicant screening experience are below.

- Review the job announcement for the position you are attempting to fill.
- Note minimum requirements needed and refer to them often as you review candidate materials.
- Review material to see if it is personalized to Fitchburg State.
- Review for typos and incorrect grammar.
- Ignore the applicant's name, address, and personal information to limit subconscious biases.
- Check work experience for applicability to the available position, length of time in each position, promotions or awards received, and the reason for leaving each position.
- Note gaps in employment but do not assume they were caused by negative reasons.
- Check educational background for qualifications necessary for successful job performance.

- Note special skills.
- Note any pertinent questions that arise when reviewing candidate materials on a separate piece of paper. Discuss these questions with the search committee. This may provide assistance with forming interview questions.
- Divide the candidates into three folders – YES for those that closely match job requirements and for which a telephone screen is appropriate, MAYBE for those who meet some requirements and may be considered secondarily, and NO for those who do not meet the requirements at all.
- If necessary, screen the top group again to narrow down the candidates even further. On average, about 6 – 8 candidates per open position should be sufficient for first round interviews.

Human resources can assist in the decision making process, identifying critical stages in the recruitment process where the university can demonstrate its commitment to affirmative action/diversity, and answer any questions that you may have pertaining to the search. As a reminder, questions relating to immigration and naturalization should be directed to Human Resources.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No member of the bargaining unit shall serve on a search committee or otherwise participate in any way in the hiring of a member of the bargaining unit if to do so would constitute a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. No unit member, for example, shall serve on a search committee if his/her spouse or domestic partner is a candidate for the position.

PRELIMINARY 1ST PHONE/ZOOM INTERVIEW

First round of interviews should be conducted with 6 – 8 candidates, all of whom should be deemed serious candidates. Prior to setting up the phone/Zoom interview human resources will review the diversity of the pool. Move candidates to skype/phone interview folder in Interview Exchange and notify HR that the committee is ready to set-up phone/Zoom interviews, which will trigger a review of the applicant pool.

These interviews should be structured with a list of interview questions to be asked of all the candidates. Follow up questions are acceptable. One of the key steps to a successful search is maintaining consistency throughout the process. Additionally, it is recommended that all search committees use a rating system when evaluating candidate's responses to the questions. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has strict guidelines for what questions are considered discriminatory. ***Review Appendix F Conducting the Interview.***

Note: During phone/Zoom screening briefly describe the position, salary range, and ask if the candidate remains interested in still being considered for the position.

ZOOM Technology

The search committee chairperson, or departmental assistant, should reserve a Zoom room (Mazzaferro, Science 311 or Conlon 212). In order to conduct a Zoom interview, the candidate(s) must set up a Zoom account (see ***Appendix G*** and send instructions if needed.). ***See Appendix H*** for instructions on how to use the Zoom technology. You will also need the Meeting ID and the Host Key, which will be sent to the chair when a search is posted. The meeting ID is shared with the candidates, but the Host ID is not shared. Committee members should arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the interview, to ensure the technology is working properly and they are prepared for the interview process. If you have trouble with the technology dial 978-665-4500 and select classroom emergency.

SELECTION OF FINALISTS

After the first round of interviews, the search committee chairperson will forward the three finalist's names to the Office of Human Resources and the department manager of the area. Once the department manager reviews the three finalists, interviews may be scheduled. No more than three finalists may be invited to campus. A search that produces less than three candidates will be reviewed by the department manager and Human Resources, to determine if the search should be continued, canceled, or if a new search is required.

Campus Interviews

The search committee chairperson is responsible for scheduling the interview appointments with the search committee, department manager, department members, if applicable, and human resources (for a number of positions there is an assessment component, which last 45 minutes). The candidate's application materials may be shared with interviewers participating in the interview process prior to the candidates. - *See Appendix I*

Reference Checks

When you invite candidates to campus, request a list of references from the candidate. This list should include the names of former supervisors, and co-workers, not friends. Let the candidate know that after the on-campus interview you will be contacting references on all finalist. The search committee chair, or designee, is responsible for contacting references by telephone and documenting the discussion. Of the three, one of them needs to be an immediate supervisor or person that has some professional oversight of the candidate. *See Appendix J.*

Reference checking is essential to verify a candidate's background. Combined with proper interviewing techniques, reference checking should give added assurance that the intuitive sense that you have about a candidate's abilities to successfully perform in the position is well founded. Checking a candidate's reference should involve a factual investigation of education and employment.

