FACULTY SEARCH RESOURCE GUIDE

WPI

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A resource for WPI deans, department head and search committees created by the Office of Provost and Division of Talent and Inclusion. Revised 2026.

Faculty Search Resource Guide for Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty and Teaching Appointments

Introduction

Recruiting new faculty is one of the most critical endeavors for any college or university. It represents a significant investment in the institution's future, bringing fresh energy, innovative scholarship, and new perspectives that enrich both students and colleagues. Faculty members shape the character of an institution and play a central role in how it is perceived—by prospective students, the broader academic community, and key stakeholders.

WPI values an inclusive workforce and is committed to providing equal opportunity in appointment through non-discriminatory open recruitment and hiring practices and equal opportunity programs. An inclusive faculty provides a variety of role models and mentors for our student population, which helps us to attract, retain and graduate such populations more successfully. It is important that our faculty reflect the world we live in.

WPI's faculty recruitment and hiring process is intentionally structured to ensure equity, transparency, and consistency. It is designed to give all qualified candidates a fair opportunity to apply and to ensure that every applicant receives thoughtful and impartial consideration. To uphold these standards, departments must apply the process consistently, establish clear selection criteria in advance, and adhere to them throughout. Careful documentation at each stage is essential to maintaining the integrity and accountability of the process.

Faculty positions funded from operating budgets become available when they are approved through the annual planning and budgeting process. Once these positions are approved, they are communicated to the Deans by the Provost. Deans communicate the approved positions, with budgets for salary and startup, to the department heads. An entirely new position may be authorized and funded through reallocation of existing funds or in response to a strategic hire opportunity.

This Faculty Search Resource Guide has been developed to assist Deans, Department Heads, Search Committee members, and administrative staff, all of whom play an important role in the recruitment and appointment of faculty.

The offices of the Provost and Talent and Inclusion are available to provide assistance and guidance in your search and recruitment activities.

Chapter 1: The Search Begins

The Office of Financial Planning & Analysis (FP&A) will annually announce the timeline for the Faculty Position Request Process. Deans will work with each of their Department Heads to request a new faculty position or refill an existing budgeted faculty position. Department Heads will submit their prioritized faculty position requests in Adaptive with justification. Academic Deans will prioritize the consolidated list for their School and provide any additional comments or justification.

The Provost's final decisions are recorded in Adaptive system as approved or not approved. FP&A communicates these decisions to the Dean via Adaptive and email. Outside of this annual process, if a budgeted faculty position becomes vacant due to resignation or retirement, the Provost decides whether to recruit, hold, or reallocate the budgeted faculty position.

Once Provost approval is granted, Deans will delegate responsibility for recruiting to the appropriate Department Heads and/or Program Directors. Department Heads will then assign the recruitment process for approved positions to designated search committee members. Deans and Department Heads are responsible for monitoring actions of their search committees to ensure committee members are following established guidelines.

SEARCH COMMITTEE FORMATION AND COMPOSITION

Tenured/Tenure Track Faculty

The search committee is formed by the Department Head and with the Dean's approval.

Search committee members cannot serve if one of the following applies: 1) a family member, spouse or significant other, etc. is applying for the position; or 2) a committee member is applying for the position.

Items for thought when forming the search committee include:

- Size of committee - Using an odd number of members ensures that there are no ties if votes are counted.
- Interdisciplinary in nature
- Interdisciplinary of membership - Members should hold different backgrounds, perspectives, expertise, and years of service.

CHARGE TO COMMITTEE

The Dean will meet with the Search Committee to relay the strategic area they are to search for, criteria that are important to the University, rank of faculty member, timeframe for completion of search, and format in which the committee's final recommendations are to be brought forward.

The charge must be clear and precise: ambiguity in the charge, in the role of the committee, or in the extent of its authority can create confusion that will hamper and delay the selection process at crucial points.

A representative from Talent & Inclusion should be invited to the initial meeting as well and provide information on how best to maximize recruitment strategy and attract a candidate pool. This should include specific initiatives, the need for confidentiality amongst committee members, legal and illegal questions asked to candidates, interview protocol, and other general guidelines on best practices.

