

FAQs About the SEA Program

Search Committees

- **Q: When should the search chair first meet with the SEA about the search?**
 - A: As soon as there is a search chair, meet with the assigned SEA so that you understand the SEA role and the need for them to have time with the search committee during the first search committee meeting. Co-planning the 1st SC meeting is a great way to build partnership around your involvement.
- **Q: When should the search committee first meet with the SEA about the search?**
 - A: The first search committee meeting should involve the assigned SEA so that everyone understands the SEA role.
- **Q: Should the SEA have any say in the search committee configuration?**
 - A: Generally, the SEA cannot suggest that some people should or should not be included. They can ask questions about the mix of folks to help the search chair or dept. chair reflect on how intentional they have been in selecting search committee members and share research such as [this study](#) suggesting that search committees chaired by women or underrepresented-minority faculty members led to significantly more diverse applicant pools.
- **Q: At what point should search committees begin having conversations about retention with the SEA?**
 - A: Given that recruitment is a retention effort, early on can be most useful (the first meeting can be best). Here are some questions that could guide such a conversation:
 - In terms of onboarding new faculty, what have you done well? What could be improved?
 - In terms of mentoring new faculty, what has gone well? What could be improved?
 - In thinking about retention, what plan can you make so that your onboarding and mentoring are more intentional and inclusive in the future?
 - What are the long-term goals of your department? How will this search and a new colleague support those long-term goals?

Position/Job Descriptions

- **Q: Should a SEA join a search that has finalized a position description?**
 - A: No. SEAs cannot work with searches for which the description is finalized because SEAs should play a key role in that process. Because ALL of the following steps (screening, rubric creation, interviewing, selection, etc.) rely on a thoughtful position description, involving a SEA with a finalized position description doesn't set the SEA or the search up for success.
- **Q: What resources are there about position descriptions?**
 - A: [Hiring Brief 1: Writing an Inclusive Job Description](#)
 - A: [A practical guide to writing inclusive job descriptions](#)
- **Q: What tools are useful in creating quality criteria for the position and screening?**
 - A: [The criteria matrix](#)
- **Q: Should search committees ask candidates to submit a diversity statement?**
 - A: There are equity issues related to who has assistance in writing one. A better approach would be for the search committee to ask candidates to respond to specific DEI questions in their covers or separately.
- **Q: Should a search committee ask for recommendation letters?**
 - A: Research consistently shows that letters of recommendation introduce bias to the process and thus should be avoided. [Letters of recommendation](#) should be avoided as they are riddled with bias. It's best to ask for references instead.

Recruitment

- **Q: What resources can search committees use for recruitment?**
 - A: [Inclusive Hiring Toolkit for Tenure Track Searches](#)
 - A: [Faculty Recruitment Resources List](#)
 - A: [Best Practices in Faculty Recruitment](#)

Screening

- **Q: What role should a SEA play in the initial screening of candidates?**
 - A: SEAs should assist in the co-creation of a criteria matrix, rubrics, and interview questions based on the position description. Because SEAs are not voting members, review of applications should be done but can be done at a more cursory level or just focused on certain areas to ensure they are familiar with the materials.
- **Q: Do SEAs review all of the applications or just monitor the committee's discussions of the screening process?**

- A: It's best that they do both. Monitoring the screening process is an important part of the SEA duties given their expertise and lack of vested interest in a particular outcome.
- **Q: Should all search committee members screen candidates?**
 - A: Have at least 2 search committee members review all files in a preliminary way to determine if qualifications are met.

Interviewing

- **Q: Who creates the interview questions?**
 - A: All of the questions should be constructed based on the position description as a group with SEA guidance. SEAs can suggest tweaking questions, can question questions, can notice gaps, can help them determine which questions are most appropriate at the different interview stages (using the criteria matrix), and can offer examples of DEI-related questions but they should not tell search committees which question(s) to ask related to equity-mindedness nor expect that they get to ask it.
- **Q: Should search committees provide questions in advance to the candidates?**
 - A: Questions ahead of time can be helpful for neurodiverse individuals and candidates who need additional time to process information. You can choose to provide some or all questions in advance.
 - A week is too much time-it privileges those who have more time.
 - The sweet spot is between an hour and a day with plenty of warning to all candidates ahead of that so that they can use that time to prepare.
 - A: You can provide themes that will be covered in the interview and tell them you will ask behavior-based interview questions.
 - A: Whatever you decide to do, make sure ALL candidates get the same. Think about whether answering on the spot is necessary for the position.
 - A: Follow-up questions should be aligned with the original intent of the interview questions and the chosen areas of the rubric that are being considered for the evaluation of the candidates.
- **Q: Should the SEA introduce themselves?**
 - A: Research from Cal Poly suggested that having SEAs on some searches caused greater interest from a diversity of candidates across ALL searches. Promote your use of the SEA role and have the SEA explain (briefly) what they do during the interviews.
- **Q: Are SEAs expected to be a constant, silent observer in the interviews--both ZOOM/remote and in-person?**

- A: SEAs should not be silent observers as that can feel awkward to the interviewee. It's worth discussing HOW the SEA engages during the interviews as a search committee and coming to some agreement. Although the SEAs may help more with the equity-oriented interview questions, SEAs can offer to ask any question really (who asks which question often gets passed around anyway depending on who can be there). Having a SEA crafting and asking only the DEI-oriented question sets them up to be seen as the DEI police (which they are NOT). All search committee members need to own equity-mindedness as an important consideration.
- **Q: What is the guidance re: zoom interviews?**
 - A: This [resource](#) offers tech tips and here are some [guidelines](#) for zoom interviews.
- **Q: In addition to the toolkit, where can I find helpful resources?**
 - A: The draft chapter from the guide should be a comprehensive resource on this topic.