References, based on a former employer's past perceptions of the candidate's performance, can be used to predict how this candidate may perform. With that said, finding people who are actually willing to take time to thoughtfully answer questions based on their own experiences with the candidate is not always easy. Many employers advise managers to limit their comments that are subjective in nature. Try anyway! Sometimes what is not said is enough said!

FINALIST RECOMMENDATION PROCESS

Once the reference checks are complete, the search committee should identify the strengths and limitations of each candidate in writing, and the hiring manager will make a recommendation for hire. The recommendation should be forwarded to the department manager and human resources. The Associate Vice President of Human Resources will review the recommendation. If none of the names submitted are acceptable or if all recommended finalists decline the job offer, the department manager and Human Resources will consult regarding next steps.

Offer of Employment

The department manager will make an offer of employment to the top finalist, with HR's final approval to do so, and determine a start date (ideally, the start date is on a Monday and at least 10 – 12 business days from the offer date). The offer of employment is contingent on the successful completion of the background screening and CORI.

Background Screening

Once the offer of employment has been provided; the Office of Human Resources will initiate the hiring paperwork, a background screening and CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) on the finalist. These screenings are another method to secure additional information related to the candidate. The department

manager will notify the candidate that they will receive a generated email from the vendor, Castle Branch at the time of the offer. This email will be sent to their personal email account for completion. It is imperative that the candidate complete this request in a timely manner. The Office of Human Resources will notify the department manager once the screening is completed.

Hiring Procedures and Paperwork

To complete the search, the search committee chair must notify Kelli Lundgren (klundgren@fitchburgstate.edu) to close out the search. If a [position vacancy form](#) has not been completed, please complete at this time.

Submission of Search Materials

The search committee must submit all applicable documents used in the interview process to the Office of Human Resources in electronic format to klundgren@fitchburgstate.edu . This information is stored for three years electronically in the case there are any legal actions. Human resources will work with the search committee chairperson to close out the search and send final notification to the unsuccessful candidates.

Onboarding

It is important to maintain ongoing communication with the newest colleague in your department. New staff members should feel welcomed and have resources within the university prior to their arrival. The department manager should prepare to assist the new employee during their transition:

- Identify a member(s) of the department to be a key contact for the new employee during their transition.
- Work with the department assistant and new staff member to arrange their office, order supplies and any other miscellaneous items they might need prior to their arrival.
- Work with Capital Planning and Maintenance for assistance with office location, furniture, etc.
- Verify technology needs of the new hire and work with IT.

New Employee Orientation

The Office of Human Resources will contact the new staff member in advance of their start date. An individual orientation will be scheduled, which will include topics such as payroll, policies, and benefits. In addition, new employees will be taken to the OneCard Office to get their campus ID, and then to Information Technology to meet with a staff member who will review email, Blackboard, FSU ALERT, etc.

In the event that any additional needs or questions arise, contact the Office of Human Resources for assistance.

APPENDICES

- A. Job Vacancy Announcement Example***
- B. Department Manager Checklist***
- C. Search Committee Chair Checklist***
- D. Search Committee Meeting Notes***
- E. Sample Rating Chart***
- F. Conducting the Interview***
- G. Zoom instructions for participants***
- H. Zoom technology instructions***
- I. Sample Campus Interview Schedule***
- J. Reference Check Form***

APPENDIX A

**POSITION DESCRIPTION, DPA-Form 30-State
Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

1. Position Title			Agency Fitchburg State University	
2. Appropriation or Agency Code	Position No.	Requisition No.	Salary	Date Prepared
3. General Statement of Duties and Responsibilities				
Supervision Received (Name and title of person from whom incumbent receives direction)				
5A. Direct Reporting Staff		5B. Their Staff N/A		
6. Detailed Statement of Duties and Responsibilities				
1. Other assigned duties				
7. Qualifications Required at Hire (List knowledge, skills, abilities)				
1. Must be able to satisfactorily pass a check conducted by the Criminal History Systems Board (CORI check) 2. Ability to perform above duties with or without reasonable accommodation.				
8. Qualifications Acquired On Job (List knowledge, skills, abilities)				
9. Minimum Entrance Requirements				
10. License and/or Certification Requirements				
Prepared by: _____				
Initials of Incumbent: _____ Date: _____ Initials of Supervisor: _____ Date: _____				

