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TIPS FOR SEARCH COMMITTEES REGARDING VIDEO INTERVIEWS

If committee members have not done many meetings or interviews using video, they may not be aware of the bias that can enter into candidate considerations due to the video and audio connections.

Be Mindful of How Technology Shapes Impressions

- For an in-person interview, the "first impression" begins when the candidate enters the meeting room, which is typically after the candidate has had a chance to ensure that clothing and smile are "ready to go." In a video interview, there is an awkward period when the candidate is trying to make the technology connection work, with this process often projected on a large screen viewed by the entire committee. This means that the video candidate is making a "first impression" before he or she is in the same "ready to go" mode as enjoyed by the in-person candidate.

- First impressions are shaped from the total appearance of a candidate walking into a room and having physical (handshake, eye contact) with each committee member. Research on interviews calls this the "halo effect" (positive) or "horn effect (negative) that can shine into the rest of the interview. In a video interview, a candidate is visible only from the shoulders-up and there is little opportunity to create a "halo effect" but much opportunity, while trying to get the technology to work, to create a "horn effect." Any introduction process for the entire search committee will be brief and in-passing with little viable in-person connection. This means that committee members do not have cues that they are used to processing to establish their initial impression of a video candidate. Search committee members have to rely on other cues that they may not be as adept at processing.

- Often technology does not work smoothly, which can rattle a candidate, particularly one who is not tech-savvy. This "rattling" can continue to discombobulate the candidate far into the interview and affect the committee's impression of the candidate. In-person candidates do not have a similar technology process to grapple with before their interviews start, so the starting points of in-person and video interviews may not be on parity.

- Video and phone interviews can be subjected to technology delays and distortions that can make the candidate seem awkward or inarticulate. This impression can be exacerbated if the video feed is pixilated or muddy or if the audio feed has echo or other sound modifications. There is typically no commensurate sources of delays and distortions with which in-person candidates have to deal. These technology hindrances can affect how a committee may assess the quickness of the candidate, the depth of a candidate's answer, or the candidate's ability to deal with adversity.

- Good interviews should be like conversations, but good conversations depend upon eye contact and successful reading of body language to gauge tempo and engagement. All are hindered in the video/audio process. There can be no real eye contact in a video interview because of the intervening camera lens. The candidate cannot get usual eye- and body-language feedback from around the room if an answer is going in the right direction, is not yet sufficiently robust, or is wandering on too long. The results from not having these cues may give an impression that the candidate cannot fully or adequately answer questions, or is not sensitive to timing which may give the impression of a poor communicator.

- An interview is an unnatural and highly stressful experience for any search candidate. The video-candidate has additional stresses incurred by the technology. Particularly for senior administrative positions, where the committee may want to gauge how a candidate handles stress since these jobs are fraught with stressful situations, it is not fair to shape an impression of a candidate based on his or her use of technology. If a person was in a senior position, there would be many people to smooth over the technology, including an IT expert in the background, a communications specialist who prepped the administrator with talking points andrehearsed the interview with the administrator, all supported by the best technology that the institution can provide. An interview candidate has none of these support mechanisms, often very little video conferencing experience, and typically poorer technology equipment than is servicing the search committees on their side of the interview.

Treating All Candidates Fairly
- Because it may take longer to establish the technology connection, video interviews rarely start on time. Despite this, video candidates must be given the same interview block of time as afforded to in-person candidates. This will require the chair to time the interview from the commencement of the official process and conclude when the time block is completed, even if this runs into scheduled debrief and break time. If there are technology problems that stop or slow down the interview, then extra, compensatory time needs to be added into the interview time block.
- Each part of the interview as experienced in-person needs to be replicated in a reasonable way for the video participant. If the in-person is brought in the room and provided opportunity to meet and greet each committee member, a facsimile of this must be provided to the video candidate. The Greenwood/Asher consultant will discuss with the search committee chair facsimile options that will achieve the same effect for equitable treatment of all candidates.
- In-person candidates come into a tightly controlled environment of the committee meeting room where all outside and extraneous variables are, by design, excluded. The video candidate may be doing the interview from an office, hotel room, home, or airport business lounge where the external environment of candidate/computer/video camera cannot be as controlled. Extraneous noises (e.g., dogs barking, children calling out) should be excluded from consideration of the video candidate's interview performance.
- Although Greenwood/Asher & Associates continually advise search committee members to measure candidates against the qualifications instead of against each other in the early stages of the search process, including the Round One Interviews, it is easy for search committee members to do these mental comparisons. To treat candidates fairly, their attributes need to be considered not in light of the interview mode (in-person, video conference) but on the basis of what they said. The interview mode contrast adds one more layer of difficulty in treating candidates fairly without consideration of interview situation.
- It is easy to stereotype a candidate based on his or her facility with technology. It is easy to dismiss someone who is not adept with technology as not being "with it" or "too old to deal with technology." To treat all candidates fairly, the impact of the technology of the interview needs to be eliminated from consideration.
- Video cameras distort faces and facial expressions. These distortions are exacerbated by how close or far away from the camera the candidate sits and may not be controllable on the candidate's side of the interview.

Useful websites to share with the search committee about preparing for video interviews
- Five Reflections for the Skyping Employer from HigherEdJobs
  http://www.higheredjobs.com/Articles/articleDisplay.cfm?ID=407
- Don't be a Victim of Interview Bias from AOL Jobs
  http://jobs.aol.com/articles/2010/06/15/interview-bias/