

WSU Search Advocate Program



Weber State University is an institution dedicated to the improvement of educational access and quality by creating an environment where all are welcome, and opportunities are available for students, faculty, and staff to reach their full potential. We are proud to be a university that works to be a safe and inclusive place for all identities. Weber State is committed to working toward the elimination of disparities in educational outcomes for underserved and underrepresented students. One way we are able to significantly accomplish that goal is through increasing the diversity of our faculty and staff.

Why is a focus on diversity in hiring important?

Diverse workforces are better at innovation, creativity, problem-solving and effectively addressing implicit biases within organizations.

The purpose of Weber State's Search Advocate (SA) program is to expand candidate pools, enhance equity, and mitigate bias often found throughout the hiring process. Through the program, members of Weber's hiring committees participate in unconscious bias training and are given practical strategies to build in inclusivity and equity at every stage of the hiring process - from creating job descriptions and building hiring committees to interviewing and screening candidates. The Search Advocate program, a part of WSU Human Resources, provides guidance and resources to the hiring manager while HR supports the process through the advertising and recruiting efforts of the positions. Designed to encourage a variety of applicants to apply, the Search Advocate program has been successful at various institutions around the country.

We know equity-minded initiatives cannot be isolated to one area of the institution. True change happens when equity values are integrated throughout each and every area on campus. The outcomes listed above are in line with efforts to help address institutional policies and procedures. This will begin to bring about the changes needed to our organizational culture and university systems that are necessary to address institutional disparities.

Weber State University Human Resources

Search Advocate Phase 1: Building a Search Committee

One simple and practical step we can take in building equity into our hiring practices is to utilize a cross-functional hiring committee. Below are a few basic guidelines to help ensure unconscious biases are minimized during the hiring process.

When you consider a diverse committee, please remember diversity includes a wide range of cultural and identity factors, including: race, religion, sexual orientation/identity, ability/disabilities, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographic location, gender identity and expression, and more.

- ❑ Ensure each committee member has participated in the Unconscious Bias & Hiring training from Human Resources and the Office of Workplace Learning.
- ❑ Ideal size of committee: 4 to 6 people, depending on position
 - *Choosing size and members is dependent on what is necessary to ensure the committee is representative of the organization and position's interests while simultaneously minimizing the time and resources needed to fill a position.*
 - *Hiring committees should represent a variety of characteristics and people, including not only people from often overlooked and underrepresented groups, but also staff members from other departments.*
- ❑ Choose two members to be area experts who represent the content and competency for the position being hired.
- ❑ *When possible/appropriate:* Choose two members who complement the area experts, particularly those who would partner with the department, provide another perspective on the same discipline, or a person whom the position would regularly interact with outside the department (i.e. when searching for a Human Resource position, perhaps bring in a person from Payroll and the AA/EO office).

*OSU Search Advocate Handbook & Resources

<https://www.apadivisions.org/division-18/sections/veterans/diversity-hiring-toolkit.pdf>
<https://hr.uw.edu/diversity/hiring/checklist-for-interviewing-hiring-committees/>

Search Advocate Phase 2: Drafting a Position Description

WSU's Commitment to Diversity *(automatically included in system posting)*

Weber State University is an Equal Opportunity Employer committed to creating an inclusive environment by welcoming all individuals, including culturally diverse staff, faculty, and student body. WSU Values every individual by embracing all identities through the promotion of belonging, creativity, and uniqueness. We strive to create environments which are welcoming, inclusive, and equitable for all. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to protected categories, such as disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, national origin, veterans status, or others as required by law and university policy (see Weber State University Policy & Procedure Manual 3-32).

Position Summary Paragraph

- Brief overview of university, hiring unit, and mission/impact of the position.
- 3-5 sentences: Focus on the impact this position will create on your department for the future. Write conversationally and be careful of jargon or [gender-coded words](#).

Position Duties

- Top 3-5 functions of the position
- Use specific present-tense action verbs
- Describe the work, not the worker
- Bullet-points preferred *

Required Qualifications

- Measurable minimum quals - such as degrees/certifications, etc.
- Stick to "must-have's" - what is essential to the position
- Describe the work, not the worker
- Bullet-points preferred *

Preferred Qualifications

The shorter this list the better. We may unintentionally exclude individuals from underrepresented backgrounds as they are less likely to apply for jobs unless they meet 100% of the qualifications. By keeping this list short, it will naturally expand the candidate pool.