APPENDIX B

Department Manager Checklist

- Complete the [position vacancy form](#)
- Prepare job description
- Submit completed job description to the Office of Human Resources
klundgren@fitchburgstate.edu
- Email search committee members and identify chair to the link below:
<https://survey.fitchburgstate.edu/TakeSurvey.aspx?PageNumber=1&SurveyID=18KK8pmL&Preview=true>
- All committee members are required to participate in the Search & Hiring Process Training every three years.
- Search committee members are directed to create a user account for the online jobsite so they may review candidates (if they do not already have one)
<https://survey.fitchburgstate.edu/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=8453mn8>
- Visit university job site to review applicants

Once the finalist has accepted the position, create a smooth onboarding process.

- Identify a member(s) of the department to be a key contact for the new employee during their transition.
- Work with the department assistant and new staff member to arrange their office, order supplies and any other miscellaneous items they might need prior to their arrival.
- Work with the Office of Capital Planning and Maintenance for assistance with office location, furniture, etc.
- Verify technology needs of the new hire.

Appendix C

Search Committee Chair Checklist

- Establish committee meeting to begin the recruitment process. The first meeting should be used to request dates and times from committee members to establish meeting times and dates, rooms to meet, and establish timeline for review of candidates, 1st round interviews, on campus interviews, etc.
 - Verify that all committee members are trained on search and hiring process prior to review of candidate materials. HR could do a search training at your first committee meeting if it is helpful.
 - Direct committee members to create a login for the job site.
 - Review the minimum qualifications and as a committee establish criteria beyond the minimum requirement to assist with bringing forward your ideal candidates; this must be done prior to reviewing candidate materials, as this will allow for all members of the committee to evaluate candidates similarly.
 - Establish timeline for review of applications.
- Prior to establishing preliminary interviews with 6-8 candidates notify Kelli Lundgren (klundgren@fitchburgstate.edu) that the candidates selected for the Phone/Zoom interviews are in the “yes” folder. Once you hear back from HR & department manager, you may schedule the Phone/Zoom interviews.
- Establish questions for Phone/Zoom interviews.
- Coordinate the Phone/Zoom interview with candidates. Provide date, time of the interview, and secure appropriate information for Zoom and telephone in the case of technology challenges.
- Schedule appropriate room and technology for Phone/Zoom interviews for committee. All members must be present for the interviews.
- If using Zoom technology, contact HR or IT for Meeting ID and the Host Key. The Meeting ID is shared with the candidate and the Host Key is just for the search chair.
- Identify three finalists for on-campus interviews, in collaboration with the committee.
- Provide the three finalists’ résumés to the department manager and HR for review, prior to scheduling them for on-campus interviews.
- Once finalists are reviewed and approved, scheduling on-campus interviews may occur:
 - Verify availability of the department head, HR, staff participating in interview, & the committee.
 - Contact candidate to schedule the interview and ask for a list of reference. Confirm and provide an agenda with whom they will be meeting prior to their interview via email. References will be checked for all finalist after the campus visit.
 - Schedule rooms and technology needs if any for on-campus interview (make certain rooms are accessible for all candidates).
 - Schedule to meet with committee to determine appropriate questions
 - Schedule a departmental meeting with the members of the committee to meet with the candidate(s) if applicable.
 - Search committee chair will coordinate the arrival and departure of candidate to the university or assign a designee. Make certain that all escorts introduce the candidate to the groups they are interviewing.
 - Verify that all pertinent candidate information materials are collected.

- Once on campus interviews conclude:
 - Conduct reference checks
 - Update applicants' status in the Fitchburg State jobsite.
 - Convene committee to determine the strengths and limitations of finalists.
 - Submit strengths and limitations of the finalist in writing in no ranking order and references to the department hiring manager.
 - Submit the following to HR
 - Search summary
 - Rubric (rating sheet)
 - 3 references for each finalist
 - Search committee letter
 - Search questions (both Phone/Zoom & on-campus)
 - Any evaluation tool used to collect feedback

Appendix D
Search Committee Meeting Notes

Meeting Date	Clerk	Members Present	Notes	Action Items

**Appendix E
Sample Rating Chart**

Name of Candidates	CV Received	Letter Received	Experience	Specific Qualifications	Total

Notes on Rubric:

Minimum Qualifications: Candidates must meet all minimum qualifications to be considered for position.

