

# Search & Interview Committee Toolkit



ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY  
EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY/EMPLOYEE RELATIONS  
1000 ASU DR, SUITE 107  
LORMAN, MS 39096

## Contents

Search & Interview Committee Toolkit & Guide Overview .....	3
.....	3
Contact Us .....	3
Affirmative Action Considerations .....	4
What is Affirmative Action? .....	4
As a Hiring Manager, how can you support our affirmative action efforts? .....	4
Committee or Not? .....	5
Committee Members: Duties .....	6
Sample Duties: Search Committee Chair: .....	6
Sample Duties: Search Committee Members .....	6
Implicit Bias .....	8
Addressing Gender Pronouns .....	8
Establishing Criteria .....	9
Application Red Flags .....	10
International Hires .....	11
Reference Checks .....	12
On-Site Interviews .....	13
Interview Notification .....	14
Questions and Topics to Avoid.....	15
Speaking of Small Talk .....	16
Three Types of Questions .....	17
Sample Competencies with Sample Questions .....	18
Experience & Education .....	18
Motivational Fit & Enthusiasm .....	18
Attitude .....	18
Adaptability /Multi-Tasking .....	19
Communication Skills & Professionalism .....	19
Conflict Resolution .....	19
Consultation Skills .....	20
Critical Thinking.....	20
Customer Service Orientation .....	20
Decision Making/Judgment .....	21
Cultural Competency .....	21
Integrity.....	21

Leadership .....	22
Mentorship.....	22
Process Improvement.....	22
Project Management .....	23
Results-Orientation .....	23
Teamwork .....	23
Job Auditions.....	24
Evaluating Candidates .....	25
What Tools Should I Have to Conduct the Interview?.....	26
Resources for Interviews.....	26
Employment Reference Request Form - External .....	26
Employment Reference Request Form - Internal .....	26
Internal Transfer Request form .....	26
Interview Documentation form.....	26
Interview Evaluation Scoring Matrix .....	26
Standard Interview Questions Matrix .....	26
Making the Selection .....	27
Hiring Process .....	28

## Search & Interview Committee Toolkit & Guide Overview

The Office of Human Resources Management (HRM) offers a variety of tools to assist departments in making the best hiring recommendation for your department and Alcorn State University. This toolkit/guide will clarify the roles of committee members, outline best interview practices, provide sample questions and forms, and so on.

Alcorn State University is expressly committed to providing equal employment opportunities without regard to race, color, national or ethnic origin, ancestry age, religion or religious creed, disability or handicap, sex or gender identity and/or expressions, sexual orientation, military or veteran status, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state or local law. Further, the University will not tolerate any instances of harassment/sexual harassment. This policy applies to all employees, regardless of position, consultants and applicants for employment. Additionally, it is the responsibility of all personas making employment decisions to adhere to this policy.

**\*\*All committee members must complete the Search & Interview Committee Virtual Training.**



## Contact Us

If you need additional help with your search or interview committee, the EEO/Employee Relations Manager will be glad to assist you. See contact information below.

Human Resources Management – [hrm@alcorn.edu](mailto:hrm@alcorn.edu), 601-877-6188

Attn: Manager, EEO/Employee Relations

Additional information can also be found on the HRM webpage:

[www.alcorn.edu/humanresourcesmanagement](http://www.alcorn.edu/humanresourcesmanagement)

## Affirmative Action Considerations

Alcorn State University (ASU) offers equal access to employment opportunities to all persons without regard to age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, sex identity, genetic information, religion, race, color, national origin, and/or veteran status pursuant to applicable state and federal law. It is the responsibility of all persons making employment decisions to support this policy and to ensure the work environment is free from discrimination.

### What is Affirmative Action?

- Affirmative Action is based on the premise that over time, and absent discrimination, the University's workforce will reflect the ethnic, racial and gender identification of the labor markets used to recruit applicants.
- As part of affirmative action, we are required to assess our labor markets and identify gaps where minorities, women, veterans and persons with disabilities are underrepresented (i.e. a greater representation in the workforce than at ASU) annually. Those gaps are then translated into goals.
- Goals are created for all EEO job groups for ASU.
- Goals are not quotas.
- Our obligation under affirmative action is to make "good faith efforts" to achieve our goals by increasing the pool of qualified minority, female, veteran, and disabled candidates when recruiting for open positions.
- Examples of ASU's good faith efforts include:
  - Analyzing all job descriptions to ensure descriptions accurately reflect essential functions of the position.
  - Reviewing minimum qualifications of like positions to ensure consistency across departments.
  - Utilizing the Mississippi Department of Employment Services, job fairs and recruiting programs sponsored by local community colleges and other community organizations for placements.
  - Identifying and utilizing targeted recruitment sites for qualified minority and female applicants.

### As a Hiring Manager, how can you support our affirmative action efforts?

- Partner with the Office of HRM to ensure your job descriptions and postings are consistent with like jobs across the University and accurately reflect appropriate minimum qualifications.
- Adhere to University hiring policies.
- Utilize various Recruitment Resources to source applicants.
- Ensure all participants in the hiring process receive Committee Training.
- Do not make any employment decisions based on a protected class.

