

# Hiring Review Report

## Executive Summary

January 13, 2004

**Purpose:** This committee was asked to review certain hiring practices and processes employed in the Division of Academic Affairs during the 2002-2003 academic year and to make recommendations concerning the improvement of such processes.

### How the review was conducted:

- The review committee consisted of Dr. Mary Ann Rose, Dr. Robert J. Thompson, and Mr. Harvey Lineberry. Mr. Lineberry left the university on November 21, 2003, but shared his thoughts based on his participation to that date with the remaining members. He also reviewed the final report and concurs with its recommendations.
- The committee interviewed 27 people in person, spoke with 2 others by phone, and offered opportunities to meet with the committee to 3 others.
- The committee reviewed six administrative hires and eight faculty hires within the Division of Academic Affairs.
- The committee wishes to note that it received the assistance and cooperation of the people consulted willingly. It thanks them for that help.

### Findings:

- **Administrative Hires:** Please note that these findings reflect only the aspects of the searches in which procedural problems or issues were identified. Not every administrative search examined is reflected in these findings.
  - In two cases, waivers for administrative hires were requested and granted. The authority to grant waivers has been delegated to the EEO Officer after provision of "...a complete, detailed explanation outlining the need for special permission..." Such waivers may be granted for "Chief Executive or Academic Officer hire of core staff in negotiated arrangements" or for "Programs of Strength Wavier: Stellar candidates with expertise in area currently unrepresented within the university." (ECU Guidelines for Recruitment and Selection of EPA Faculty and Administrators, p. 6). The documentation provided to support these waiver requests was minimal at best. Moreover, the EEO officer did not perceive herself to be in a position to question the appropriateness of the requested waivers or to consult with the appropriate administrative supervisor.
  - In two searches for administrators only 30 day searches were held. While the length of these searches was approved, the resulting candidate pools were comparatively small.
  - In two administrative searches, the individuals who were eventually hired participated in an advisory capacity while at their previous institution in the development of the position descriptions for which they subsequently applied. While this is not a violation

of policy as the positions were new to the university, it raises questions about their comparative advantage over other candidates.

- In one administrative hire carrying faculty rank, the home department was not appropriately involved in the faculty personnel portion of the hiring process and the individual who was hired as a tenure-track faculty member was not appropriately notified of the time limitations on extensions of the probationary term appointment as would be required given the associated administrative role.
- In one administrative hire, members of the search committee were called away from the campus on the day of the interview and were unable to participate in the scheduled interview. The candidate who was scheduled to be interviewed was thus not officially interviewed by the search committee, but was eventually hired without meeting with the search committee.
- In one administrative hire, the candidate stayed overnight at the residence of a member of the search committee.
- In one administrative hire, the successful candidate made at least one visit to the campus prior to the submission of the application materials and met with campus officials during that visit.
- In one administrative hire, the search committee believed the applicants to be of such diverse strength that only one was invited to campus while two others were interviewed by telephone. This resulted in substantial differential treatment of the candidates.
- **Faculty Hires:** Please again note that these findings reflect only the aspects of the searches in which procedural problems or issues were identified. Not every faculty search examined is reflected in these findings.
  - In one faculty hire, the unit was granted the position after an individual's availability became known to university officials. An abbreviated search was held and the proposed person was hired. The subsequent salary authorized by Academic Affairs for the faculty member created a significant salary equity issue within the hiring unit given the person's rank against the recommendation of the department chair.
  - In one hire, an individual was given a faculty title and 1310 funds were used even the hiring unit is not an academic unit and the individual was not assigned to an academic home department.
  - In one faculty hire, a tenure track appointment was made after a very abbreviated search and unit faculty involvement procedures were not followed.

**Recommendations:** The review committee recommends the following changes to university hiring practices. The committee did find instances where waivers were granted on questionable grounds, where search committees did not follow established university policies, and where university officials were placed in position of potential conflict of interest or intimidation in the carrying out of their responsibilities. The following changes to university hiring practices are recommended to decrease the likelihood of the issues raised above from occurring in the future.

- Waivers from EEO Policy regarding searches for faculty and EPA administrators.
  - More elaborate documentation of the justifications for such requests should be developed prior to the granting of waiver approvals.
  - If such waivers are negotiated in the hiring of an administrator, then documentation of that negotiation should be provided to the EEO Officer.
  - Counter approval signatures from outside the requesting office should be required. The committee suggests that the appropriate signature would be that of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources.
  - An annual comparative report should be submitted to the Board of Trustees with indications of reasoning for the waiver and on what basis it was granted.
  - An overall review of approved waivers should be conducted to determine if there is a broader issue that should possibly be addressed. The use of waivers in the searches the committee reviewed seems to be indicative of a pattern that has increased significantly in the past year or so and may speak to a larger item of concern.
- Search Processes
  - Every search committee should receive a consistent administrative charge and guide regarding effective search processes and encouraged to contact knowledgeable EEO officials if process questions arise.
  - Faculty appointment procedures should be assiduously followed.
- EEO Office
  - The EEO Office and the personnel staffing it have an obligation to be the independent employment watchdogs for the university. This is a difficult, but crucial role with in the university.
  - The EEO Office must be supported in that role by the senior administration of the university and they must act according to that role even if not so supported.
- Existing and future university administrators should act in ways that preserve not only the actuality of fairness in institutional hiring practices, but also the public perception of their fairness.
- The University should reinforce publicly that this review is not about the candidates who were selected for these positions, but about the processes employed in their hiring. It has been obvious during our review that the university gained some outstanding people and risks losing them as a result of recent issues and uncertainty of their security here as valued and productive members of this institution.