Chapter 2: Creating Position Description and Posting the Position

CREATE A POSITION DESCRIPTION

Develop clear position specifications that include minimum qualifications and experience desired. A job advertising template can be found here. The job ad should include the following content:

- A brief description of position you are seeking
- Paragraph highlighting your department
- Candidate expectations, qualifications
- Paragraph highlighting WPI community
- Required documents, deadline and contact information

Talent Acquisition will create the job requisition and search committee in Workday allowing members access to the job posting and applications. A primary recruiter will be assigned to assist you throughout the search.

POSTING AND ADVERTISING THE POSITION

Notify the primary recruiter with the desired advertising outlets to obtain cost estimates. The goal is to ensure broad and effective outreach, including efforts to reach targeted interest groups. Search Committee Chairs and members are also encouraged to engage their professional networks to help identify promising candidates and actively encourage them to apply.

Ads will automatically be posted to the following WPI's prepaid higher education sites:

- HigherEdJobs.com
- AcademicKeys.com
- AcademicCareers.com
- Indeed.com
- MassJobQuest.com
- WPI LinkedIn

Additional outreach suggestions:

- Share on LinkedIn - In addition to the career page, WPI also has available job posting slots on LinkedIn. Please send a request to your Talent Acquisition Partner or recruiting@wpi.edu to advertise and promote the open position on LinkedIn.
- Ask members of the department to contact colleagues at other universities.
- Send job posting to professional organizations
- Encourage faculty and staff who will be attending professional conferences or visiting other universities to combine recruiting efforts with their visits.

COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES:

While the charge to a search committee may vary depending on the type of position being filled, activities assigned to a committee may include:

- Develop a recruitment timeline with a target completion date.
- Create a detailed position description that outlines minimum qualifications and desired experience; determine where the position will be advertised.
- Initiate networking and outreach to identify and attract a broad, diverse candidate pool.
- Establish a system for recordkeeping to ensure proper documentation and compliance.
- Prepare standard correspondence, including recruitment letters and applicant communications.
- Inform all applicants and nominees that, unless confidentiality is requested in writing, application information may be shared during the review process.
- Clarify that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed for finalists.
- Define clear screening criteria to guide the evaluation of candidates.
- Conduct structured interviews using consistent and equitable methods.
- Verify references for selected candidates.
- Identify final candidates to be invited for campus interviews.
- Establish a plan for managing rumors in consultation with Talent & Inclusion.
- Discuss confidentiality expectations with search committee members and department faculty.

Chapter 3: Application Receipt and Evaluation

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DISCRETION

The names and credentials of all applicants (internal and external) are to be received and reviewed in confidence and shared only with Talent & Inclusion staff, hiring department members and/or members of a search committee. It is imperative to respect a candidate's privacy. Discretion also requires avoiding informal reference checks, such as contacting individuals who may be personally or professionally acquainted with the candidate. These actions can compromise both confidentiality and the integrity of the search process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF APPLICATION RECEIPT

Workday will confirm receipt of each application received.

SCREENING AND EVALUATING APPLICANTS

Screening and advancing candidates will be based on job-related criteria without regard to subjective judgments or impressions. Discussion during the process is critical to ensure that no single person can eliminate a candidate based on a non-job related bias.

Initial screening of applicants should typically be based solely on the minimum required qualifications as stated in the job announcement. Members of the search committee will be able to monitor all applicants through the Recruiting Dashboard worklet on their Workday home page.

To view your applicant pool:

1. Navigate to your Workday Global Navigating Menu and select **Recruiting Dashboard** app and select your job posting.
2. Click the **Candidates** tab to view the applicant pool.
3. Click on any individual candidate to access their application materials and credentials.

NOTIFICATION OR APPLICANTS NOT MEETING FIRST ROUND CRITERIA

Once applicants who meet the minimum required qualifications have been identified, they may proceed to the next stage of evaluation. Applicants who do *not* meet the minimum qualifications should be notified that they are no longer under consideration at this time. Please contact your Primary Recruiter for assistance in updating each candidate’s status in Workday. The recruiter will select the appropriate decline reason on the candidate’s profile, which moves them to the inactive pool and triggers an automatic decline notification email.

