

Opportunity Hire Guidance

Due February 3rd, 2025

The 2022 DEI Strategic Initiatives, which were incorporated in the overall UNH Strategic Priorities, call for increased faculty diversity. Opportunity hires are one way of supporting this initiative. If your department or program decides to pursue an opportunity hire, the proposal must be submitted to your dean. Deans will review proposals and submit no more than two to the provost for further consideration.

Opportunity hires create a mechanism for diversity recruiting and for hiring exceptional individuals whose expertise will contribute to the academic excellence of a department or program. They operate within legal hiring practices and are aligned with the institution's mission and with appropriate department, college, and university approvals. Opportunity hires allow UNH to effectively compete with other institutions for outstanding candidates. Examples of when the opportunity hire process is a possibility:

- An exceptional underrepresented minority candidate applies to a posted position and although not the top candidate for that position, the search committee recognizes the value to the university of recruiting the individual for a different position.
- A professional contact from outside the university is known to be looking for a new opportunity that is brought to the attention of the department.

There is an inherent uniqueness to opportunity hire cases. Therefore, while any search committee or department can submit a proposal to their dean for review, it is ultimately the provost who determines if an opportunity hire candidate can be pursued.

The identified candidate for an opportunity hire must be of a quality commensurate with top candidates from national searches.

Please keep this guidance in mind as you develop your proposal:

- Does the position address a pronounced need in terms of student demand: i.e., do enrollments and major/minor numbers support this position?
- How does the position enhance your unit's diversity and support diversity goals as stated in the UNH Strategic Plan?
- Does the position offer a commitment to one of our interdisciplinary programs?
- How will the position address significant curricular, research/scholarship/creativity, or engagement needs in the department/program?
- What does the current and future state of the relevant discipline(s) suggest about the relative importance of and need for this position?
- What is your department or program plan for supporting and retaining the person hired? A clear pathway to promotion and success should be provided. Consider mentoring, community building, network connection, development opportunities, etc.

Although there are many reasons to consider an opportunity hire, when addressing UNH's strategic initiative for diversifying faculty, a focus on domestic diversity (i.e., U.S. citizens and permanent residents) and on identities historically underrepresented at UNH is recommended.

Joint proposals from two departments/programs are welcome as are proposals originating outside of a department from which a candidate was originally interviewed.

The Office of the Provost anticipates the ability to approve 1-4 opportunity hires each academic year. No more than two proposals per college will be considered.

Procedures for Proposing an Opportunity Hire

Individuals Identified via a Search

A potential opportunity hire candidate often comes to the attention of a department or program via a current search. This is the simplest process for identifying an opportunity hire.

After an individual has been identified via a search, if there is interest in appointing an opportunity hire, a written proposal should be submitted to the dean by a department or program chair. The proposal should address the six bullet points previously mentioned, paying close attention to the following:

Potential

The nomination should make a case for the exceptional potential of the candidate as a teacher and scholar, the needs the candidate would fill, and the ways in which the candidate would contribute to the academic excellence, diversity, and/or reputation of the University, department, or program.

Source

Describe how the candidate came to the department's/program's attention (i.e., through outreach efforts, professional networks, via a search process, or other contact).

Rationale

The rationale for nominating a particular individual should include enhancing the curriculum, possibly introducing a new field or subfield, enhancing course offerings in an established subfield, enhancing research/scholarship/creativity and engagement in a core discipline or establishing or strengthening interdisciplinary research, meeting existing or anticipated department/program need, supporting the retention of an existing hire, and/or meeting stated goals as outlined in UNH's Strategic Initiatives (e.g., diversifying faculty).

Retention Plan

Describe how your department plans to work towards retaining the candidate via support, professional development opportunities, inclusive spaces, and other best practices, particularly if the opportunity hire is an underrepresented minority.

The dean will evaluate the proposal in a timely manner, ensuring that it meets the criteria for opportunity hires and makes a compelling case.

The dean will consult with the provost. The provost will determine if there is a compelling case for an appointment to be made.

In some isolated cases, opportunity hires may need to undergo a second interview process if the position they originally interviewed for is significantly different from the position for which they are now being considered. The dean and/or provost will make this determination based on UNH's hiring practices.

If all prior steps are completed and result in a decision to make a hire, the dean will contact the candidate and offer employment. If the hire is made at the rank of assistant professor or associate professor without tenure, it will include a timeline for a future tenure review. If the hire is made at the rank of associate professor or professor, it will be conditional upon a tenure review to be conducted as soon as possible, following the usual steps for tenure reviews. Considerations for tenure must align with faculty Collective Bargaining Agreements.

Individuals Identified Outside of a Search

A potential opportunity hire candidate may come to the attention of a department or program in a variety of ways not involving a search. Any member of the university community may identify an opportunity candidate; however, the department should refrain from discussing the possibility with the individual until the dean and provost have approved the nomination.

After an individual has been identified and endorsed by the department, a nomination proposal is submitted to the dean by a department or program chair. The nomination should be in the form of a written proposal addressing the six bullet points previously mentioned and should address the same areas as proposals for opportunity hires identified via a search, i.e., *Potential, Source, Rationale, and Retention Plan*.

The dean will evaluate the nomination proposal in a timely manner, ensuring that it meets the criteria for opportunity hires and makes a compelling case.

The dean will consult with the provost. The chair submitting the proposal will then either a) receive approval to proceed with recruitment or b) receive an explanation for why the proposal is not approved.

With approval from the provost and dean, the chair then contacts the candidate to determine their level of interest in being considered for the position in question at the University of New Hampshire. Confidentiality and discretion should be maintained, appropriate to the candidate's professional situation.

If the individual is interested in being considered, an expedited search will ensue. See the Addendum for the expedited search process.

If all prior steps are completed and result in a positive decision, the dean will contact the candidate and offer employment. Faculty rank considerations maintain the same restrictions and considerations as opportunity hires identified via a search process, i.e., if the hire is made at the rank of assistant professor or associate professor without tenure, it will include a timeline for a future tenure review. If the hire is made at the rank of associate professor or professor, it will be conditional upon a tenure review to be conducted as soon as possible, following the usual steps for tenure reviews. Considerations for tenure must align with faculty Collective Bargaining Agreements.

Addendum

Consider the following:

- Department members must take part in the decision-making process and a majority of departmental voting faculty must be on board with opportunity hire candidates prior to an offer being made.
- Since opportunity hires who have not taken part in a national search will be asked to engage in an expedited search process, consider writing a job description addressing the intended hire's specific expertise.
- Post Docs and candidates already identified via a search process can be appointed to roles without a search process.
- Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreements and department tenure processes must be followed in all offers of tenure. Tenure process must be the same for opportunity hires as with any other faculty in respective departments.
- Consider opportunities for internal promotions first. Can someone in the department be promoted to do the same work as the person nominated for the opportunity hire with the same results and impact in the department?

An expedited search process consists of the following:

- A job description must be written and approved by the dean.
- The position must be posted for no less than ten days both internally and externally.
- The Office of the Provost expedites the hiring approval process.
- A search ensues with normal expectations (search committee, a dossier of applicant materials, screenings, interviews, background checks, campus visits, appropriate approvals from the Affirmative Action and Equity Office and HR, etc.)