Building a Better Academic Nursing Search

<p style="text-align:center;">**Context**</p>

⇒ "According to a _Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions_ released by AACN in October 2018, a total of 1,715 faculty vacancies were identified in a survey of 872 nursing schools with baccalaureate and/or graduate programs across the country (85.8% response rate). Besides the vacancies, schools cited the need to create an additional 138 faculty positions to accommodate student demand. The data show a national nurse faculty vacancy rate of 7.9%. Most of the vacancies (90.7%) were faculty positions requiring or preferring a doctoral degree".

⇒ "According to AACN's report on _2016-2017 Salaries of Instructional and Administrative Nursing Faculty_, the average ages of doctorally-prepared nurse faculty holding the ranks of professor, associate professor, and assistant professor were 62.4, 57.2, and 51.2 years, respectively".

⇒ "According to an article published in _Nursing Outlook_ on Retirements and Succession of Nursing Faculty in 2016-2025 by Drs. Di Fang and Karen Kesten, one third of the current nursing faculty workforce in baccalaureate and graduate programs are expected to retire by 2025".

⇒ There are 60-65 Dean and Director openings nationally in CCNE accredited Schools of Nursing alone. These numbers are increased when ACEN accredited schools are considered.

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Use Rolling Consideration (rather than Cohort-Based Consideration)

Due to the scarcity of applicants for nursing positions, _The Hollander Group_ recommends a rolling consideration process. It is recommended that applicants be evaluated by the search committee as they apply, waiting no longer than 2 weeks to determine the disposition of each applicant. Search committees are strongly encouraged to be more inclusive rather than exclusive, particularly with leadership positions as academic CVs are typically inadequate in describing leadership qualities. These are best gleaned through interview. There is obviously a profound difference **Rolling Consideration** and **Cohort-Based Consideration** in terms of how decision-making tasks of the end-to-end process play out. In order to underscore some of the key aspects of those difference, let's identify some of the key top-level tasks comprising the process:

- Position Description: Develop/finalize versions of the Position Description document in form suitable for posting and outreach.

- Outreach:
  - Email Announcement: Begin a very broad outreach via personalized electronic mail messages.
  - Call: Follow-up phone calls to substantive subset of those individuals contacted via email to announce the position.
  - Processing: Respond diligently to inquiries, submissions of applicant materials, questions, nominations, etc. Make sure that any additional materials needed to become an applicant (e.g., cover letter) is obtained.
- Preliminary Screening: Review submitted application materials to ascertain whether the individual seems to meet the qualifications for the position and is likely to be able to meet its responsibilities.
- Search Committee Screening: Reviews submitted applicant materials in order to decide whether the individual should be interviewed via videoconference by the search committee, thereby becoming a semi-finalist candidate. As noted above, scheduling and conduct of the interview is time critical.
- Finalist: Deciding whether the semi-finalist candidate should be invited for a campus visit, thereby becoming a finalist candidate for the position.
- Campus Visit:
  - Schedule and conduct the campus visit. Again, this is time critical.
  - Conduct references using names on the candidate's reference list. These are "on list" references and should only be contacted with the candidate's permission.
  - Stakeholder Feedback: Following each candidate's visit, the search committee gathers input from as broad a range of stakeholders as possible regarding the finalist candidate's performance and suitability for the position. This typically includes faculty, staff, students and administrators.
  - The search committee gathers and analyzes this information and typically recommends more than one name to the hiring authority for final consideration.
- Hire: Decision by the hiring executive regarding whether to offer the position to a particular finalist candidate. Sometimes, with the candidate's permission, the hiring executive may want to get "off list" references.
- Offer and Negotiate: Make and negotiate the offer for the position.

Specifically, the tasks highlighted in sky blue above are pulled forward in time under the Rolling Consideration vs. the Cohort-Based Consideration model.

Proactive Scheduling

Search Committee members are typically very busy. It is important to schedule times for applicant evaluation meetings and interviews at the beginning of the search, understanding some flexibility will be needed. Blocking out times on members calendars is typically an effective way

to get the most members to each meeting/interview. Not all members can be at every interview but scheduling ahead will give the best attendance.