Search committees should consider a candidate’s entire career trajectory when applying evaluation criteria. For example, candidates who have taken time off for family care may have employment gaps or fewer publications than peers with uninterrupted careers. The timeline and context of achievements, such as publications, may reveal strengths not immediately apparent.

While publications are an important indicator of future success, they are not the sole measure of a candidate’s value. Committees should evaluate all accomplishments, growth potential, unique perspectives, and contributions the candidate can bring to the department.

Evaluations must be free of bias related to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, or gender. Applicants with disabilities should be assessed strictly based on job requirements without assumptions about accommodations. The committee should consult Talent and Inclusion for any disability-related concerns.

To ensure consistency, the committee may use a rating form aligned with key job-related criteria or maintain detailed notes. Written evaluations help decide which candidates to interview and provide documentation if the search reopens.

Only applicants who have formally applied through Workday qualify as candidates and should be evaluated.

For tenure-track positions, preference should be given to candidates who have completed or will complete their advanced degree before their appointment starts, as finishing a degree during the appointment can add undue challenges.

Internal applicants must be assessed using the same criteria as external candidates.

RECORDKEEPING

Careful recordkeeping of the reason(s) for rejection for each candidate must be kept by the Committee by updating the applicant statuses in Workday. These records will be used to maintain documentation reflecting that the Committee engaged in a competitive hiring process. The Committee is responsible for retaining documentation and records of its screening and selection process for three years at the conclusion of the search.

Chapter 4: Interview Process

Questions should be developed prior to the interview to ensure consistency. If in doubt of appropriateness of a question when the search committee is developing a core list, you should contact your Primary Recruiter. See list of available resources below:
Summary Chart of Legal Interview Questions
Sample Interview Questions for Faculty Positions
Sample Faculty Candidate Interview Evaluation Form

INTERVIEW STRATEGIES

Conference Interviews:

- The purpose of a conference interview should be to determine credentials, discuss teaching and research experience as well as to share the 'WPI story' and department initiatives.
- Questions asked of candidates at a conference should also be asked of candidates who were not screened at a conference.
- Candidates screened at conferences must submit an application and documentation following the same applicant instructions provided to all candidates. Meeting with potential applicants must be informal if the individual has not officially applied for the open position. Second round interviews are permitted at conferences if the individual has applied for an open position.

Telephone or Zoom Interviews:

- Telephone or Zoom interviews can be an effective and low-cost method for initial screenings of candidates.
- **The search committee should a establish structured interview format beforehand ensuring that all candidates are asked the same set of questions.** This consistency is crucial for both in-person and remote interviews (e.g., telephone or Zoom). Additionally, a written summary of each interview must be prepared to support record-keeping and assist in the final evaluation process.

Search committees will develop a short list of the best-qualified applicants to be invited to campus and will provide written recommendations for the Dean's approval, through the Department Head, listing strengths and weaknesses, vitas and credentials files. The candidates may or may not be ranked. The Department Head will in turn forward to the Dean. Once recommendations have been approved, a campus interview may be scheduled.

Chapter 5: Campus Visits

After the candidate pool has been narrowed to a group of strong finalists, generally three to four candidates should be invited for a campus visit. This visit provides an important opportunity to share WPI's history and its strong commitment to academic excellence. The quality of the campus experience often plays a significant role in a candidate's decision to join the university. It is essential that interview itineraries are comparable in scope and duration for all candidates invited for the same position.

SCHEDULE

Before the candidate arrives, a detailed and thorough agenda should be established. This will include the individuals and groups the candidate will meet, facilities to be visited, and faculty or staff who will escort the candidate from place to place. One person should be designated as the primary point of contact for the visit. Also, ask the candidate if they would like to see particular facilities or meet specific people. Provide opportunities for all candidates to interact with faculty and students.

- Most campus visit candidate interviews are conducted over a two-day period.

- Provide all participants involved with the agenda for the day, interview questions and copy of the candidate's application materials.

- Each candidate must offer a formal seminar, colloquium or lecture; departments must announce the presentations to the WPI community.

- When hosting a candidate, the following should be kept in mind:
  - The agenda should be sent to the candidate or shared with him/her prior to the visit or shortly upon arrival if revisions have been made.
  - The committee may wish to consider sending fact sheets and other information about WPI and the academic department prior to the campus visit.

