

## Search Committee Recusal and Conflict of Interest Guidelines

### Recusal

#### Situations Appropriate for Recusal

*“I know this applicant/candidate, should I recuse myself from the search committee?”*

In some instances, a search committee member may realize that someone they know or have worked with previously has applied for the position. Depending upon the type and extent of the connection, situations may arise in which there is sufficient reason for search committee members to consider recusing themselves from reviewing, evaluating, and/or participating in consensus gathering and discernment processes for a particular candidate or candidates. Examples of such situations include but are not limited to:

1. Applicant/candidate is a family member or someone with whom the search committee member has a close personal relationship (e.g., spouse, current or former partner/significant other, child/grandchild, parent/grandparent, sibling, extended family member, etc.)
2. Applicant/candidate is a close friend/colleague (close church family member, neighbor you grew up with, colleague who has become a good friend, etc.)
3. Applicant is a former student who is “like a daughter/son” to search committee member
4. An equitable or impartial decision process is not achievable due to a bias held by the committee member (e.g., bias related to protected class information such as “age, disability, ethnicity, familial status, genetic information, height, national origin, race, religion (except in the event of a bona fide occupational qualification), sex (including gender expression, gender identity, pregnancy, sexual orientation), theological perspectives (e.g., conservative, progressive, traditional), veteran status, weight or any other legally protected attribute, status or characteristic” ([Hope College Policy on Nondiscrimination](#))). Other potential sources of bias (e.g., feelings about program/advisor where applicant received their training/education, feelings toward applicant’s current/former institution, applicant worked at search committee member’s former institution/organization and there are feelings which may bias the process, etc.)
5. Applicant/candidate is a current or former mentor or mentee
6. Search committee member has a personal financial connection to an applicant/candidate
7. Search committee member has a personal connection to an applicant/candidate that is perhaps not connected to financial gain/loss, but to prestige, notoriety, or status
8. Applicant/candidate is a current or former close collaborator (e.g., co-author or co-collaborator on a major project, grant co-PI, co-editor of journal, book, literary collection, digital database, etc.)
9. Search committee member believes their recusal would be in the best interest of maintaining the integrity of an ethical and equitable process

Situations that are, typically, not cause for recusal (depending upon the extent of relationship):

1. Applicant/candidate is a former student

2. Applicant/candidate is a professional/personal acquaintance (e.g., someone you see at an annual conference but are not close to, a colleague from a former job, someone you went to college or graduate school with, a church family congregation member with whom you are not close)
3. Applicant/candidate is a collaborator, but not on a major continuing project (e.g., appeared on a panel together, co-facilitated a workshop together in the past, present at the same conferences, publish or exhibit creative works in the same outlets, etc.)

*“Okay, I think this situation potentially warrants recusal, what should I do next?”*

The search committee member should disclose the relationship or potential concern with the search committee chairperson at the start of the search process or as soon as they become aware of the situation (e.g., the search may have been in progress and a latter applicant is a colleague, friend, or family member).

In these instances, a determination will need to be made as to the degree of relationship that exists between the applicant/candidate and the search committee member. The search committee chair in conjunction with the search committee member will make this determination (with input as needed from Human Resources or Search Committee Training personnel as best meets the specific situation). In cases where the degree/extent of relationship is determined to be minimal, the search committee member may proceed with review of application materials, evaluation of the candidate, and search committee discussions of the candidate’s materials and/or interview processes.

For cases in which the determination is made that the relationship between the applicant/candidate and the search committee member is more than minimal, the search committee chair in conjunction with the search committee member (and appropriate input as needed from Human Resources or Search Committee Training personnel as best meets the circumstances) will discuss options for recusal.

## Options for Recusal

*“Do I need to recuse myself from all search committee activities?”*

It is permissible to be recused from various elements of the search process dependent upon the nature of the disclosed relationship. For example:

1. Search Committee Member will not review any materials nor participate in rubric evaluation or search committee, but may participate in search committee discussions regarding the specific candidate(s) in question provided they do not share information gained from their relationship with the candidate that would not be available for other applicants and that is not position relevant.
2. Search Committee Member will not review any materials nor participate in rubric evaluation for the applicant, but may be present as a silent observer for search committee discussions regarding the specific candidate(s) in question.
3. Search Committee Member will not review any materials nor participate in rubric evaluation or search committee discussions regarding the specific candidate(s) in question.
4. Search Committee Member will not participate in any aspects of the search process.

At all times, the Search committee member may choose to recuse themselves if they believe their recusal would be in the best interest of maintaining the integrity of an ethical and equitable process.

### Conflict of Interest

If a bona fide conflict of interest situation exists for a search committee member and an applicant, recusal would be appropriate. The following definitions refer to conflict of interest at Hope College:

“Conflict of Interest” means any situation, circumstance or state of affairs relating to a Covered Person which: (1) involves personal interests or Financial Interests of the individual that may be inconsistent with, or divergent from, the interests of the College; or (2) could ultimately harm or benefit financially: (a) the individual; (b) any member of his or her Immediate Family; or (c) any entity in which any individual described in clause (a) or (b) of this definition has a five percent or greater ownership or beneficial interest, with respect to which any such individual serves as a director or officer, or over whose activities or decisions any such individual has the ability to exercise control. Without limiting the foregoing, any interest in a Related Party Transaction shall constitute a Conflict of Interest.

“Financial Interest” means any instance in which a Covered Person has, directly, or indirectly, through business, investment or Immediate Family: (1) an actual or potential ownership or beneficial interest in any entity with which the College has, or may reasonably be expected to have, a transaction or arrangement; or (2) an actual or potential Compensation arrangement with any entity or individual with which the College has, or may reasonably be expected to have, a transaction or arrangement.

Hope College affirms the dignity of all applicants as persons made in the image of God and seeks to engage in equitable search processes that provide opportunities for candidates to show their best selves.