

Opportunity Hiring Policy

(Approved at October 2019 Faculty Meeting. Modified June 2025)

NOTE: As part of the University's regular policy review process, this policy is subject to review by the University's legal counsel.

Southwestern's opportunity hiring policy allows the University to consider exceptional faculty candidates outside of the normal process when doing so advances a significant University priority.. The intention is to take advantage of exceptional circumstances that provide an opportunity to hire an individual who meets a University priority. The purpose of this policy is to enrich the faculty by adding outstanding individuals who bring diverse perspectives, experiences, and skills to Southwestern, in alignment with the University's educational mission and commitment to equal opportunity. Other less common examples might include leading scholars not currently looking for a position and partner hires. Opportunity hiring is intended to allow speed and flexibility in securing outstanding candidates who can help improve the quality and diversity of Southwestern's faculty. Diversity considerations will be in accordance with applicable law and will never involve exclusion of any candidate on the basis of a protected characteristic. Opportunity hiring is a limited exception to the standard search process, to be used only in rare cases of unique opportunity or critical need. It does not replace the University's standard commitment to open and competitive searches. Opportunity hiring proposals can arise either from a planned search that produces two suitable candidates, or when a suitable candidate is identified outside of an existing search process. The Dean of Faculty will accept opportunity hiring proposals at any time.

Procedure for opportunity hiring proposals not arising from a planned search

If a Department or Academic program identifies, and agrees on the suitability of a potential candidate for an opportunity hire, the chair should discuss the possibility of an opportunity hire with the Dean of the Faculty. If advised, departments will then create and forward a proposal to the Dean, including the candidate's CV, and a detailed assessment of how the candidate meets the criteria (below) for an opportunity hire.

The Dean, advised by the Faculty Resource Allocation subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee will consider the suitability of the situation for an opportunity hire, as well as the anticipated budgetary impact of the hire. If the Dean authorizes recruiting the candidate, the Dean shall constitute an interview committee, including the department or program chair, at least one additional member of the department or program, and a tenured member of another department. The interview committee shall solicit further evidence as needed of the candidate's success as a teacher and as a scholar (e.g. letters of recommendation, statements of teaching and scholarship), and shall invite the candidate for an on-campus visit.

The visit should include a scholarly and/or teaching presentation to faculty and students. During the visit, the candidate will meet with the interview committee, with additional members of the department or program, with faculty from related disciplines and programs, and with the Dean of the Faculty and the President, as available.

Procedure for opportunity hiring proposals when two suitable candidates are identified in a planned search

If after the on-campus interview stage, a planned search has identified two candidates endorsed by the search committee, and appears to meet the criteria for an opportunity hire, the Chair of the Committee should discuss the possibility of an opportunity hire with the Dean. If advised, departments will then create and forward a proposal to the Dean to make offers to both candidates. In addition to the material typically submitted to the Dean with a faculty hire recommendation, the chair of the committee will submit a detailed assessment of how the situation meets the criteria (below) for an opportunity hire. The Dean, advised by the Faculty Resource Allocation subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee will consider the suitability of the situation for an opportunity hire, as well as the anticipated budgetary impact of the hire.

Based on the advice of the Dean, proposals for opportunity hires should address the following criteria:

- The likelihood that the candidate's presence will have an exceptionally positive impact on University goals related to Paideia and High-Impact Experiences.
- The likelihood that the individual will make a significant contribution to the department or program and to the University, meeting a current or anticipated need.
- The extent to which the candidate would contribute to the diversity of the faculty and enhance inclusive excellence through their background or scholarly/teaching focus.
- The likelihood that the individual will achieve success at Southwestern through teaching, scholarship, and service.
- The hire must be budgetarily appropriate.

Any candidate recommended under this policy must meet the high standards for faculty excellence at Southwestern, including demonstrated strength in teaching, scholarship, and service and the hire should address a bona fide curricular or institutional need. Additionally, all opportunity hire candidates will be held to the same professional qualifications and performance standards expected in a regular search.