  - Be mindful of the candidate's travel schedule to WPI, avoiding early morning starts as needed.
  - Provide beverages throughout the visit and design the schedule to include personal breaks.
  - Inquire if special accommodations would be helpful (mobility/dietary)
  - Consider using name tags during small group meetings to help a candidate have more personalized interactions

- Each candidate should be asked the same set of interview questions in a consistent manner. Participation of all search committee members and interviewers is encouraged at each interview to enable a fair comparison and evaluation for all candidates interviewed.

- All visiting candidates should be offered the opportunity to meet with faculty members who are not on the search committee and students.

- The interview process should provide the candidate with an overview of the job requirements as well as criteria for promotion and tenure at WPI, if applicable.

- A member of the Talent Acquisition team should be included as part of the on-campus visit to evaluate the candidate and provide information about the University's benefits.

DUAL-CAREER CONSIDERATIONS

It is possible that candidates will inquire about spouse/partner employment opportunities. In the event a candidate expresses interest in a dual-career faculty opportunity at WPI, contact the Department Head and he/she may work with the Dean to consider what options may be available. If the candidate expresses interest for his/her spouse for a University staff position, or employment outside the University, contact Talent and Inclusion for assistance.

REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

- The annual budget for recruiting candidates will be established by the Provost's office in advance of the searches. Typically, a maximum of the three visits per position will be reimbursed by the Provost's Office, and three candidates may not always be needed. Consider using the "rolling" approach where the strongest candidate is invited first, and a decision is made on that person before moving to the next.

Reimbursement for lunches is limited to $25 per person, for a total of no more than four individuals. For dinners, reimbursement will be made for a maximum of three persons including the candidate unless the candidate's spouse is present, in which case the reimbursement limit is four persons. The limit per person for dinner is $50 including the tip. All reimbursements must comply with the Business Expense Policy.

Chapter 6: Reference Checking

Reference checking is a fundamental part of the hiring process. Every search committee is expected to secure references on a prospective faculty candidate, even if that person was/is a current employee.

The goal of verifying references is to confirm your selection of the final candidate before making an employment offer. Past performance is the best predictor of future performance.

Personal references from friends, relatives, or neighbors are often positive but may not provide meaningful insight into a candidate's job performance. Work-related references should be obtained from the candidate's immediate supervisor to ensure an accurate assessment of their qualifications and experience.

Candidates may be asked to sign a reference authorization form if a former employer requires written consent. This documentation can help employers feel more comfortable sharing employment-related information.

Begin the reference process by requesting contact information for professional references from the candidate. When possible, speak directly with the candidate's immediate supervisor to verify past performance. If the employer seems hesitant to provide information over the phone, offer to allow them to call you back for identity verification.

Some employers may only confirm dates of employment, job title, and salary due to company policy. In such cases, document and date this information and proceed to contact other references. If no information can be obtained, clearly document the reason (e.g., "Unable to obtain due to company policy," "No records found," or "Unreachable").

If patterns of performance issues emerge during reference checks, consider this a potential indicator of future concerns. You may ask whether documented evidence of performance issues exists (such as evaluations or disciplinary actions) to better assess the reliability of the information shared.

Keep in mind:

- Employers are not required to answer all questions
- It is unlawful for any employer to knowingly provide false for defamatory information
- Avoid questions or discussions involving personal, non job-related information, as these are inappropriate and may be legally prohibited

EDUCATION/DEGREE VERIFICATION

Each background check includes an education/degree completion on every finalist. We will provide this service and cover all associated charges.

Chapter 7: Recommendation/Extending Offer of Appointment

The committee should review all feedback and make a proposed final list of acceptable and unacceptable candidates with strengths and weaknesses for each candidate. When the most qualified individual has been identified by the Committee, the Committee should notify the Department Head with their selection.

