Strategies for Strengthening Nurse Leader Recruitment and Retention

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The Recruiting Landscape

• Highly competitive
• Greying of the profession
• New types of leaders – DNP vs. PhD
• Work-life balance
• Technology impact on education and simulation
• Millennial impact
• NIH funding impact
• Tenure challenges
ARE YOU SURE
YOU'RE READY?
Be Prepared to Recruit

- **Job Description (JD)**
  - Ensure search committee and other stakeholders are in agreement with Dean’s priorities for this hire
  - Focus published JD on strategic goals and not endless bullets of duties – don’t overwhelm interested candidates with pages of duties right out of the gate
  - Share School’s culture and tie it in with University’s culture
  - Share link to tenure guidelines if applicable
  - Provide salary range only if you are absolutely capped or have significant internal equity issues
  - Share city and surrounding highlights
Be Prepared to Recruit

- **Search Committee**
  - Keep committee between 5 and 8 people
  - Appoint committee members who are positive and in sync with the Dean’s/School’s future direction
  - Members should add value and be invested in the success of the new hire
  - Charge the committee with confidentially – have them sign confidentially agreements
  - Ensure committee knows the difference between “hearsay” and “direct knowledge”
  - Search committee members should be highly engaged, attend all meetings, and be cheerleaders for the position and candidates
  - Have committee members keep an open mind – there is never a perfect candidate that will meet everyone’s expectations
  - Committee should nominate candidates and/or share position with colleagues
  - Do not conduct backdoor references until finalists are named and inform them you will be contacting colleagues
Be Prepared to Recruit

• **Salary and other funding**
  • Know AACN hiring salary data by region, public or private, rank/track/position
  • Know your internal budget limitations and salary equity issues – if market is higher than your internal range, work this out prior to starting recruitment or be prepared to offer other incentives (signing bonus, time/goal completion specific bonus, start-up package)
  • Specify, when applicable, that all or a portion of bonuses be returned if placed candidate leaves position prior to the completion of one, two or three years of service
  • Ensure any external (other schools, department, center and institutes) funding sources are identified and a MOU has been signed by all parties
  • Be very specific with written draft start-up package financial details – when will funds be available, what can funds be used for, what happens if not all funds are spent on schedule, etc.
  • Share prior two years’ merit increase percentages
  • Clearly identify portion of salary that is their academic base without a leadership or other administrative stipend
"We're replacing our Search Committee with posses."
Recruiting – Search Committee Pitfalls to Avoid

• Members not attending all or most meetings – lose time catching members up
• Committees see themselves as “eliminators” not recruiters
• Committee members recast Dean’s vision for this hire
• Clear division between “old guard” and new faculty – need one voice
• Disfavoring a candidate because of their current institution
• Focusing too much on one part of their CV and not valuing entire body of work and potential
• Requiring current funding and discounting recent grants and future funding potential
• Formulating opinions regarding tenure potential when many on committee are not tenured
• Committee members absent or late for interviews, presentations, lunch/dinner meetings
• Sharing hearsay about candidate – first-hand knowledge of candidate is valuable but hearsay can be incorrect or one-sided at best – all leaders have had to make tough decisions in the past and no leader is 100% liked by all
• Too casual dress at interviews – put on your Sunday best – you are recruiting
Get to Know Your Candidates Well

• Motivation
  • Why this job, why now in their career?
  • Identify prime motivation
    • Move in to a leadership position?
    • Salary?
    • Start-up package ended?
    • Increase research collaboration?
    • Better resources?
    • Spouse/significant other career move, retirement?
    • Empty nester – “My time”?
    • Institutional reputation?
    • Conflicts at current institution?
    • Failure to obtain tenure?
    • Leverage for a counter offer at current institution?
    • Be closer to family?
Get to Know Your Candidates

• Personal/Family Needs
  • Spouse/significant other’s career needs
  • School-aged children’s needs
    • Public/private school options
    • Daycare options
    • Support systems (sports, food allergies, faith-based after school programs)
  • Extended family obligations (aging parents and/or other primary caregiver needs)
  • Immediate family distance tolerance
  • Housing/relocation assistance – connect candidate with relocation realtor
Interviewing