## Committee or Not?

The use of a committee for staff positions is not required; however, committees are customarily formed for positions with a wide scope of responsibility and/or influence. A committee ensures applicants selected for interview and final consideration are evaluated by more than one individual and minimizes the potential for personal bias.

The Hiring Manager (department supervisor) should identify members who will have direct and indirect interaction with the applicant in the course of their job to participate on the committee. Committees should represent a well-rounded cross section of the staff.

The Hiring Manager should decide how they would like to use a committee throughout the process at the time the position is posted and make those connections and requests early to ensure that the committee members can accept the responsibilities that follow.

There are two different kinds of committees, and a committee can perform a singular function or a combination of both committee functions:

- **Search Committees**
  - Review the applicant pool (entirely) and make recommendations for who should be interviewed to the Hiring Manager.
  - Search Committee members should understand and agree on what the minimum and preferred qualifications are for the position based on the job posting prior to reviewing applications.
- **Interview Committees**
  - Participate in the interview phase (phone and/or in-person) and make recommendations based on the candidates' ability to successfully perform the job.
  - Consider using internal customers, peers, or your HRM Partner when developing an interview committee.

For positions that are frequently recruited using a committee, the mix of members should change frequently, as well, to minimize the risk of "group think" or collective bias.

No more than 3-6 members are recommended for a committee and the composition of the committee should be based on the nature of the position. Consider the following when selecting committee members:

- An individual who has a strong understanding of the role and its contribution to the department.
- A job specialist (technical or functional).
- An individual who will interact closely with the position and/or serves as a main customer.

Committee members must ensure no conflict of interest exists in relation to the applicants under consideration and must never be an applicant him/herself. **Committee members must complete a one-time Search and Interview Committee Virtual training at the start of the process.** Committee members should ensure they are well-equipped for their role in the recruitment process to ensure fairness and compliance.

## Committee Members: Duties

The Hiring Manager and/or committee chair are required to ensure and or verify whether committee members have had Search and Interview Committee training.

This checklist will assist in ensuring that the Chair of the committee is fully informed of the charge of the Search and/or Interview Committee.

### **The Committee Chair is responsible for knowing the following:**

- ✓ Official or approved job title of position
- ✓ Job description
- ✓ Minimum qualifications for candidates
- ✓ Time frame for completing the search
- ✓ Search and Interview Committee Members' Role, Responsibilities, and Code of Conduct
- ✓ Specific duties for chair and individual committee members
- ✓ Minimum number of finalists to interview
- ✓ Screening forms for search committee
- ✓ University hiring process

(Excerpt from *"Search Committees: A Tool Kit for Human Resource Professionals, Administrators, and Committee Members"*)

### **Sample Duties: Search Committee Chair:**

- ✓ Serves as liaison between the committee and the hiring manager (department head)
- ✓ Ensures charge of committee is carried out
- ✓ Sets up and chair all meetings and interviews
- ✓ Maintains all search records throughout the search and provides the file to the appropriate department members
- ✓ Ensures a completed packet is sent to the HRM designee (EEO/Employee Relations Manager).
- ✓ Corresponds with candidates
- ✓ Serves as lead host for candidates brought to campus
- ✓ Performs duties as a regular member and any other duties as assigned by hiring manager

### **Sample Duties: Search Committee Members:**

- ✓ Completes one-time Search and Interview Committee training.
- ✓ Maintains appropriate confidentiality with search materials and proceedings
- ✓ Attends all scheduled meetings and interviews
- ✓ Reviews all candidate materials
- ✓ Reviews all position related materials
- ✓ Treats all candidates fairly and consistently

- ✓ Hosts candidates who come to campus
- ✓ Participates in the interview process
- ✓ Helps check references
- ✓ Other duties as assigned by search committee chair

***For questions, concerns, or additional information, you should contact the EEO/ER Manager in Human Resources Management.***

## Implicit Bias

### Key points to remember:

- Also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.
- These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control.
- Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness.
- The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance.
- These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations.
- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that **favor our own ingroup**, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our ingroup.

*\*Taken from the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Ohio State University*

## Addressing Gender Pronouns

When addressing candidates prior to knowing their preferred gender pronouns:

- Use gender neutral pronouns such as they/them instead of he/him or she/her
- Avoid using Mrs. or Mr., instead just use the person's name
- Do not ask their preferred gender pronoun during the interview process as this is protected information; however, if they share it with you then you should honor their request

## Establishing Criteria

Criteria are the competencies and qualifications you will establish to screen applicants, determine questions, and make decisions. Criteria is based on the minimum and preferred qualifications as taken from the posted job description, including the required knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). KSAs represent competencies needed in the job, such as experience with Microsoft Office or a soft skill like professionalism.

Established criteria must be consistent with the minimum qualifications of the job per the job description.