The Department Head will work in concert with the Dean to negotiate terms as appropriate and formalize the offer using the guidelines provided in the initial charge. To assist in determining all of the details of the offer, Department Heads use the *Information Capture Template*, an **INTERNAL** document used for capturing budget and logistical information. The *Information Capture Template* will help the Department Head and Dean consider all aspects of the offer. These include:

- Position, start date, course load expectations
- Salary
- Summer salary
- Equipment
- Professional Development and travel
- Grant transfers
- Personnel (RA, Post Doc, Lab Tech, etc.)
- Relocation costs
- Office location/Lab location
- Capital Renovations (for example, electric, water, gas, HVAC for labs, furniture)
- Information Technology (hardware, software, databases, storage)
- Library (databases, journals, digital or hard copy collections)
- Information on grants/equipment/personnel from other institutions
- Sponsorship requirements

Keep in mind that not all of the information captured will be shared with the candidate, but will assist the Provost's Office with evaluating the total financial commitment. This document will also serve as a touch point for the other offices on campus (IT, Library, Facilities) to begin to prepare for the candidate's arrival, should an offer be accepted. Finally, this document will provide the Provost with information about the candidate pool and related selection criteria for the finalist.

Talent and Inclusion can provide assistance with compensation benchmarking as needed. Contacts for consultation on the other aspects of the offer are noted on the *Information Capture Template*.

Once this information has been captured, the Dean will send it to the Provost, FP&A, and Talent and Inclusion for review along with the candidate's application and C.V. **By the time the Info Capture form and CV are sent to the Provost, the package should be the best representation of the offer that WPI is prepared to make, and the one that has the best probability of being accepted by the candidate. In other words, by the time it is submitted it should be close to final, and the basis for a formal offer.** From this review, a draft appointment letter and Exhibit A form will be created and sent to the Dean and department head, to be used as a basis for the offer to the candidate.

If the draft offer is approved, the department head will inform the Dean, Talent and Inclusion and the Provost's Office to send the formal appointment letter to the candidate.

If the offer is not accepted and results in a renegotiation, any new points should be sent to the Dean, Talent and Inclusion and Provost's Office, encapsulated in a new *Information Capture Form* for review and the drafting of a new appointment letter, which will be sent back to the Dean and department head for review and approval. If the revised offer is approved, the department head will inform the Dean, Talent and Inclusion and the Provost's Office to send the new version of the formal appointment letter to the candidate.

The selected candidate must be moved to the offer status in Workday and an online Info Capture Questionnaire will need to be submitted with the offer details. The offer will go through an approval process in Workday for Talent and Inclusion to send the offer letter to the candidate.

Chapter 8: Acceptance of Written Offer

Talent and Inclusion will notify the Dean/Search Committee/Department Head upon receipt of a signed offer of acceptance letter.

Once candidate signs offer letter, the Talent & Inclusion office will initiate a criminal background check including degree verification though the University's external vendor. Talent and Inclusion will notify the International House should the candidate require sponsorship.

INITIAL WPI WELCOME

Talent and Inclusion will send welcome correspondence to the new faculty member, that includes links to a new hire checklist, WPI account creation prior to their start date and new employee orientation information.

Department support staff should stay in contact with the faculty member until their arrival, offering assistance with any forms, details, expenses, etc. that the faculty member may have before arrival.

Chapter 9: The Search Ends

CLOSING THE SEARCH

If the position has been successfully filled, the job posting will automatically be unposted and closed in Workday.

Declining the candidates will move them to INACTIVE status and generate a message stating that the search is complete. **If department would like to send their own letters to candidates that were considered or interviewed on campus, but were not selected, the options of *Interviewed – Do Not Send Letter* or *Not Interviewed – Do Not Send Letter* may be selected.**

If the same position reopens in the future, prior applicants must reapply if they are interested. Previous applications should not be carried over from one search to another.

When declining candidates, the specific reasons for candidates may vary depending on the current step of the workflow process. Disposition candidates appropriately as soon as you know that they are no longer being considered. This will prompt Workday to send an email notification notifying candidates of their status. Once a job requisition is filled, all other remaining candidates who are not dispositioned in the Review or Screen stage will automatically receive a decline status notification. Please contact Talent & Inclusion for more information or questions.

EVALUATING THE SEARCH PROCESS

All Committees must evaluate the process after completing a search for full-time tenured/tenure-track faculty. WPI strives to create and maintain a culture of transparency.

Evaluating the search presents an opportunity for the Search Committee to provide valuable suggestions and/or recommendations for future faculty searches.