For finalist interviews on campus, it is a good idea to block time on the President and Provost, or others as appropriate, calendars as well. This should be done at the beginning of the search.

Meetings to Schedule:
- Applicant evaluation meetings: every 2 weeks until videoconferences begin. Once videoconferences begin, new applicants can be discussed in conjunction with those meetings.
- For Dean searches, about 7-8 videoconference interview times should be blocked out, and 5 campus times. Please see below to see recommended numbers of interviews. Scheduling extra times will provide flexibility for applicant availability as Dean applicants are typically very busy as well.

Applicant Evaluation Process Steps:
- Applicant sends application materials comprising CV and cover letter to *The Hollander Group*.
- *The Hollander Group* shares application materials with the search committee chair via email. The Search Committee Chair opens a shared drive giving access to all search committee members.
- Search Committee members are notified by the Search Committee Chair that the shared drive contains a new applicant.
- The Search Committee determines the status of the applicant:
    - The applicant is worthy of further consideration at the next level- schedule videoconference
    - The applicant is not worthy of further consideration- HOLD
    - The applicant is in a "maybe" status- to be considered in the context of other applicants- hold and re-evaluate in 2-4 weeks.
    - Applicants should not be rejected formally until the search process is over. Occasionally, an applicant that the committee put in the hold status is reconsidered.

Videoconference Interviews
- Remember that this is a recruitment, not a grilling process. You will get excellent information from the candidate either way, but you want to leave every applicant with an excellent, welcome feeling about your University and School.

- Timing- effective videoconference interviews can typically take place in 45 minutes: 35 minutes for committee questions, 10 minutes for applicant questions. Note: applicant

questions are very important as they provide insight as to how interested the applicant is in the position.

- Questions- all applicants should be asked the same questions. Follow up questions can be asked, time permitting.

- Nature of questions
    - Questions should be modeled after the position description (PD). In looking at the "Responsibilities of the Position" and "Qualifications" sections of the PD, Search Committee members should decide on the top 5-6 things they want to evaluate in this first stage and write questions to elicit this information.
    - Questions should be **behavioral** in nature. In other words, ask the applicant to give **examples** of what they have done in relation to the quality or experience you are trying to evaluate. You are trying to determine a track record: does the applicant have a track record of being able to do what you are trying to evaluate? You are not trying to find out what the applicant might do, rather what they have done.
- Number of questions- typically, the following basic approach is successful:
    - 1 question to ask the applicant to describe their career trajectory and why s/he is interested in this particular position at your university.
    - 4-5 questions that elicit the information described above in 4a.
    - The final question should elicit questions from the applicant.
- Number of videoconference interviews- 6-8 videoconference interviews typically yield a successful finalist pool.

Campus visits
Based upon our experience over 285+ academic nursing executive searches, we recommend that no fewer than 4 campus visits are conducted to yield a successful hire.

Timeline for Search-
In our experience, the typical overall timeline for a top-tier nursing academic position (Dean/ Director) is about 14-16 weeks. And, it goes without saying that it always takes place in an environment that is ferociously competitive recruitment environment in which demand always far exceeds supply. That has led *The Hollander Group* to adopting a two-fold mantra for academic nursing executive recruitments: (1) *A slow search is not a better search! (2) Time is the enemy!*

This has also led us conclude that you will be best served if: (1) you acknowledge receipt of materials/questions from a potential candidate within 2 days and (2) you never take more than 2

weeks to get back to an applicant with a decision or date/time for an interview. In other words, make sure that the process feels like it is moving along quickly from the candidate's perspective.

Rolling Consideration Timeline:

Constituent Task(s):	Position Description	Outreach	Submission-Driven cycles of: Preliminary Screening, SC Screening and Finalist? And Campus Visit	Hire? And Offer / Negotiate
Week(s):	1	2-6	7-14	15-16

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