EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWING AND SEARCH COMMITTEE BEST PRACTICES

May 2017

TODAY'S OBJECTIVES

- Learn about and understand the SUNY Cobleskill search process
- Learn how to frame behavioral-based interview questions and why they are important
- Learn about other ideas and tools to enhance the search and interview process

IS THERE A SUNY COBLESKILL HIRING POLICY?

- There are three!
  - Internal Career Advancement Program
    - Primarily addresses UUP Professional (staff) openings
  - Bridge Program
    - Addresses career movement between CSEA and UUP jobs
  - Guidelines for the Employment of Professional Personnel
    - Deals with approving jobs to be filled, affirmative action, the old (pre-electronic) search process
- All three policies can be found on the HR website
- All three policies are old (1990s) and outdated and are due for a refresh

CIVIL SERVICE & COLLECTIVE BARGAINING OBLIGATIONS*

- The hiring process for CSEA and PBA vacancies are governed by civil service law and the collective bargaining agreements
  - Hundreds of pages of rules governing the Civil Service hiring process is contained in the State Personnel Management Manual (SPMM)
  - For example: Candidates for *Competitive* classification positions must be on the Civil Service list for the position with a test score in the top three, or meet the eligibility requirements to transfer
- CSEA Agreement - Article 45: Posting and Job Vacancies
  - Appointments to higher level positions in the *Non-competitive* classification are based on the bargaining unit seniority of the bidders (must meet the qualifications)
  - Temporary employees in the *Labor* classification take precedence over external candidates
- CSEA Agreement – Article 20: Layoffs
  - References Civil Service Law Section 81 – Individuals on layoff who are on a preferred list or retrenchment list must be considered before all other candidates
- UUP Agreement – Article 34: Transfer Rights / Article 35 – Retrenchment
  - Employees on the retrenchment list (laid off) take priority system-wide
- UUP Agreement – Appendix A-28 (Promotions)
  - Outlines the job posting, selection, and candidate notification processes
- UUP "ghost" Appendix item: Our internal promotion process is based on an old Appendix item that is no longer part of the Agreement but is still in force

* Not an all inclusive list

HOW LONG IS THE JOB POSTING PERIOD?

- CSEA and PBA: 15 calendar days
  - Note: CSEA and PBA canvass lists expire in 90 days
    - The candidate must start before the end of the specified 90 days
- For UUP Professional positions, jobs may be posted for internal candidates first (10 business days), or for internal and external candidates simultaneously (30 days)
  - Depends on whether there is an expected pool of qualified internal candidates
  - In either case, qualified internal candidates are interviewed and receive feedback before considering external candidates
- UUP Faculty jobs are posted for 30 days

WHAT IS THE GENERAL SEARCH PROCESS FLOW?

- "Request to Fill" submitted and approved on Interview Exchange
- "Interview Exchange Information" form completed
- Job posted on Interview Exchange
- Think about how to reach diverse candidates
  - The College wants to meet its Affirmative Action Plan goals
- Outreach for candidates
  - Canvass (Civil Service Jobs)
  - Job boards
  - Professional associations
  - Social media
  - Networking
  - Academic institutions

WHAT IS THE GENERAL SEARCH PROCESS FLOW? (CONTINUED)

- Search committee formed
  - Diversity on the search committee matters!
    - Position
      - Faculty
      - Staff
      - Student
      - Different departments/programs
    - Race/National Origin
    - Gender
    - Age
  - The hiring manager and others in the supervisory chain are NOT on the search committee
- Search committee charge
- Search committee builds search timeline and list of interview questions
  - Reserves dates and rooms for the entire process
- Search committee reviews the resumes
  - Using a matrix
  - Look for diversity in the candidate pool

WHAT IS THE GENERAL SEARCH PROCESS FLOW? (CONTINUED)

- Search committee conducts telephone interviews with top candidates
- Pros and cons of the phone interviewed candidates given to hiring manager to decide who to invite on campus
- Search committee schedules in-person interviews with candidates moving forward
- Candidates book own travel; HR books local hotel (if needed)
- Recommended elements of the interview day agenda:
  - Meet with search committee
  - Meet with hiring manager
  - Presentation (to faculty, staff and/or students)
  - Work simulation/in box exercise
  - Meet with HR (benefits info/travel reimbursement)
  - Campus tour
  - Lunch

WHAT IS THE GENERAL SEARCH PROCESS FLOW? (CONTINUED)

- Pros and cons of the interviewed candidates compiled and given to hiring manager
- References contacted
  - This can be done prior to the in person interview
- Hiring manager makes selection decision and offers the job; the candidate accepts
- Search chair updates the status of all candidates in Interview Exchange
- Hiring manager completes the "Hire Justification and Appointment Form" in Interview Exchange
- Hiring manager or search committee chair calls candidates who were interviewed on campus to tell them they were not selected
- HR notifies all other candidates by email that they were not selected
- Search file brought to HR

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SEARCH CHAIR?