- Skills to help enhance performance
- Ensure each qualification relates to essential job functions
- 3-4 preferred qualifications suggested
- Bullet-points preferred *

** Bullet points naturally lean toward clarity and cleanness in expectations and impact of the role. Bullet points also increase accessibility in communication, particularly for the visually-impaired or in instances where English is a non-native language.*

Search Advocate Phase 2: Drafting a Position Description

A successful candidate will:

- Be willing to ...
- What sort of skills would you want a candidate to learn or develop in the future to meet the desired impact of the position
- Focus on impact - skills can be learned/taught
- Use this to open the door to candidates being able to envision themselves in the role which will naturally attract a greater amount of candidates.
 - Create a compelling picture of how a candidate can grow in their professional life while aligning with the desired impact of this position in the future. By focusing on potential impact instead of past behaviors you are more likely to reach the goals you have set for your department in a variety of ways.*

Benefits

- Include a few benefits to help increase the appeal of the role, such as insurance, retirement, wellness, tuition waivers, season tickets, etc.
- WSU HR is currently building out a section of our website to direct prospective hires to during the marketing phase. It will be dedicated to showing off the benefit of living in the Northern Utah/Rocky Mountain Wasatch area with the goal of creating consistent marketing for all job positions.

A few things to consider:

- Avoid or limit arbitrary numeric measures such as number of years - these privilege quantity, not necessarily - and sometimes at the expense of - quality.
- Use words like “should” instead of “must”.
- Keep required and preferred qualifications as open as possible and suggest multiple ways to meet them - such as “BA/BS in a natural resources discipline **or other combination** of relevant education and experience”.
- Treat required qualifications as the first steps in screening, not the last - limiting these does not lessen the quality or rigor of the search.
- Identify** both key “technical” skills—*what they must do*—and crucial “performance” skills—*how they will do it*. Performance skills are almost always transferable; examples include teamwork, persistence, organization, creativity, problem-solving, conflict management, consensus-building, leadership, understanding formal and informal systems, multi-tasking, intercultural communications, navigating complex organizations, etc.

Search Advocate Phase 2: Sample Position Description

WSU Commitment to Diversity Statement (*automatically included in system posting*)

Assistant Professor in Child & Family Studies

Job Description

The Department of Child and Family Studies at Weber State University is seeking applications for a tenure-track Assistant Professor position. The tenure-track position includes a full-time undergraduate/graduate teaching load of 12 hours per semester in Family Science, Family Life Education, and Human Development, with expectations of publication, student advising, and participation in departmental, university, and community committees.

Job Duties

Duties include teaching a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate courses which may include GenEd Courses and Honors Courses. In addition, this position will have a special emphasis on developing courses that address Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion concerns in the fields of Human Development and Family Science (4/4 load). Weber State University is dedicated to becoming an institution that continues to meet the needs of all members of its community and the Child & Family Studies Department is committed to hiring diverse faculty.

Required Qualifications

- A Ph.D. in Family Studies, Family Science, Human Development and Family Studies, or closely related field (a strong ABD may be considered if degree completed by August 25, 2023).
- The candidate must be able to teach in support of the department curriculum designed around the NCFR content areas and criteria for training Certified Family Life Educators and provide documentation of competencies as they relate to the 10 CFLE content areas.

Preferred Qualifications

- Demonstrated excellence in teaching undergraduate or graduate students.
- Experiences with students from underserved communities and historically underrepresented populations, such as BIPOC/minoritized, first-generation, and low-SES students, and students placed in developmental math and English.

A successful candidate will have the following:

- A willingness to teach general education courses and collaborative WSU/Honors courses.
- A willingness to collaborate to meet the needs of our local Weber State University community.
- A research agenda and interest in involving students in research activities. A drive to create a solid track record of scholarly publication and the willingness to learn how to procure grants is desired.

Documents Needed to Apply:

1. Cover Letter
2. Transcripts
3. One-page philosophy statement on your qualifications meet our program needs
4. Curriculum Vita
5. List of five references

Search Advocate Phase 3: Creating the Interview

Prior to opening the search, the committee should discuss qualifications in detail to identify the criteria to be used when assessing each candidate. It is important the committee reach a shared understanding of the criteria determined, how it relates to the position and the different ways an applicant could meet it.

Once the criteria is established, the committee should identify the most important performance skills and values essential to the job and team. This is the information which the committee will use to build the interview questions. These same questions will be asked to every candidate. This may sound boring, but evidence suggests that your accuracy in hiring the right candidate exponentially increases.

We suggest sending questions ahead of time to allow for an even playing field of temperaments and personalities in the interviews.

- When developing questions, use predominantly situational instead of behavioral questions.
 - Situational questions help to forecast potential, assess leadership and interpersonal skills, and it levels the playing field for candidates with less experience, but great potential.
 - Behavioral questions: "Tell me about a time when you were in this situation and what you did."
 - Situational questions: "What would you do if..."
- Ask for positive and negative examples to help build a balanced picture of the candidate. Expect to hear mistakes - mistakes happen when people take risks. *(No candidate is perfect.)*
- Develop follow-up to help the candidate provide you with relevant and detailed information.
 - Why would you choose that course of action?
 - What would you say your motivation would be in that instance?
 - Tell us more about the steps you took and what happened.
 - How did others react and what did you do with those reactions?
 - Would you do anything differently if faced with that same situation?
- Choose 6-8 open-ended questions. Between these and follow-up, this should fill an hour pretty quickly.
- As the same questions in the same order and as much as possible ask the same follow-ups, if necessary.

