

UC Berkeley Dean Searches – An FAQ

Deans play a critically important role at the University of California, Berkeley; hence, their selection is a matter in which we invest considerable thought and energy. The practices and norms governing these searches are under continuous review and improvement. This document summarizes current practices and notes some recent changes to them.

What is the typical timeline for a dean search?

The dean-selection process is a careful and deliberate one; consequently, it can typically take several months and span more than one academic semester.

If the goal is for the new dean to take office July 1, the beginning of the academic year, the search will most likely begin early in the fall of the previous year and conclude in the spring (e.g., a search with a planned start date of July 1, 2019 will have started early in fall 2018 to conclude in spring 2019). While time is a factor, the most important goal is to find the right individual.

Who is responsible for the search process for selecting a new dean?

The Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost (EVCP) is responsible for overseeing the search for a new dean to lead a Berkeley college, school, or division. A search advisory committee makes recommendations to the Chancellor and the EVCP. See below for details on how that committee is constituted.

How is it decided whether to conduct a closed search, restricted internally to campus candidates, or an open search that considers both internal and external candidates?

To ensure the broadest and most diverse candidate pools, all Dean searches should be open to both internal and external candidates. Restricting the search to internal candidates should be done only when there is an extremely compelling reason. Open searches, it should be noted, have been the norm on the campus for a number of decades when looking for deans of professional schools and certain colleges. With one exception, open searches will be the norm for searches to fill July 1, 2019 vacancies and, thereafter, it will be the norm. Note that being open to external candidates does not mean that external candidates are in any way favored—Berkeley is blessed with good internal candidates who, among their other skills and strengths, bring a deep and valuable knowledge of the campus and its processes. At the same time, external candidates can bring fresh new ideas that help us from becoming parochial in our thinking and strategies.

Is the campus doing anything to help ensure a strong pool of internal dean candidates?

Yes, EVCP Alivisatos has made leadership training a priority. For example, he recently announced a Faculty Leadership Academy and the first cohort of 20 candidates will start this training in spring 2019. Additionally, for the past few years, we have been running a year-long training session for new department chairs.

Will a search firm be employed?

The EVCP decides whether the services of a search firm would significantly enhance the pool of candidates for external searches. In such cases, a firm is selected from a pool of UCOP pre-negotiated vendors.

The search firm serves as support to the search advisory committee and plays no role in deciding which candidates should move forward in their search process. Its role is to help identify potential candidates; to reach out to potential candidates to determine interest (with permission of the search advisory committee); to conduct research and due diligence on candidates; and to facilitate the work of the search advisory committee, including gathering input from key stakeholders on the selection criteria, posting advertisements, preparing materials, and assisting with meeting and candidate travel logistics.

What is the role of a search advisory committee?

The search advisory committee is charged with advising the Chancellor and the EVCP during the dean-selection process.

The search advisory committee assists in defining the selection criteria and methods of advertising and outreach, writing an advertisement for the position, consulting widely across stakeholder groups, and encouraging applications to obtain a diverse and inclusive applicant pool of highly qualified candidates. The committee reviews the biographies and academic and leadership backgrounds of potential candidates, conducts preliminary interviews with top candidates, may participate in second-round interviews, and assesses top candidates' strengths and weaknesses.

Following discussion and deliberations, the search advisory committee presents its findings, including a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate, and recommends the individuals (preferably three, not less than two) who should move forward in the process in a report to the Chancellor, EVCP, and the Vice Provost for the Faculty. The final selection of the new dean is the responsibility of the Chancellor and EVCP.

How is the search advisory committee formed?

The EVCP and Vice Provost for the Faculty form the search advisory committee, taking into account demographic and disciplinary diversity, among other factors. Typically, the committee consists of university faculty, staff, students, alumni, and advisors to the college or school in question. The membership of the committee is informed by nominations solicited from the Academic Senate's Committee on Committees, its Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations, and other campus and external stakeholders.

Is there broad representation on the search advisory committee?

Yes. A standard dean search advisory committee consists of:

- Committee Search Chair, who is a senior faculty member, preferably one with experience as a Dean.
- Faculty within the College, Division, or School who will reflect a variety of views and perspectives, including disciplinary.
- One or more staff employee representatives.
- One or more students. As the time commitment is significant, the campus prefers graduate students for this role.
- One or more alumni or “friend of the school” representative, usually selected after consultation with the college or school’s alumni advisory board or similar body.

All members of the search advisory committee are expected to attend all of the committee’s meetings (allowing for the occasional absences that can arise). All members are encouraged to participate fully in discussion and debate.

How is the committee trained for its role?

The Vice Provost for the Faculty provides clear expectations to the search advisory committee about their role. The Associate Vice Provost for the Faculty (AVP) meets with the search advisory committee prior to the beginning of the search process to discuss best practices for selection criteria, candidate evaluation, and reducing the role of unconscious bias. Video training on implicit bias is available to committee members ([UC Managing Implicit Bias Series: Managing Implicit Bias in the Hiring Process](#)).