All applicants who meet the minimum qualifications compose your applicant pool. Once your applicant pool is established, you then need a way to begin evaluating applicants and determining “best qualified” for interviews. Note you are under no obligation to interview every candidate who meets the minimum qualifications for the job. In this stage you may elevate your requirements to begin differentiating candidates. For instance, though only a bachelor’s degree may be required, you may score applicants higher for having master’s degrees.

The stages of criteria include:

1. Using the qualifications on the posted job description, criteria is established. Examples of established criteria include 5 years of related experience, a master’s degree, proficiency in Microsoft Excel, or strong communication skills.
2. Established criteria will be used for the initial screening of applications to determine your applicant pool (meets minimum qualifications) and then to begin evaluating “best qualified” for further consideration.
3. Established criteria will be used to formulate questions for the interview.
4. Established criteria will be used to evaluate candidates and determine your hiring decision.

## Application Red Flags

When reviewing applications/resumes, be on the lookout for red flags. Although red flags themselves are not necessarily reasons for eliminating an applicant from consideration, they may be useful in developing your line of questioning.

Some examples of red flags include:

- Gaps between employment
  - Did this person find themselves unintentionally without a job (i.e., fired), which is why there wasn't continuing employment?
  - Did this person resign from positions without having a new one lined up indicating they impulsively quit?
  - Did this person take another job that didn't work out and didn't put that on their application?
- Short stints at jobs
  - Is this person a job hopper?
- Drastic changes in types of jobs
  - Does this person really want to do something else and is just settling?
  - Has this person been unable to find work in their field?
  - Does this person have a career path or just jobs?
- Career ladder discrepancies
  - Why did they change jobs for a lower-level position or pay cut?
  - Is this a step down for them?
  - Why are they interested?
- Reasons for leaving
  - Are these reasons going to affect their satisfaction in our job as well?
  - Have those reasons been rectified?
  - Do the reasons given match with job changes and dates of changes?
  - Do the reasons show good judgment?
- Indicated preferences (shift, pay, location, etc.)
  - Was this person able to articulate why they were interested in something that may seem undesirable?
- Is this person going to take something just for "a" job but keep looking? Is this person just trying to get a foot in the door and then hope that you will offer the preference desired? Is that going to happen?

Remember: **Red flags are not disqualifiers**; they are subjects to pursue in your questioning and evaluation.

## International Hires

There are many considerations and preparations that must be made when considering International Hires.

A Hiring Manager is not obligated to sponsor applicants for work visas and may reject applicants with such a need. While national origin is a protected class, you are not deciding to not hire because of where the person is from but because you do not wish to or are unable to sponsor the applicant. In other words, priority will be given to candidates that are authorized to work in the U.S. That is allowable under law. In fact, our application asks questions about visa status and sponsorship so that information is available to you as part of your screening process. If the applicant answers yes to requiring visa sponsorship and the Hiring Manager does not have the funds in the budget, that can, in and of itself, be a screening criterion (i.e. anyone who needs sponsorship is automatically eliminated).

**If a candidate will need visa services to work in the United States, the Hiring Manager should consult with the Office of Human Resources Management to determine a candidate's ability to work in the United States or can be provided the appropriate visa to work at ASU. This should be done prior to the candidate becoming a finalist.** International finalists must meet with the Assistant Vice President for Human Resources to review their immigration status and potential additional information needed or communicate via email.

## Reference Checks

Contacting references provided by the candidate is optional and can be done at any stage of the process. As reference checks can be time consuming, it is recommended that they are not completed sooner than after the initial screening as the candidate pool has narrowed to a more reasonable number of applicants at that point.

**If the candidate is currently or previously employed at the University, contacting their current or previous supervisor to conduct a reference check is required. Hiring Managers should reach out to the current or previous supervisor prior to extending an offer.**

A reference check form should be used when checking references in all instances to document the information obtained and to remain consistent through the reference process.

Requests for information from references may be robust and detailed asking about knowledge, skills and abilities. The information requested should mirror the criteria being evaluated. The information gathered should be job-related and should not conflict with the Questions and Topics to Avoid. *Please note that many companies have policies against providing information about the employee so while we may ask you may be unable to get answers, which is typical.*

It is best practice to notify candidates when you are about to begin reference checks. This allows the candidate an opportunity to alert their references that contact will be made, as well as notify their current supervisor of their job search, if needed, as that might be a concern to them.

Note that internal references from an ASU supervisor should be limited to **documented** performance only. It is unacceptable for a current supervisor to relay issues with performance or behavior that have never been discussed with the employee formally, such as in a disciplinary action or a performance evaluation. A supervisor should limit their feedback to the most recent performance evaluation and any active documented counseling. If there are issues with the employee that are not documented, the supervisor should simply respond, “No documented performance/behavior issues.” It is also improper for a supervisor to give a positive reference contrary to performance or behavior issues; for instance, not sharing the issues to transfer the employee out of their area of responsibility. It is important to ensure that the information being shared is fair to all parties involved.

Negative information in a reference is not an automatic disqualifier. Any information obtained is subject to be pursued in your questioning and evaluation of the candidate.