(Establish additional preferred qualifications to assist in the interview process. The minimum qualifications will not provide enough in-depth experience about the candidates.)

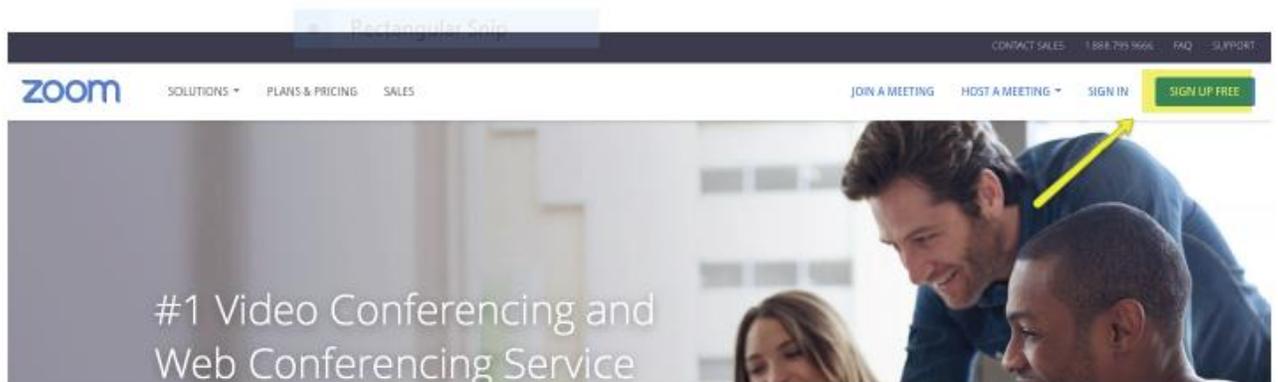
Preferred Qualifications: Provide each candidate a number between 0-5, five being the most qualified.

- 0 = not reflected in CV or letter, 1= mentioned but no additional information; 3= has significant experience

Appendix F Sign up for Zoom account and download app

Sign up for Zoom account and download app

1. Visit zoom.us
2. Click Sign Up Free in the top right corner of the screen



3. Enter your email address and click Sign Up
4. Click Sign Up again after confirming your email address – an email will be sent to your email account from Zoom. In the email, click Activate Account
5. Once your account has been activated, you'll be prompted to enter your first and last name and choose a password
6. On the next screen, click Skip this step
7. Next, click Start Meeting Now. This will automatically start the download process for the Zoom app
8. Click Run to run the Zoom_launcher_exe installer
9. Once Zoom downloads, the app will automatically open on your computer

Appendix G ZOOM Instructions

Mazzaferro, Conference Room 203

Notes:

- There are two phones in this space. The conference phone to the left (Avaya) is used for voice only calls. The phone to the right (Lifesize) is used for Zoom meetings.
- If a participant will be sharing his/her computer content, please contact the Help Desk for assistance prior to the meeting.

To start a Zoom Meeting:

1. Using the large remote and pointing at the television, press the red button once to turn the television and camera on
2. From the home screen on the Lifesize phone, press the Call button
3. Press Favorites
4. Select Zoomapp
(If zoomapp is not an option on this menu, you must select Video Call and dial IP: 162.255.36.11)
5. Select Dial As Video
6. Using the keypad, enter the Zoom Meeting ID followed by the Host Key

To end the Zoom Meeting:

1. Press the right arrow to return to the Home Screen
2. Select the red End button
3. After ending the call, please put the system to sleep by scrolling right through the options and selecting Sleep

