

SEARCH COMMITTEE

- Appoint a search committee as soon as possible.
- The composition of the committee should be representative of the institution.
- The committee chair should be the candidate's principal contact.

The responsible administrator should recognize the importance of appointing the search committee as soon as possible. The time required to conduct the search and for the successful candidate to arrive is almost always underestimated. Although an interim director may be appointed, it is in everyone's interest to move quickly toward a permanent situation. An expeditious search and a reasonable interim arrangement convey to the outside world that an organization is well run and a desirable place to work. Protracted searches or long-term interim appointments cause applicants to view potential employers with concern.

The search committee should be representative of the constituencies the library supports. Its composition will vary according to local circumstances, but consideration ought to be given to including the following:

- members from the professional schools and hospitals served by the library;
- members from among different categories of users including educators, administrators, researchers, clinicians, and students;
- someone with library expertise such as a member of the library staff who can provide an internal perspective and a channel for communication of non-confidential information with staff. Library expertise can also be contributed by someone from another campus library, a library and information science school, or a regional network.

Given the wide range of interaction with the position, it may seem equitable to include representatives from every group. This must be tempered, however, by the need to keep the committee to a size that can conduct its work effectively and communicate well with one another. Other means of soliciting input, through information gathering and participation in candidate interviews, can substitute for direct representation on the committee.

Publications by the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Association for Higher Education provide further guidance on search committees, including the composition, chair appointment, charge, and ground rules [7,9]. A study of the selection of university library directors describes common characteristics of successful searches and the role of the search committee and administration [22].

The search committee chair typically is the principal contact for candidates with the institution, or an institutional human resources officer who is advised by the committee. The committee's attention to effective communication can be very influential in generating interest and presenting the institution in a positive light. This communication should span the entire process, from contacting potential applicants to appointment. Candidates report the importance of being kept informed at all stages, including lulls in activity, and of establishing personal contact with someone. One search committee employed a successful strategy of assigning a member of the search committee to each candidate to be responsible