

## ***Search Committees: A Comprehensive Guide to Successful Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Searches***

**Christopher D. Lee. *Search Committees: A Comprehensive Guide to Successful Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Searches*. 2nd edition. Sterling, VA: Style Publishing, 2014. 180 pp. \$29.95. Paper. ISBN: 9781620362006.**

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Christopher D. Lee's *Search Committees: A Comprehensive Guide to Successful Faculty, Staff, and Administrative Searches* was published in association with the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. Lee's background includes serving as the chief officer of human resources at four institutions of higher education and teaching human resources at several schools. Since colleges and universities expend significant time and resources to identify, hire, and retain the best faculty, staff, and administrators, Lee argues they need to invest more time in planning the process. He believes that a successful search requires careful planning during each step, and he provides the tools and techniques for accomplishing this.

The cost of a bad hire negatively impacts an institution not only with direct costs, including salary, benefits, and professional development funds, but also with the intangible costs of poor staff morale, damaged reputation, and negative impact on current and prospective students. Given these potential costs, Lee suggests asking committee members "whether they're willing to wager \$3 million on that decision," which he believes reflects a realistic cost for a bad hire who stays in the position (2).

Lee examines the process for approving new hires, including an organizational analysis that reviews the position's impact on the institution, its essential functions, and its job description. He then explores assembling the best search committees, advertising and recruiting, sourcing strategy, screening and evaluating candidates, addressing bias in the process, and preparing and conducting interviews. He gives special attention to preparing a welcome package for the interviewee that empowers the candidate to make informed decisions.

Lee's discussion of developing interview questions examines a variety of question types, including informational inquiries, case study scenarios, and situational and behavioral responses, as well as the characteristics of bad questions. He argues that great questions provide critical insights for making informed, data-driven decisions. Lee provides a list of 119 potential general interview questions, 78 potential faculty interview questions, and 57 questions designed for administrator, executive, and supervisor interviews. Lee places extra emphasis on diversity throughout the work. He makes a strong case for educational diversity and argues for the inclusion of a diversity advocate on all search committees.

His discussion of steps after the interview includes managing post-interview evaluation processes, determining organizational fit, conducting background and reference checks, making a hiring recommendation, and closing the search process. He continues by examining how to successfully welcome a new hire to campus and address the new hire's long-term success and retention. Lee writes that "retention improves when the rigorous process finds well-qualified candidates who match both the position and the institution. This occurs because candidates get a sneak preview of community life and culture by interacting with a wide range of community members. They are then able to make more informed decisions about accepting any offer of employment" (1).

This book is highly recommended and should be required reading for anyone leading or serving on a search committee. The text is well written and organized. Throughout the text, Lee provides exhibit and vignette boxes, illustrating a variety of tools for gathering both qualitative and quantitative information. Exhibit #10, "How to Evaluate Resumes and CVs," and Exhibit #13, "Narrative or Qualitative Screening Instrument," are especially useful for committee members. The exhibits for gathering feedback from town hall meetings and presentations also give committees valuable tools. Additionally, the advice for committees on working with senior leaders to define the senior leaders' role in the process

provides a useful resource for committees. A complementary website, [www.searchcommittees.com](http://www.searchcommittees.com), offers additional materials, including free training videos and the author's blog.

In seminaries and schools of theology and ministry every hiring opportunity is important. The negative impact of one new hire who does not support the institution's mission can have devastating effects for years. Especially in seminary libraries, with their very small staffs, a bad hire can paralyze the vision and services of the library. As committee members and leaders, librarians must educate themselves on the search process. An ALA-accredited master's degree does not tell a committee everything they need to know, but Lee's book empowers academic search committees to make better decisions and set up both the new hire and the institution for a successful long-term relationship.

Jonathan C. Roach  
St. Thomas University Library, Miami Gardens, Florida