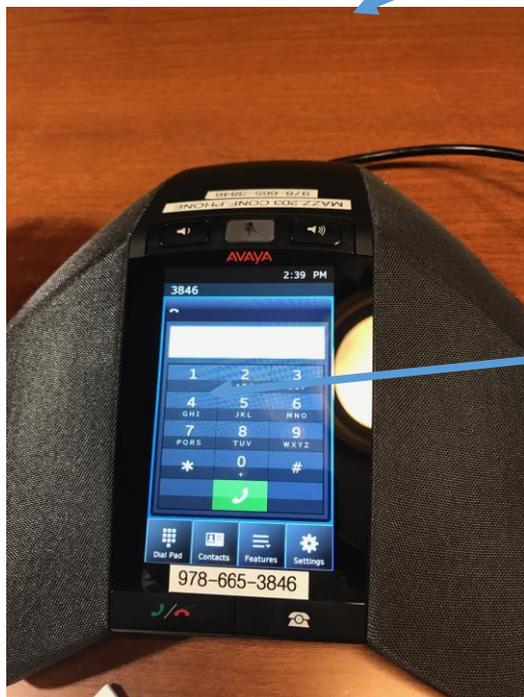
*****Contact HR or IT for Meeting ID and the Host Key. The Meeting ID is shared with the candidate and the Host Key is just for the search chair.**

Avaya Conference Phone

Conference room phone number: 978-665-3846

1. To dial a number (remember to dial 9+1 and area code for outgoing calls) press the green button in the lower left corner and use the keypad to enter the phone number
2. During the call, you may conference in another line. From the screen's menu, press Conference
3. Select the Dial Pad (lower right corner of screen)
4. Enter the phone number
5. To end the call, press the End button

Volume (lower on left, louder on right) and mute (middle)



Dial and End Call

Zoom – Conlon Hall, Room 212

1. From the computer podium, press Video Conf. This will turn on the TV located at the back of the classroom.
2. Using the remote (diagram on next page), press OK to exit the TV screensaver
3. Press OK to exit Do Not Disturb mode
4. From the Home screen, using the down arrow key, select Zoom and press OK to initiate the call (If zoomapp is not an option on this menu, you must select Video Call and dial IP: 162.255.36.11)
5. On the next screen, using the remote, enter the Zoom Meeting ID (above) and press #
6. Next, enter the Host Key (above) and press #
7. You will be the only participant in the session until someone joins the meeting.

*****Contact HR or IT for Meeting ID and the Host Key. The Meeting ID is shared with the candidate and the Host Key is just for the search chair.**

Zoom – Antonucci Science Complex, Room 311

Notes:

- This space utilizes a touch screen, located on the middle of the conference table.
- If a participant will be sharing his/her computer content, please contact the Help Desk for assistance prior to the meeting.

To turn on the system:

1. Press Wake to turn on the system
2. Press Do Not Disturb to turn off Do Not Disturb mode

Before beginning the session, you can adjust the camera to change the view participants see when they join the room. To do this:

1. Press View
2. Press Move
3. Using the arrows, you can pan the camera left, right, up and down. The magnifying glass will allow you to zoom the camera in and out.
4. To return to the main menu, select the arrow icon on the left side of the touch screen

To start a Zoom meeting:

1. Press Call
2. Press Favorites
3. Swipe down through the options and select **zoomapp**
(If zoomapp is not an option on this menu, you must select Video Call and dial IP: 162.255.36.11)
4. Press Tones to use the numerical keypad to enter the Meeting ID and Host ID (above)
5. Use the arrow icon on the left side of the touch screen to return to the main menu at any time
6. To end the Zoom meeting, press End on the touch screen
7. To shut off the system, select Do Not Disturb, then select Sleep

****Contact HR or IT for Meeting ID and the Host Key. The Meeting ID is shared with the candidate and the Host Key is just for the search chair.**

Appendix H

Conducting the Interview

Interviews are scheduled and conducted by the search committee or, in the case of a classified position for which no search committee is required, the appropriate supervisor/administrator.

Interviewers and search committees have critical responsibilities.

1. To review and recommend candidates based on job-related qualifications.
2. To comply with legal requirements in the hiring process; and
3. To follow the university's affirmative action policy and processes.

The following are some basic guidelines with regard to fulfilling the above responsibilities. Although not every question is answered about which screening/interviewing techniques are lawful, the guide is to serve as a resource tool. Interviewers and search committee chairpersons should consult with human resources for specific guidance when needed.

