



Hiring Right: Conducting Successful Searches in Higher Education

Sandra Hochel & Charmaine E. Wilson; Jossey-Bass, 2007.

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Horror stories often abound when the topic of hiring is brought up in academic company. Many faculty and administrators can relive tales of failed searches, interviewing disasters, illegal considerations being made during the hiring process, qualified candidates not being found, and outright bad hires being made, just to name a few. In *Hiring Right: Conducting Successful Searches in Higher Education*, Sandra Hochel and Charmaine Wilson strive to minimize the chances of such negative outcomes. They provide a chronological framework that guides the reader through the hiring process from beginning to end. In the process, they provide readers with American legal insights and thoughtful advice based on their prior search experiences. In addition, the authors provide a plethora of sample forms and questions for the reader to consider throughout.

The key idea Hochel and Wilson stress is that clear communication to all search stakeholders throughout the process is vital for success. Communication of relevant labor laws, committee expectations, and stakeholder roles at different stages is all emphasized repeatedly. The authors' overarching argument throughout the book seems to be that poor communication at any stage in the process can negatively impact future stages. In contrast, good communication can increase the chances that a search not only will be successful but also will result in the "right" person being hired.

In the first chapter, Hochel and Wilson discuss the importance of conducting searches that are both successful and efficient. While experienced readers may not find this chapter particularly interesting, those new to hiring will definitely benefit from the information provided. The authors explain the importance of good hiring practices as they relate to time, money, employee morale, and institutional quality. The benefits of a more structured and planned out hiring process are also discussed (e.g. Establishing clear performance criteria early in the process reduces the chances of confusion over qualifications used for screening later.) as are possible negative ramifications of a search without such planning.

The next three chapters provide recommendations for the pre-advertisement stages of a search. Topics covered include strategies in organizing and giving an initial charge to a search committee, building effective job descriptions, and planning an advertising strategy to get the richest pool of candidates possible. Much of the groundwork Hochel and Wilson lay in these chapters is designed to minimize avoidable problems later on in the hiring process.

In the fifth and sixth chapters, Hochel and Wilson discuss strategies for initially screening out applicants and selecting semi-finalists before finalists are invited for a campus interview. Although readers will find both chapters very insightful, it would have been beneficial for the authors to discuss contacting references (both listed and unlisted) in more depth given the often delicate political nature of doing so in some cases.

The final two chapters discuss inviting candidates to interview and extending a job offer if applicable. Readers should not ignore these two chapters even if they are not directly involved in these steps in

the process. As Hochel and Wilson point out, the hiring process is not complete when candidates are invited to campus. As much as the search process has focused on finding the right candidate, candidates are also evaluating their potential employer to see if they are right for them.

The only item in *Hiring Right* I found bothersome relates to Hochel and Wilson rarely making distinctions between faculty and administrator searches. Although most of the issues discussed are common to both types of searches, some of the finer nuances of a faculty search may differ significantly from an administrative search and visa versa. While this may vex some readers, the authors do a good job of minimizing the issue.

In conclusion, *Hiring Right* serves as a clear and easy to follow guide on academic hiring. The book's small size (only 114 pages) and linear organization make for a quick and useful quick reference that may be a valuable resource on the bookshelf of any party involved with a search. I would highly recommend this book to anyone directly involved in a search, but it is best read before a search begins. Although potential job candidates are not this book's target audience, this group could also benefit from reading *Hiring Right* to better understand the hiring process from the employer's perspective.



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