Will the position profile be posted on a website so that the Berkeley community knows what type of candidates the search advisory committee is seeking?

Yes, the position profile is finalized by the search advisory committee and is posted on the websites of the [EVCP](#), [Vice Provost for the Faculty](#), and college or school.

Are there opportunities for input from the college or school constituents?

Yes. Immediately after the search advisory committee convenes for the first time, typically in early fall, the committee and/or search firm conducts meetings with the college or school’s stakeholders and collects input from undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, faculty, staff, and selected alumni. The committee also solicits input via an online survey to all constituents, as the feedback informs their selection criteria.

How are prospective candidates identified?

Typically a search committee reviews the academic and leadership backgrounds of approximately 100 to 150 individuals over the course of the dean search. This includes those who are identified through the nomination process, those who apply independently (self-nominate), and those who the committee or search firm identifies as potential candidates. The candidates under serious consideration emerge in a number of ways:

- Nominations. The search advisory committee solicits widely nominations of potential candidates and applications from candidates for the position. See below for details on how to nominate a candidate.

- Advertisements. An advertisement announcing the role is posted online at the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Diverse Jobs*, *Hispanic Outlook*, *Women in Higher Education*, *Insight into Diversity*, and *Vet Jobs* inviting applications and nominations. The position is also posted at discipline-specific advertising venues, based on the search committee's recommendation. If the EVCP has decided to use the services of an outside recruitment firm, the advertisement will also be posted on the firm's website.
- Search strategy. The search advisory committee develops a robust search strategy to identify qualified individuals. The strategy includes reviewing deans and associate deans at UC campuses, AAU institutions, and top-ranked national and public universities. Senior faculty who direct large programs and or have served as department chairs are a rich source of prospective candidates. External candidates will need to meet the academic standards for a senior Berkeley faculty member, as defined by the Academic Senate.

Can I nominate a candidate?

Yes. The Chancellor, the EVCP, and the search advisory committee welcome and strongly encourage all members of the UC Berkeley community to nominate potential candidates (including, if they wish, themselves). If you are interested in nominating a potential candidate, please submit the individual's name to the email address listed in the call for nominations. All nominations will be thoroughly considered by the search advisory committee.

Who makes decisions about which candidates to move forward?

The search advisory committee works to identify a pool of semifinalist candidates. These individuals are interviewed in person by the search advisory committee. Following the interviews, and campus visits (if applicable), the search advisory committee provides an evaluation of all interviewed candidates and recommends a set of finalists to the Chancellor, EVCP, and Vice Provost for the Faculty. The EVCP and Vice Provost for the Faculty review background checks, conduct reference calls, and initiate and review on-list and off-list references before the EVCP and Chancellor make a final decision.

Will the college or school community be informed about the progress of the selection process?

The staff supporting the dean search advisory committee will send periodic updates to the college or school constituencies, including faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Because of needs to respect confidentiality (see next question) and similar concerns, there may be times during which such updates are less frequent than others.

When will we know who the potential candidates are?

It is a common national practice to preserve the confidentiality of candidates during dean searches. For many prospective candidates, to participate in a process that is not confidential would put their professional careers at risk. As a result, many candidates will simply not participate in a process that does not preserve the confidentiality of their candidacy. Evidence suggests that those who elect not to participate when searches aren't confidential are disproportionately women and members of underrepresented groups. By maintaining a confidential search process, we ensure that we can successfully engage the largest, most

talented, and most diverse set of candidates and maximize our competitive position among other similar searches that may be occurring nationally.

In the past, in some open searches (i.e., open to both internal and external candidates), the names of the finalists (typically three) were made public. In those cases, the finalists make a public presentation on their vision for the college or school to the UC Berkeley community. Given our interest in ensuring a broad and diverse pool, the practice going forward will be to maintain confidentiality throughout the process. We will, however, require the three (or so) finalists to provide an anonymous written statement, which must include their preliminary thoughts about a distinctive academic vision for the program, their approach to shared governance, and to securing philanthropic and other resources, as well as their accomplishments in enhancing inclusion and diversity and their plans for how to do so in the new position. These anonymized statements will be made available to the relevant stakeholders, who will be invited to give their assessments of these statements to the EVCP and Chancellor prior to a final decision.

Who will select the next dean? Who makes the final decision?

After the search advisory committee has provided an evaluation of all interviewed candidates and recommended finalists to the Chancellor and EVCP, it is the Chancellor and EVCP who will decide whom to select, often after consulting with the Vice Provost for the Faculty. The EVCP and Chancellor may conduct additional interviews and reference checks. Candidate negotiations can take several weeks or months, and it is not uncommon for communication about the search process to cease during this period.

Who handles the appointment and announcement?

The EVCP oversees the appointment process in coordination with the Vice Provost for the Faculty, and coordinates the announcement with the school/college and the Office of Public Affairs.

What if I have questions about the dean search process?

Anyone who has questions is encouraged to contact the search advisory committee at the email address listed in the call for nominations.