***See Resources for Interviews (pg. 26) for Reference Check forms.***

## On-Site Interviews

All committee members and others involved in the interview and selection of candidates must complete a one-time committee training. Hiring Managers or committees can use **Sample Competencies with Sample Questions (Pg. 18)** to craft an interview script for interviews. The interview questions are to be established in advance, based on the criteria established, and should be asked to each candidate being interviewed for consistent evaluation. This criterion should be added to the **Standard Interview Questions Matrix** and should be tailored to the specific position based on the qualifications and essential functions of the posted job description.

The Hiring Manager and/or their proxy (ex., administrative assistant or committee chair) is responsible for scheduling interviews. Considerations when scheduling interviews:

- Who will participate in the interviews and what role will they play?
- Where and when will the interviews be held?
- If assistance with disability accommodations is needed, contact the EEO/ER Manager.

You want to accomplish 3 things in an interview:

1. Obtain information about the candidate's qualifications to determine if they meet the established criteria.
2. Provide information about the job and University to the candidate.
3. Document the interview on an evaluation form.

### Establish rapport

- Greet the applicant with a pleasant smile and handshake.
- Make appropriate small talk ("Did you find us ok?"). Be advised, the Questions and Topics to Avoid apply even in small talk.
- Explain who you are and how the interview process will work.

### Gather information

- Refer to *Questions and Topics to Avoid*.
- Verify specific information on the application/resume.
- Verify that the applicant is interested in the position available (hours, pay, travel, location, etc.).
- Gain information by using the Sample Competencies with Sample Questions.
- Be sure to ask the same questions to all candidates.

### Sell the job

- Encourage the candidate to ask questions and answer the questions as honestly as possible. Keep in mind that we do not want to mislead candidates. The more accurately you describe the job, environment and expectations, both pros and cons, the less surprises there are for new hires. Telling about the challenges of the job can be just as important as selling the good, but of course you want to emphasize the positives over the negatives.

### Close

- Thank the candidate for their time. Explain the next step in the process so the candidate knows what to expect and when it will be.

### Evaluation

- Complete the Interview Evaluation immediately following the interview while your impression is still fresh.

## Interview Notification

When scheduling interviews with candidates, the best recommendation is to contact each candidate by phone to make the arrangements and then follow up via e-mail. When you follow up in writing, it is recommended that you utilize a professional notification with complete information about the interview process so that the candidate can prepare accordingly. The email should include date, time, and location. See example below.

**Subject:** Invitation to Interview

Dear Jane Applicant,

Thank you for applying for the position of office administrator with ABC Company in Minneapolis, MN.

We would like to invite you to come to our office to interview for the position. Your interview has been scheduled for May 1, 20XX, 1 pm, at 123 Main Street, Minneapolis, MN 55199.

Please call me at 651-555-6666 or email me at johnsmith@abccompany.com if you have any questions or need to reschedule.

Sincerely,

John Smith

---

John Smith  
Regional Manager  
ABC Company  
123 Main Street, Minneapolis, MN 55199  
651-555-6666  
johnsmith@abccompany.com

## Questions and Topics to Avoid

Employment law prohibits making employment decisions based on the following:

Age	Sex	Sexual Orientation
Disability	Pregnancy	Gender Identity
Genetic Information	Religion	Race
Color	National Origin	Veteran Status

Any questions relating to these areas should **never** be asked. Some examples of questions/topics to avoid are “Where are you from originally?” (national origin), “Where do you go to church?” (religion), “How old are you?” (age), or “Do you intend to have children?” (pregnancy). You also want to be mindful of how you phrase things: “We are looking for a recent college graduate” (age) or “young and energetic” (age) or “man’s work” (sex).

### Other areas to avoid:

Marital status	Number of children	Arrest record
Military discharge	Economic status	Mode of transportation
Medical problems	Attendance at previous jobs	

The bottom line is that these areas are not job-related. Anyone can be arrested but that doesn’t mean they were guilty; the background check provides us with any information we should know. How a person gets to work is irrelevant if they indicate that they **can** get to work. Therefore, instead of asking if they have children or have a car- something that may concern you about their ability to get to work reliably- you should ask instead if they can meet the work schedule. Also, asking questions about attendance issues at previous jobs can be tricky as it may reveal medical conditions, something you shouldn’t ask about or discriminate against. Your questions should stick to if the candidate is able and willing to perform the duties of the position.

However, even if you don’t ask, it is possible that the person might offer the information on their own. If this occurs:

- Do not write the information down
- Do not pursue the subject with the applicant
- Do not discuss amongst the committee members
- Do not base your decision on that information
- Get help from Human Resources Management

Remember: Use care in crafting your questions, sticking closely to the job-related criteria you’ve established.

### **CAUTION**

Please remember that ALL time spent with the candidate is considered part of their interview. For example, even time such as taking the candidate to lunch or dinner and transporting the candidate to interviews or from the airport. Treat all interactions with the candidates as part of the interview process. Seemingly harmless small talk is where protected information is most likely to be revealed and once it is out there, it’s out there.

## Speaking of Small Talk

Small talk is intended to be harmless: “How was the traffic?” “Wow, that’s some rain we’ve been having.” Traffic, weather and sports are usually safe topics.