Search Advocate Phase 3: Creating the Interview

Under federal law, there can be no job discrimination based on sex, race, color, religion, national origin, or age. Consequently, there are topics you should NOT ask a prospective employee because they may be discriminatory.

Below you will find a list protected categories by federal law and directions on what you can and cannot ask.

CATEGORY	You CAN Ask	You CANNOT Ask
AGE	Whether candidate is above minimum or maximum age	Age, birth date, birth certificate, high school graduation date
CRIMINAL RECORD	Conviction record, if it relates to ability to do the job	Arrest Record
CREDIT RATING	Anything that directly relates to ability to do the job	Anything that does not relate to their ability to do the job
DISABILITIES	Anything that directly relates to ability to do the job	Anything that does not relate to their ability to do the job
WORK SCHEDULE	Willingness to work required work schedule	Willingness to work anything particular religious holiday
MARITAL/FAMILY STATUS	Nothing	Anything
NATIONAL ORIGIN	Whether candidate can legally work in the US	Anything else
RACE, RELIGION, SEX/GENDER	Nothing	Anything
ORGANIZATIONS	Membership and offices held in professional organizations related to expertise	Organizations or societies candidate may belong to

Search Advocate Phase 4: Evaluating Candidates

Research strongly suggests a need to invest time early in the hiring process (ideally before posting, at least before applications are reviewed) for the committee. This approach helps to reach a shared understanding of the qualifications in relationship to the job and reduce the impact of implicit bias.

The tool is designed for full search committee participation to develop this tool. This gives committees that opportunity to discuss what meets or demonstrates strength for each qualification, which qualifications most strongly predict better performance, and how/when to evaluate each qualification.

Doing this before advertising double-checks the qualifications for effectiveness, allows them to be refined as needed, and uncovers structural bias. Rigorous accountability to the matrix at each successive stage helps mitigate cognitive *and* structural bias.

Below is a guide to fill out this form. *Complete the qualification columns before priority levels.*

- Qualification & Required or Preferred:** Copy each qualification word-for-word from the job description, one qualification in each cell. In the second column, indicate *R* for required or *P* for preferred.
*Remember, a candidate **must** meet all required qualifications to be hired.*
Preferred qualifications predict better performance.
- Relationship to Job:** To understand how broadly we can evaluate/interpret a qualification, we must understand what it enables the appointee to do in the position. Which position duties require it? Why is it needed, how is it used in the job, what might be difficult or impossible without it? Does this qualification tie directly to duties described in the job description, or have we failed to show the part of the job this qualification supports? Is it a proxy for skills not otherwise articulated? If so, what skills?
- Transferable:** Is this a transferable skill? Transferable skills are portable skills that one can learn in any setting (professional, personal, or educational) and take to any other setting; when a skill is transferable, the screening criteria are highly flexible.
- Screening Criteria:** This column broadens our understanding of how candidates may meet each qualification, so we can consider more candidates and those who are qualified less typical ways. Given its relationship to the job, what experiences, accomplishments, or learning meet this qualification? If it could be assessed in an interview, what **MUST** the candidate include in their answer—at a minimum—to meet the need? Go beyond *quantity* (such as number of years) to define indicators of acceptable *quality* in their performance or understanding. Ask “who might we miss?” and “What ways to meet this we have overlooked?” to broaden the criteria.

Search Advocate Phase 4: Evaluating Candidates

- **Priority** – How important is *strength* in this qualification compared to *strength* in other qualifications?
 - Required qualifications: If meeting a qualification *strongly* (vs. minimally) strongly predicts *better* performance, it is a *high priority* for the committee to spend more time evaluating. Conversely, once an objective numeric qualification is met, there is no need for the committee to spend more time on it; it is *low priority*.
 - Preferred qualifications: Those that most strongly predict better performance are *high* priority. Those that least strongly predict better performance are *low* priority. *High*, *medium*, and *low* priority apply to both preferred AND required qualifications.
- **Strength** – For medium and high-priority qualifications, what are indications that a candidate meets them *strongly* (beyond just meeting them) in relationship to the job? What *ways* of meeting (or exceeding) the qualification predict better performance? Go beyond quantity (how *much*) to include quality (how *well*).
- **When to Assess** – at what stage will we have enough information to assess this qualification for all applicants? If it is high priority and will be evaluated at more than one stage, what are we looking for at each stage? When will we eliminate candidates for not meeting it?

Job Title:

Full Consideration Date:

Final Closing Date:

Qualification	Required or Preferred?	Relationship to Job <i>What parts of the job does this qualification support? Why is it needed/how is it used? What might they not be able to do without it?</i>	Transferable?	Screening Criteria <i>What are the different ways someone might meet this qualification?</i>	Priority - relative importance	Strength <i>(for medium & high-priority qualifications) What are indicators that someone meets the qualification STRONGLY? What ways of meeting it predict better performance?</i>	When to Assess <i>(and eliminate for not meeting)</i>