
A Search Committee Code of Ethics

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Search committees should consider adopting a code of conduct to ensure impartial, ethical, and respectful treatment of candidates, and also to ensure that a decision is reached based on the most complete and accurate information. The following might be a model for such a code.

As members of this search committee, we accept our responsibility to protect the integrity of every prospect and candidate. Accordingly, each of us pledges to adhere to these principles:

1. I acknowledge that only the Chairperson is authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the institution.
 2. I certify that I am personally not a candidate for the position.
 3. I subscribe to the principle that any appearance of real or potential conflict of interest in the relationship between me and a prospect or candidate should be avoided and that its occurrence will be disclosed promptly to the committee.
 4. I pledge to keep as my primary focus the need of the institution to attract a new hire within a timetable that gives it a competitive advantage.
 5. I will follow the principles below for the management of information about the work of the committee. This work includes what is developed and received about prospects, candidates, and their employing institutions. I understand this effort is necessary to attract excellent finalists, to avoid putting their current positions in jeopardy, and to maintain my institution's professional image. Specifically, I will adhere to the following code of responsibility, accuracy, and integrity:
 - I pledge to respect the absolute confidentiality of all prospects and candidates. I will not reveal the name of or any information about any prospects or candidates before or after the committee completes its work.
 - I will adhere to the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct.
- I will be fair, accurate, honest, responsible, and decent in my management of information.
 - I will avoid practices that would conflict with my ability to be fair and unbiased.
 - I will develop my independent opinions prior to group discussions.
 - I will guard against inaccuracies, carelessness, bias, and distortion made through either emphasis or omission of information.
 - I will admit any misrepresentation of information and correct it promptly and prominently.
 - I will strive for impartial treatment of issues and dispassionate handling of controversial subjects. I understand that prospects and candidates who have held executive jobs and made difficult decisions have not necessarily been in positions to win popularity contests.
 - I will not permit personal interests to distort or misrepresent the facts.
 - I will give reports on candidates to the Chair of the Search Committee for determining their accuracy before the Chair shares the information with others. Reports should be confirmed by three on-the-record sources.
 - I understand that no code of ethics can prejudice every situation.
 - I will use common sense and good judgment in applying ethical principles to search work.
 - I consider the content and intent of this statement to be a matter of personal responsibility.

The concept and several of the principles in this model code of conduct were initiated by the search committee chaired by Frances Hesselbein for the search for the president of Independent Sector. Principles were also borrowed and adapted from the APME (Associated Press Managing Editors) Code of Ethics for Newspapers and their Staff.