Small talk becomes problematic when it ventures into the topics to avoid “We have the same alma mater. When did you graduate?” “You have an interesting accent. Where did you grow up?” “I see that you’re limping. What happened?” “It looks like you’re expecting. How many kids do you have?” Even though small talk usually takes place outside of the formal interview process, the information is still being asked and shared nonetheless, so it carries the same risks as if these topics were questions in the actual interviews.

### **What if the candidate is freely sharing the information?**

Even if you didn’t ask, the topics are still off-limits. If the candidate brings up a topic to avoid, redirect the conversation.

## Three Types of Questions

### Open-Ended

- Allows candidate to open up and respond freely.
- Generally begins with “explain how,” “tell me about,” etc.
- Use open ended questions to
  - Collect information
  - Promote discussion and expand on ideas
  - Personality insight

### Closed

- Allows interviewer to receive a specific response.
- “Yes” or “No” or limited response (such as “five years”)
- Generally begins with “have you,” “do you,” “how much,” etc.
- Use closed questions to
  - Gain clear understanding of remarks
  - Substantiate understanding

### Behavioral-Interviewing

- Based on the premise that the best predictor of future performance is past performance.
- Questions are formulated based on the criteria established for the position (as defined by the interview evaluation)
- Use behavioral-interview questions to surmise experience, or lack of
  - Was the candidate able to give an example that demonstrates experience?
  - Did the candidate handle the described situation well?
  - Is their experience relatable to our environment?
  - Were they able to give multiple examples to reaffirm experience level?
- Traditional interview question: “What is your leadership style?” vs. Behavioral interview question: “Tell me about a time when you successfully coached an underperforming employee.”
- Requires the candidate to demonstrate their experience and decision making as opposed to telling you what they think is the right answer.

## Sample Competencies with Sample Questions

The following is a list of sample job-related criteria used to evaluate candidates along with a brief explanation of what the criteria is used to measure. In addition, sample questions are provided to guide you in determining how to probe the criteria for effective evaluation. Keep in mind that you are not limited to the criteria or questions provided in this guide; these are for sample purposes only.

***For review of alternative questions, please contact the EEO/ER Manager in Human Resources Management.***

**Experience & Education-** Goal is to find if candidate's past has helped prepare them for the available position. Do they have the required education and experience?

- Describe the responsibilities of your former position?
- Tell me about your experience with...
- What was your specific role in the process?
- What sort of projects did you work on at school that helped prepare you for...?

**Motivational Fit & Enthusiasm-** Gauges how well the person 'fits' the job. Will they be happy and satisfied? Are they going to get what they are looking for out of this position? Is it going to help them reach their future goals? Are they going to be personally fulfilled in this position? Is the person excited about the job or are they just looking for "a" job? You can gauge also from the type of questions the candidate asks (if any asked at all).

- Why does this job interest you?
- What are you expecting to gain from this position?
- How do you feel about taking on these responsibilities?
- What are you looking for out of a job?
- What part of your work gives you the greatest feeling of satisfaction?
- What has been your favorite/worst job and why?
- What type of environment do you prefer to work in?
- What are your future career goals?

**Attitude-** Demonstrates that they can accept criticism and take accountability for actions. Do they try to rectify situations and are they generally positive and upbeat about work situations?

- Can you give an example of a time when you have received negative feedback about your job performance? How did you react?
- What frustrates you the most about your current position? Can you give an example of how you have dealt with this frustration in the past?
- When was the last time you made a big mistake? What did you do?
- Have you ever taken a substantial risk that has failed? What was it? What did you learn?
- Have you ever had an experience turning a problem into a success? Tell me about it.

**Adaptability /Multi-Tasking-** Assessing a person's ability to adapt to change and handle multiple different job duties at once. Are they "slow and steady" or do they have the ability to quickly change gears and not be overwhelmed by constant interruption and requests for help?

- Give me examples of how you've gone above and beyond in your current job?
- Sometimes we are asked to solve problems without the proper resources and tools. Do you have an example of when this has happened? What did you do?
- Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.
- How do you handle a challenge? Give me an example.
- Tell us about a situation in which you had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?
- Describe one of the most difficult, challenging, demanding, or frustrating work experiences you have faced. Why was it so difficult? How did you handle the situation? What did you learn from the situation?

**Communication Skills & Professionalism-** In this assessment you are looking for the 3 main behaviors that affect patient satisfaction: communication, listening and respect. A lot of this is observable. Does the candidate communicate on a level appropriate for the job? Did the candidate make eye contact? Were their answers appropriate for the questions? Did they listen attentively or interrupt you? Do they have a demeanor of confidence? Do they understand what proper business behavior is?

- What do you do when you don't understand your supervisor's instructions?
- Tell me about a time when you struggled to communicate with someone.
- Tell me about a difficult patient you had to care for. What made them difficult? How did you respond? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a specific experience that illustrates your ability to influence another person verbally. Feel free to use an example that involved changing an attitude, selling a product/idea, or being persuasive.
- Sometimes we are misunderstood by other people. Has this ever happened to you? How did you respond, and what were the results? What did you do to prevent this from happening again?
- Give me an example of a time you had to explain a financial concept to a non-financial audience. What were the results?