At the beginning and during interview:

1. Establish rapport. The interview setting should be conducive to good communication. A warm greeting and "small talk" serve to relax both the interviewers and candidates and establish mutual confidence. However, be careful not to ask any questions that may later be viewed by the interviewee as discriminatory (marital status, family, etc.)
2. Gather predictive information. The keys to controlling the interview are careful, active listening combined with good use of questions. Through a variety of questions and comments, the interviewer may encourage things that may be important. **Listen to what is said and what is not said** in response to your questions – do not assume an answer. Ask finalist to support their statements by giving examples.
3. When the search committee interviews, it is advisable to meet immediately following each interview for a feedback session. Also suggested is the use of a rating/comment form for committee members to note candidate responses to questions during an interview. Do not rely on memory. Remember, however, that note taking during an interview may make the interviewee uncomfortable.
4. The use of words and phrases such as "why," "how," and "describe," or "tell me about" will yield more complete answers than leading questions or those that require only a "yes" or "no" answer.
5. The purpose of the interview is to obtain a clear and balanced picture of the finalist's qualifications for the job without indicating the responses you hope to hear. Avoid leading questions such as "do you agree" or "you must have liked..." as they may influence the interviewee's response. Remain objective.
6. Be watchful of your own non-verbal communication as well as that of the candidate. Be cognizant, however, of cultural diversity and remain objective. Keep focused on what you are hearing – do not appear preoccupied.
7. Maintain control of the interview. Time should be a consideration but never rush an interview.
8. Describe the position, the duties, level of authority/supervision and support systems available, and describe the university as well. Inform the interviewee at the beginning of the interview that an opportunity will be provided during the latter part of the interview for the interviewee to ask questions. Respond to the questions raised. An interview is a two-way process. Provide

sufficient facts, both favorable and unfavorable about the position and the institution in a straightforward manner so the candidate can make an intelligent decision on the acceptability of the position.

9. Thanking the interviewee for his/her time and outlining what will happen next is an honest and comfortable way to end the interview. Give the finalist an appropriate date by which you expect to take any follow up action or make any decisions.
10. References should be contacted. Listen carefully to what is said and how the reference responds to your inquiries. Listen for hesitations, silences.

Interviewing Do's and Don'ts

General

Federal and/or state laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, disability, veteran status, marital status, or national origin.

A cardinal rule when interviewing is to avoid asking questions of candidates if the answers could not properly be considered in making the hiring decision. Even if the candidate brings up or makes a comment related to an area that is unlawful, do not pursue it. Stay with questions that have to do with the candidate's education, training, work history and job-related skills.

Discriminatory behavior is improper, even when it is not intended. The use of certain questions would not necessarily show that you mean to discriminate but such questions can be used, and have been used in a discriminatory way. Therefore, the following subjects should be avoided because they may show gender-based discrimination.

- Marital status or non-marital arrangements;
- Spouse's employment;
- How spouse feels about candidate's working or traveling;
- Child care arrangements

You may cite the hours required of the job and ask whether the candidate will have difficulty meeting them (ask of both sexes, however). You may also ask about the candidate's availability for weekend or evening work *if* the job so requires. If the candidate indicates a need for religious observance, this fact cannot be used in the hiring decision unless "reasonable accommodation" for the religious observance would be an "undue hardship" for the university. Specific guidance is available through the Office of Human Resources and Affirmative Action.

Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits **all** questions about a candidate's disability at the pre-offer stage of interview. It is **unacceptable** to ask an interviewee whether he/she is disabled or about the nature of the disability even if, it is an obvious disability. You may however ask a disabled candidate questions about his or her **ability** to perform job-related functions. If the disability is obvious and the interviewee does not wish to address/discuss the disability or does not request reasonable accommodations yet indicates that he/she is able to perform the major functions of the job, it is unlawful to disqualify the candidate – you cannot discriminate on the basis of the person's disability. If you are not certain an interviewee is a person with a disability, you may ask if he/she knows of any reason why he/she would not be able to perform the essential functions of the job he/she is seeking. If the answer is yes and reasons are stated there should be follow up questions regarding possible accommodations that would assist the candidate in performing the major functions of the job.

After a job offer has been made, you can ask about disabilities and conduct medical examinations and the offer can be conditioned on the applicant's answers to the questions and the results of an examination.