- Ensures that the hiring process is followed and keeps the process moving forward
  - Be part of as many aspects of the search process as possible
  - May personally check references, move candidate files between folders in Interview Exchange, and call interviewed candidates to notify them that that they were not selected
    - These tasks also can be delegated to others on the search committee
- Liaison with the hiring manager and HR

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Past performance and behavior predicts future performance and behavior
  - Situation (Tell me about a time…)
  - Action (What did you do?)
  - Response/Outcome (What was the result?)

FORMULA FOR ASKING BEHAVIORAL-BASED QUESTIONS

- *"Tell me about a time when you had to _____. What did you do about it? What was the outcome?"*
- **Even better:** Ask about a challenging situation
- **Better yet:** Ask follow up questions to clarify understanding
  - Don't assume

FRAMING QUESTIONS – ONE EXAMPLE

- **No!** *"Have you ever repaired car engines?"*

- **Good:** *"Tell me about a time when you had to repair a car engine. What was the problem? What did you do to repair it? What was the outcome?"*

- **Better:** *"Tell me about a time when you had to repair a car engine and you couldn't figure out what was wrong? Why was it challenging? What did you do? What was the outcome?"*

FRAMING QUESTIONS – ANOTHER EXAMPLE

- **No!** *"Have you ever trained people?"*

- **Good:** *"Tell me about a time when you had to train someone how to perform a new task? How did you approach it? What was the outcome?"*

- **Better:** *"Tell me about the most challenging experience you had trying to teach someone to do something new and different? Why was it challenging? How did you approach it? What was the outcome?"*

BEWARE OF FLUFFY ANSWERS!

- "As a supervisor with 20 years of experience, I've trained hundreds of people to do new and different things. Some people learn quickly and others more slowly, but I help everyone learn how to do what they need to do. I'm a really good trainer."

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET FLUFF?

- Redirect and ask again
- "It's wonderful that you've trained so many people. I need you to provide me with **one specific example**. Tell me about the most challenging experience you had trying to teach someone to do something new and different? Why was it challenging? How did you approach it? What was the outcome?"

WHAT IF THE PERSON HAS NEVER DONE WHAT YOU'RE ASKING?

- Ask about something similar that they might have done

- "Thank you for letting me know that you've never trained someone to do something new on the job. I see that you recently completed your bachelor's degree. Tell me about a time when you helped a fellow student learn something new or understand how to do something difficult? How did you approach it? What was the outcome?"

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO ASK?

- Four areas to focus on in every interview:
  - Technical skills/competencies
  - Teaming skills/competencies
  - Leadership skills/competencies
  - Student centered behaviors/competencies
- Need balanced number of questions addressing all four areas

PLANNING YOUR QUESTIONS

- Think about:
  - What are the most critical aspects of the job?
  - What does the person need to know?
  - What does the person need to do?
  - Who will the person be interacting with?
- Look at the job description
  - Update the job description if necessary

KNOW SPECIFICALLY WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

- If you can't describe it, you won't know it when you find it, and *you might hire the wrong person!*
- Make sure that the whole interview team understands and agrees on what is most important
- Past behavior predicts future performance

BUYER BEWARE

- Beware of candidates who have no (or few) questions!
- Beware of job hoppers!
  - There are reasons people change jobs frequently
  - Be sure to ask why they left each job and what their supervisor would say about them – good and bad
- Don't fear the unemployed
  - But do ask and understand what really happened
- Pay attention and respond to body language, tone, vague/evasive answers and "too good to be true" answers

ADVICE FOR TELEPHONE AND IN PERSON INTERVIEWS

- Plan your questions ahead of time
- Plan who will ask the questions
- Plan who will be listening for fluffy answers and asking follow up questions
- Explain behavioral/situational interview questions again:
  - "We are going to be asking behavioral/situational questions. The questions will ask you to describe a situation you have encountered, tell us what was challenging about the situation, tell us how you handled the situation and what the outcome was. If your answer doesn't include all of this information, we'll ask follow up questions to ensure we get the information we need."
- Make sure you're asking different questions at each step of the process
- Each person should be taking notes

BEWARE OF ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

- You can't ask questions that might reveal a candidate's "protected" characteristics:
  - Race, color, national origin, religion, creed, age, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, familial status, pregnancy, predisposing genetic characteristics, military status, domestic violence victim status, criminal conviction, or any other legally protected status

- Some easy pitfalls
  - "Where is that accent from?"
  - "What do you do outside of work?"
  - "Who looks after your kids when they get out of school?"
  - "What is your husband going to do when you move here?"

- **NEW!** NYS Executive Order 161
  - "No State entity, as defined by the Executive Order, is permitted to ask, or mandate, in any form, that an applicant for employment provide his or her current compensation, or any prior compensation history, until such time as the applicant is extended a conditional offer of employment with compensation."

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- Be prepared
- Be organized
- Be consistent
- Accept no fluff!