**Conflict Resolution-** Assesses a person's ability to reason through multiple viewpoints. Do they listen for concerns from all sides? Do they work to improve situations or are they passive aggressive and blame others?

- Tell me about the last argument you had with a coworkers. What was it about?
- Describe a situation when someone put you in the middle of an ongoing argument. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you disagreed with a decision by your manager or other leaders. Why did you disagree? What did you do about it?

**Consultation Skills** – Goal is to find out how well the person can interact with various customers, handle tough situations, gain credibility and respect, and be influential.

- Tell me about a time you disagreed with a customer on how to resolve an issue. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- Give an example when you persuaded management to do something they were first reluctant to do. What was the result?
- Have you ever had to "sell" an idea to a customer or a group? How did you do it? Did they "buy" it?
- How do you go about establishing rapport with a customer? What have you done to gain their confidence? Give an example.
- Have you ever had to introduce a policy change to your work group? How did you do it?
- Have you ever met resistance when implementing a new idea or policy to a work group? How did you deal with it? What happened?

**Critical Thinking-** Assesses if a person can see the bigger and smaller pictures to address problems. Are they able to transfer ideas from one problem to another? Have they learned from past successes and failures to improve performance?

- Describe an institutional goal- such as improving admissions- not easily applied to your office. What have you done to work toward this goal in your office's daily activities?
- Give me an example of a time when you developed or recognized new thinking or trends that were helpful to your organization.
- Tell me about a time you had to plan a complex project.
- Think of a problem you have addressed by focusing on the underlying process rather than on isolated events. Describe the approach you took.
- Tell me about one major obstacle you overcame in your last job. How did you deal with it?

**Customer Service Orientation-** In this assessment you are looking for a service attitude. Is the person eager to help and willing to go above and beyond? Can they diffuse negative situations? Will they relentlessly hunt down answers and solutions? Do they have a mature problem-solving attitude?

- Provide an example of a time in which you had to use your fact-finding skills to gain information for solving a problem
- Tell me about a time that you helped resolve a particularly difficult customer issue.
- Describe the most creative way you have solved a customer's problem
- Tell us about recent success you had with an especially difficult employee/co-worker.
- Please describe a time when you were working with a customer (internal or external) and were not able to give them what was originally requested. How did you approach this customer? What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you worked with a demanding customer. In what ways was this customer demanding and how did you go about working with this person. What was the outcome?

**Decision Making/Judgment-** Indicates ability to make appropriate decisions in a thoughtful way. Does the candidate have the ability to work in an environment of uncertainty and change? Do they take action to achieve goals and go beyond what is required? Can they demonstrate ability to exercise discretion and judgment in matters of sensitive or confidential nature?

- Tell us about a time you made a mistake. What did you do? How did you handle it?
- What was the toughest decision you had to make in your last position?
- Tell me about a decision you made that you later regretted.
- Tell me about a termination decision you did or didn't make. What would you do differently now?
- How do you handle last minute changes?
- Tell me about a major change in your previous position and how you dealt with it.
- Describe a project or idea you originated.
- What kind of changes did you make in your past positions?
- What personal standards have you set for yourself? How do you keep from falling short?
- What do you do when you disagree with a decision your manager has made?
- Have you ever missed a deadline? Why?
- Tell me about a time you didn't complete your work. What did you do about it?
- Have you ever been in a seemingly impossible position with resource constraints, such as lack of staff, time or budget to complete a project? How did you handle that?

**Cultural Competency-** The goal is to assess their appreciation of various backgrounds. Are they sensitive to the feelings of others? Do they make special efforts to demonstrate respect in terms of actions and words? Are they adaptable to customers and coworkers with different needs, values and opinions? Or do they express stereotypes or biases about people?

- Tell me about a time you had to adapt to work with a person from a different cultural background. What did you do and what were the results?
- Give me an example of a time when communication with a customer or coworkers was difficult. How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation when you worked with a person whose personal beliefs were the opposite of yours. How did you deal with it?
- Tell me about a time when you were able to step into another person's shoes in order to discover their unique perspective.
- Have you ever had a time when you felt it was necessary to compromise your own immediate interest in order to fulfill another person's needs? Tell me about it.

**Integrity-** Assesses whether a person takes personal responsibility for their actions. Do they take personal pride in professionalism? Will they respect confidentiality of customers and peers?

- Tell me about a situation in which you were called upon to keep a promise or confidence.
- Give me an example of a time when you chose to speak up for others when they were not present.
- When was the last time you "broke the rules"? Why did you do so?

- Tell me about a time when you asked forgiveness for doing something wrong?
- Share an example of a problem created for you by someone else. How did you handle it? What were the results?
- Have you ever had no control over circumstances, yet were responsible for the final outcome? What did you do? What were the results?

