

College of Liberal Arts Department Head Selection Procedures

The role of department head (hereinafter referred to as chair) requires attributes and skills that allow the occupant to work effectively with faculty, staff, and students in the department, advocate for their needs as appropriate, and work effectively with university administrators in a variety of contexts. At the same time, department chairs are expected to maintain an active role in teaching, research, and service as members of the faculty. Selecting a candidate for such a position requires all involved to balance their respective priorities and recognize the difficulty in finding candidates who can maintain the delicate balance required of them in this role. As such, both the department and the administration need to be involved in the search and selection process in meaningful ways. The following procedure, developed in consultation with the College of Liberal Arts Advisory Committee, governs searches for chairs in the College effective January 2021.

Interim Appointments

When an interim appointment is necessary due to an unexpected vacancy, the following procedure will be used:

- 1) The Dean will solicit feedback from all full-time faculty and staff in the department. The solicitation should provide opportunities for responses in writing as well as through means that protect confidentiality.
- 2) The feedback solicited serves two purposes, the first of which is to consult with the department to determine who is interested or willing to do the job. The second purpose will be to gather information about what faculty and staff perceive to be the future needs, strengths and weaknesses of the department.
- 3) If a consensus emerges about who should serve as interim chair of the department and the Dean believes that person would be able to manage the job, both as an advocate for the department and as a representative of the administration, the Dean will reach out to the faculty member to discuss the role. In some cases, multiple candidates may be put forward for consideration. The Dean will contact one or more of them to discuss the position and make a decision.
- 4) Absent a consensus, the Dean will return to the department for further discussion and share an overview of the content from those who participated in the initial conversation.
- 5) In rare cases, the Dean may need to appoint an interim to start immediately due to an unanticipated departure. In such cases, the Dean will appoint an interim immediately and then proceed as soon as is practical to hire a chair per the process outlined below.

Standard Appointments

Generally, the University requires a national search to fill leadership positions. All University rules and procedures must be followed and take precedent if in conflict with this document.

Departments should determine how to best manage interaction with the committee, as no one approach will serve all departments. The following principles and procedures apply to all searches:

- 1) Faculty participation should be as broad and robust as is feasible. Although faculty not eligible for tenure may not have a formal role per MTSU policy, their input should be solicited in a fair and sensitive manner.
- 2) The Dean will appoint a Department Chair from another unit to serve as Chair of the Search Committee.
- 3) The Dean will appoint members of the Search Committee, endeavoring to represent the disciplines, subfields, and various needs of the Department while keeping the Committee

size manageable. When a Department lacks sufficient tenured faculty, the Dean will add tenured faculty from related areas to the Committee.

- 4) The Search Committee should seek feedback from others involved in the process prior to deliberations, including, but not limited to, the Dean, department staff, students, and department faculty not on the committee.
- 5) The Committee should endeavor to represent the will of the entire department.
- 6) Internal candidates can apply during a national search.

In an effort to make the most informed decision, the Dean will:

- 1) Solicit feedback from all full-time faculty and staff in the department prior to the start of the search. The solicitation should provide opportunities for responses in writing, as well as through means that protect confidentiality, in order to gather information about what faculty and staff perceive to be the future needs, strengths, and weaknesses of the department.
- 2) Meet with the candidates twice—once in a formal interview and once for lunch or dinner—and participate in an exit interview with the candidate led by the Search Committee.
- 3) Conduct off-list reference checks.
- 4) Communicate with the Department committee as requested.
- 5) Thoroughly consider all feedback received from the Committee, the Provost, and other stakeholders.
- 6) Communicate his/her decision to the Department with context.

The Dean is responsible for recommending the candidate for hire, negotiating with the selected candidate, and finalizing the hiring of the candidate.

In cases where an external search is not possible, such as when an open faculty line is not available and the addition of a line not justified or feasible, an internal process for selecting the next chair will occur as follows:

- 1) The Dean will solicit feedback from all full-time faculty and staff in the department. The solicitation should provide opportunities for responses in writing as well as through means that protect confidentiality.
- 2) The feedback solicited serves two purposes, the first of which is to consult with the department to determine who is interested or willing to do the job. The second purpose is to gather information about what faculty and staff perceive to be the future needs and strengths and weaknesses of the department.
- 3) If a consensus emerges about who should serve as chair of the department and the Dean believes that person would be able to manage the job, both as an advocate for the department and as a representative of the administration, the Dean will reach out to the faculty member to discuss the role. In some cases, multiple candidates may be put forward for consideration. The Dean will contact one or more of them to discuss the position.
- 4) If there is no viable candidate, the Dean will return to the department for further discussion and share an overview of the content from those who participated in the initial conversation.
- 5) An additional solicitation for nominations will occur.
- 6) The hiring of a chair without a national search requires the approval of the Provost and the Assistant to the President for Institutional Equity and Compliance.