Note: The EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Council) takes the position that if the employer reasonably believes an applicant will need accommodation to perform the job, the employer can ask limited questions about the accommodation at the pre-offer stage. However, the employer is still prohibited from asking about the disability itself (excerpted from CUPA, Legal Watch, January 1996).

National Origin

It is acceptable to inquire into a candidate's ability to read, write or speak a foreign language where the position requires those skills. However, it is inadvisable to ask the candidate how he/she acquired these skills if it would disclose national origin or descent.

It is **legal** to ask if a candidate is a U.S. citizen; however, it is **illegal** to require (with very few exceptions) that they be U.S. citizens to be hired. It is also legal to ask an alien if he/she is authorized to work in the U.S. However, you may not ask the candidate to show you specific documents (i.e. green card) to verify work authorization. The candidate, if offered the job, is to present to the employer any combination of legally acceptable documents of his/her choice to establish work authorization within three days of his/her date of hire. (Contact the HR department for listing)

Organizations and Memberships

Inquiries about professional memberships related to the job are acceptable (i.e. Chemical Engineering Society). Questions about organizations whose name or character indicate the member's economic or social class, race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, religion or national origin should be avoided – country clubs, social clubs, religious clubs, fraternal orders, etc.

Never inquire about activities in political or civil rights organizations or ask the applicant whether he/she is involved in discrimination complaints or lawsuits.

It is also inadvisable to ask any questions designed to disclose age, arrest records, credit/financial status, home/car ownership, type of military discharge, political affiliation, sexual orientation or religious beliefs.

The Office of Human Resources and Affirmative Action has resources to assist search committees/administrators to conduct effective interviews and to clarify the legal points in the interview process.

Appendix I
Sample Campus Interview Schedule

Date of Interview	Time	Location
Search Committee		
Department Manager		
Department if applicable		
Meeting w/ Human Resources (15 minutes to review benefits & 45 minutes for an assessment)		

Appendix J
Reference Check Form

The form below is a guide and can be modified. Remember to give candidates advanced notice that you will be checking their references.

- Introduce yourself and state purpose of your call
- Confirm that it is a convenient time to talk
- Briefly describe the position the applicant has applied
- Confirm the relationship between the person giving the reference and the applicant
- Verify basic duties such as job title, duties, salary, dates of employment
- Ask questions related to the position and clarify any unclear or unanswered questions the committee may have about the candidate.
- Be consistent!

Reference Conducted by: _____ Date: _____
Candidate Name: _____ Position Applied for: _____
Reference Name: _____ Relationship to Candidate: _____
University/Company: _____

General Format of Reference Check:

- What was the nature and length of your relationship with the candidate?
- How would you describe the candidate's leadership skills?
- Why did he/she leave the position (if relevant)?
- Is the candidate more of an individual contributor or team-oriented person? Why do you think this?
- How do you think co-workers would describe the candidate?
- How did the candidate deal with conflict?
- What are the candidate's key accomplishments or impact on the organization?
- What is/are the candidate's strength(s)?
- In what area(s) can the candidate continue to improve?
- Did the candidate adhere to leave policies, were they responsible as it relates to attendance/tardiness (frequent absences, tardiness, etc.)? (*When speaking with a manager or something with direct supervision over candidate*)
- Is the candidate eligible for rehire at this time? (*If they left*)
- Is there anything that you think someone considering this person for a job, should know?

Key Contacts for the Search and Hiring Process

Ms. Jessica Murdoch, Associate Vice President of Human Resources & Payroll Services,
Affirmative Action/Title IX Coordinator

jmurdoch@fitchburgstate.edu

978-665-3172

Ms. Kimberly Page, Associate Director of Human Resources

kpage3@fitchburgstate.edu

978-665-3850

Ms. Kelli Lundgren, Assistant to the AVP of Human Resources and Payroll Services

klungren@fitchburgstate.edu

978-665-3172

Ms. Jossy Brack, Onboarding & Benefits Specialist

jbrack@fitchburgstate.edu

978-665-3440

**Please direct all questions regarding Search & Hiring Policy to:
The Office of Human Resources and Payroll Services/Affirmative Action**

Fitchburg State University

160 Pearl Street

Fitchburg, MA 01420

Phone 978-665-3172

Fax 978-665-3720

*This guide is subject to change at the discretion of the President
and/or the Office of Human Resources and Payroll Services/Affirmative Action.*