**Leadership-** The goal is to find out if the person demonstrates the ability to motivate the team and make good decisions. Are they someone who acts as a role model and leads by example? Are they someone who understands the role of a leader? Are they proactive problem solvers who seek feedback?

- What have you done to improve your leadership skills over the last year?
- What personal standards do you hold yourself to as a leader?
- Tell me about a time when you were successfully able to turn a failing employee around.
- If you took your manager's position tomorrow, how would you improve the department?
- Tell me about a tough employee relations situation you've had to deal with.
- What has been your experience in dealing with poor performing employees? Give me an example.
- Describe how you have involved staff in performance improvement initiatives and other decisions pertinent to their work.
- How do you make constructive feedback motivational?
- What was the toughest business decision you ever had to make?
- Have you ever had to implement an unpopular decision? What steps did you take? What was the outcome?
- Why have you chosen to be in management?

**Mentorship-** The goal is to determine if they work collaboratively with peers and share knowledge.

- Give me an example of a time when you came up with a clever way to motivate your colleagues.
- Tell me about a time when you acknowledged or celebrated the success of yourself or others.
- Have you ever been a mentor? Describe a situation when you worked with someone to successfully improve their performance.

**Process Improvement-** Assesses whether they apply a systematic, logical, and reasonable approach to analyzing situations. Are they confident in assuming authority? Can they function comfortably without a structured agenda? Are they motivated to address problems?

- Have you ever made suggestions for improving your work process? Describe what you did and how you achieved results.
- Tell me about a time when your supervisor presented you with a new process for doing something and gave you the task of implementing and evaluating that process. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you were faced with a situation where there was no clear policy or procedure to follow. What did you do? What were the results?

- Have there been any large changes within your current organization? Tell me about one change that affected your job. How did you react?
- Tell me about a problem that you identified and resolved by using a systematic approach.

**Project Management-** Assessing a person's experience and ability to manage projects.

- Describe a project you have recently managed? What role did you play? What were you trying to accomplish? What barriers did you encounter? What was the result?
- How do you ensure a project stays on track? What tools do you use to plan your activities?
- In your experience, what are important skills for a project manager to be successful?
- Tell me how you schedule projects and establish timelines.

**Results-Oriented-** In this assessment, you are identifying if the person is capable of seeing the big picture and how all the pieces and parts contribute to the end goal. Are they able to identify when something doesn't make sense and needs to be changed or are they solely process focused? Do they have initiative to get things done?

- Describe a project or idea that was implemented primarily because of your efforts. What was your role? What was the outcome?
- What impact did you have in your last job?
- What projects have you started on your own recently? What prompted you to get started?
- Give some instances in which you anticipated problems and were able to influence a new direction.
- Being innovative sometimes means getting away from the same old way of thinking. Tell me about a time when you were able to break away from the traditional way of thinking to come up with new ideas.
- Give me examples of how you've gone above and beyond in your current job?

**Teamwork-** The goal is to determine if they are successful being a part of a team. Can they distinguish between their own efforts and contributions made by others? Are they acknowledging and proud of team efforts? Can they maintain a positive attitude through disagreements and resolve conflicts appropriately? Will they follow through on explicit/implicit promises and commitments?

- Describe a situation in which you accomplished something as a member of a team. What was the team's purpose? What was your role?
- Describe a time when you were able to help a coworker solve a problem or improve their performance?
- What is the main strength or "natural style" that you bring to a team? Describe a specific situation and how your work style affected the team's decision.
- Give me an example of a time when you confronted a negative attitude successfully, with the result of building teamwork and morale.
- Give me an example of an occasion when you have done something for others in the organization without being asked or told to do so.

## Job Auditions

A job audition is when you require, as part of the interview process, the candidate to perform some job-related activity to demonstrate their competence. Examples include:

- Conducting a presentation (could be used to assess presentation skills and/or subject matter expertise).
- Sharing examples of past work products (examples might be an advertising campaign or fundraiser they worked on, something they've written such as a policy or program or article, or a training class they developed.)
- In-basket exercises (During the test, the applicant is given mail, telephone messages, documents and memos that they have a limited period of time to set priorities, organize their working schedule accordingly and respond to mail and phone calls.)
- Demonstrating ability to utilize computer systems, such as creating a spreadsheet
- A writing sample

If the person needs to prepare for the job audition in advance, this information should be included as part of the Interview Notification. Give specifics as to what is expected, time and length, as well as any resource considerations (such as file types for presentations or equipment that will be made available).

***For example:***

***Please be prepared to give a brief presentation (10 minutes) on the topic of Leadership- your philosophy and recommended approach. The format and overall content for this presentation is what you would like for it to be – no content requirements. You may e-mail your PowerPoint (if applicable) in advance to [eeo@alcorn.edu](mailto:eeo@alcorn.edu) so we will have it ready and available for you at the time of your interview. If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to Ms. Doe at 601-877-5\*\*\*.***

Other examples of job auditions include:

- Applicants for an administrative assistant position are asked to edit a piece of written correspondence, complete a purchase requisition and/or fill out a travel voucher.
- Applicants for positions in public relations, communications or marketing may be asked to write a press release responding to a reporter's written questions and/or provide feedback on a draft brochure intended for the general public.