- Put your best foot forward
  - Interviewing
    - First interview (preferably video conference) should be focused on getting to know the professional, their motivation for pursuing the position, and their leadership characteristics
    - Avoid vision and goal setting questions – Candidate doesn’t know your institution well enough yet to frame big picture and directional strategies
    - Have the search committee in one room for interviews
      - Test your technology and have staff conduct a trial video session with candidate several days prior to interview
      - Remember that it is more difficult for the candidate to see and hear you
      - Look at the camera when speaking, look engaged and interested even if you are no longer interested in the candidate – you are representing the Dean, School and your institution
    - Have a reasonable number of talking points – don’t try to fit 20 questions into 30-45 minutes
    - Save time for the candidate to ask a few questions to the search committee
Interviewing

• Put your best foot forward
  • Interviewing
    • **On-campus first interviews** should be focused on providing time for key stakeholders to get to know the candidate
      • Prepare key stakeholders in advance of the interviews
      • Do not run the candidate all over campus
        • Identify a central conference room where most key stakeholders can come and meet the candidate
        • Keep to schedule and allow plenty of breaks for candidate
        • Reduce over-exposure of candidate to faculty and others
      • Collect stakeholder feedback within three days from interview
Interviewing

- Put your best foot forward
  - **On-campus second interviews** should be focused on providing time for the candidate to meet the faculty, make a presentation, and meet with potential collaborators (research, technology, center directors)
    - Prepare faculty, remind them to recruit, not to “weed out” – this is not a dissertation panel
    - Do not run the candidate all over campus (see above)
    - Encourage all faculty, regardless of Department, to attend candidate’s presentation – consider inviting students and external parties as well
    - Collect faculty feedback within three days of interview
    - Initiate negotiations, draft terms of appointment
Lookout for Red Flags

- Recent job move(s)
- Difficulty/tardiness in responding/communicating
- Difficulty in scheduling interviews (video or on-site)
- Rude to support staff
- Impatience with process
- Start-up package exhausted
- Failure to obtain tenure
- Negative social media
- Directly known behavioral issues
- Over-focus on salary/inflexibility
- Spouse/significant other will remain in current location
- Kids in final years of high school
- Relocating aging parent(s)
- Tough real estate market/location for selling home
- Struggles with technology
Red Flags Candidates Notice

- Lack of communication with candidate during process
- Unwelcoming faculty/search committee members
- Disinterest during video conferencing and on-site interview
- Interrupting candidate while responding to questions
- Comparisons to prior incumbent and especially other candidates
- Failure to coordinate logistics (hotel, car service, campus interview locations, meals/breaks)
- Low attendance at on-campus presentation
- Unprepared stakeholders
- Long time delay in hearing about next steps after each stage of recruitment
Recruitment Experience - Lessons Learned

• **Time is not always on your side**
  • Overly lengthy recruitment process tends to lose good candidates
  • Candidate loses interest – keep candidate engaged with frequent updates
  • Candidate becomes interested in another position
  • Candidate negotiates a retention package at current institution
  • Tenure process can take months
  • Share tenure process and timeline early in recruitment process
  • Run CV by others who are well-informed regarding tenure guidelines early in the process
  • Start negotiating with candidate on salary and start-up package once identified as a finalist – Use “Draft Terms of Appointment” memo to nail down details and expectations if selected
  • Ensure Dean communicates her/his interest personally to finalists and keeps them engaged
  • Know what signatures and university approval is needed prior to extending offer – get offer out ASAP
  • Avoid large gaps in start dates – too many things can go wrong – keep communicating
  • Communicate, Communicate, Communicate
Summary

- Recruitment is a two-way street, highly competitive and complex
- A candidate’s recruitment experience reflects on you and your institution – be a cheerleader for the position and your School
- Respect all candidates and their interest in the position
- Don’t be too laser-focused on one thing – review candidates’ entire body of work and potential
- Know the salary market, your restraints and your flexibility
- Recruitment and relocation have to work for the entire family
- Stay highly engaged with those in which you have the most interest
- Be timely in your communication updates
- Invest in the on-boarding phase to welcome and orient the new hire
Thank You