If a job audition is included in the process, it should align with the criteria established for the job. For instance, an administrative assistant applicant's performance on a Microsoft Excel task should be used to rate the established criteria of experience or their performance on an in-basket exercise should be used to rate the established criteria of organization skills.

If using a job audition as part of your process, it is recommended that you consult with Human Resources Management.

## Evaluating Candidates

Interview evaluations should be completed immediately following the interview while your memory is still fresh. Keeping track of candidates may be difficult, and relying on memory is risky and inefficient. Using an Interview Evaluation not only gives you the opportunity to record information about the candidates but also ensures that you evaluate each candidate using the same job-related criteria. A structured evaluation form used for all applicants also helps eliminate interview bias.

When completing an evaluation:

### 1. Identify useful information

Record information related to each criteria. The best information is “evidence statements,” which are precise sentences or phrases used by the applicant.

*Evidence is clear if...*

- It is specific and factual
- It makes sense
- It enables understanding of the situation, opinion, or thought being conveyed

*Evidence is relevant if...*

- It pertains to one or more of the established criteria identified in the posted job description
- *Evidence is adequate if...*
- You have obtained enough evidence for each job-related criteria to make a hiring decision.

### 2. Assess applicants

Rate applicants against the established criteria.

A simple rating scale might be (optional):

Exceeds Criteria (E): Evidence shows that the applicant’s skills and competencies go beyond what is required to do the job.

Meets Criteria (M): Evidence suggests that the applicant will be able to perform at an acceptable level with respect to the established criteria.

Does Not Meet Criteria (D): Evidence suggests that the applicant would not be able to perform at an acceptable level with respect to the established criteria.

#### Stick to Established Criteria when Evaluating Candidates

Use care in noting your impressions of the candidates on evaluations. For instance, comments such as “accent is too thick” or “not sure they could meet the physical demands of the job” are veering into protected categories that could be construed as discriminatory. Refer to the Questions and Topics to Avoid section as your guide for what aspects are to be avoided and stick to evaluating established criteria to ensure all assessments are job related. When in doubt, get help from HRM.

## What Tools Should I Have to Conduct the Interview?

It is the responsibility of the committee chair to ensure that all members that are conducting the interviews have the following:

- Approved Job Description
- Application/Resume of Candidate
- Standard Interview Questions Matrix (The questions should be listed in the spaces provided.)
- Interview Evaluation Scoring Matrix

**Note: The same question should be asked for all candidates. This will ensure fairness throughout the interview process.**

### Resources for Interviews

Employment Reference Request Form - External

Employment Reference Request Form - Internal

Internal Transfer Request form

Interview Documentation form

Interview Evaluation Scoring Matrix

Standard Interview Questions Matrix

## Making the Selection

Congratulations! You have completed the screening, interviewing and evaluation process and are ready to make a selection.

1. Collect interview evaluations from all parties who participated in the interview process. Discuss and/or clarify any issues or concerns resulting from the evaluations before finalizing your decision.
2. Compare and contrast your candidate feedback to the established criteria. Who is the best candidate? Why? Is your decision fully job-related? If you have concerns, get help from HRM.
3. Determine if more information is needed. For instance, you may wish to bring your top candidate(s) back for a follow-up interview if there are still lingering questions or doubts.
4. Provide a summary of the interviews on the **Interview Documentation form**.
5. **Create a file- either electronic or paper- to store all of the forms and documentation used as part of the process and submit to the EEO/Employee Relations Manager in HRM.** This documentation must be kept on file for a minimum of 3 years. This documentation will be used to support the hiring decision should it later be challenged, such as through a discrimination claim. You only want to keep the official documentation, such as screening matrix, interview evaluations, reference checks and selection documentation. Handwritten notes from the interview, for instance, can be discarded as the relevant information is provided on the interview evaluation.
6. Refer to the Hiring Process on HRM Employment Resources Page.

*Remember: PeopleAdmin sends notifications at any point in the process as soon as the applicant's status is changed to "Not Hired." Notifying candidates in a timely manner that they are no longer in consideration is respectful and considerate. 'Do not leave people hanging.'*

## Hiring Process

Timely completion of the new hire paperwork takes effort from the Hiring Manager (responsible for the EPAF and Management of the Requisition). Per policy for staff and faculty hiring, committee members conduct interviews, selects a candidate for hire, completes the approval to hire template, attaches candidates' application and submits to the Vice President of the Department and the President for review and approval.

Once the completed documents have been submitted to HRM:

- Complete a Hiring Proposal in People Admin
- An offer letter will be sent to the candidate. The offer letter must be signed and returned to HRM within 5 business days, or the offer is rescinded.

If the candidate is transferring from another department within the university, an Internal Transfer Request form, with signatures of the transferring employee, present supervisor, hiring manager (new department), and Unit VP, must be submitted to the Office of Human Resources Management before the official offer letter issued.

***See Workflows and Hiring Process for the full hiring process or you may contact HRM for further guidance.***