

Encourage as many faculty members as possible to call, send e-mails or letters expressing excitement that they have accepted, and not to hesitate to ask questions or ask for assistance.

Share department information with the new candidate, but don't imply they need to do a lot before arriving. For example, for one of my jobs I was added to the department listserv right after I accepted.

Offer help and information about mundane everyday things: banks, housing (including college rentals or buying assistance), public schools, and moving companies. Perhaps offer to help unload or arrange for low-cost student labor. One school had a college-owned room I rented at low cost for a week while I searched for housing.

A nice perk which I would have liked at all my jobs, was the option of a salary advance. Many schools do not issue the first paycheck until the end of September. This is usually six to eight weeks after a new hire has had to make a number of large expenditures, such as a security deposit or down payment. The school which offered this option takes \$500 out of each of the first four paychecks, and pays it in a lump sum (\$2000) in August.



Brian Dott

## **Hiring: The Nuts and Bolts** **Joan O'Mara, Washington and Lee University**

### **MY SCORECARD**

I have been part of six searches in East Asian Studies at my institution over the past twelve years. Several of them have gone as one would have hoped, because they were searches for Chinese or Japanese language faculty, and the department involved, East Asian Languages and Literatures, exists in conjunction with East Asian Studies and without a separate major; all members of the Search Committees were part of the East Asian Studies program and shared common goals. Several searches, however, have presented greater difficulties, in part because they were run through other departments whose curricular concerns were not the same as the concerns of the East Asian Studies faculty, especially our concern for maintaining balance within our own program. It may be helpful, or at least cautionary, to share a few caveats

that have come out of these latter search processes, as well as some practical procedural guidelines that have served us well in the former searches.

### **BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

If your search is being shared with another department on your campus, know where you stand at the outset. Have an understanding about what your role is to be, with your Dean and with the Chair of the department that will be conducting the search. You, or a member of your Asian Studies program, should be on the Search Committee, if the search is for someone who will serve in your program. If that is not to be the case, why not? And if not, how will that affect what is expected of you and other Asian Studies faculty during the search, in terms of time and energy? Should those expectations be spelled out? What effects are comments from you likely to have on the deliberation process?

The subtext here is that area studies programs are too often second class citizens at their own institutions, with input from area studies faculty permitted, even expected, but then given lip service and practically, or entirely, ignored in the final departmental deliberations, whether those deliberations be for hiring, or later, in the tenure process.

### **PRACTICALITIES OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS:**

Advertisements for an upcoming open position should be placed in a timely fashion in disciplinary publications, as well as in the Association for Asian Studies (AAS) Newsletter and online listings. Remember that the later you set your application deadline, the later you will be interviewing, and the more limited your applicant pool may be. It is important to include in the job description the fact that the successful candidate will be expected to serve in an Asian Studies program, as well as in a disciplinary department. If it is important to your program that the successful candidate be able and willing to teach a broader range of courses than his or her particular field of research interest or geographical specialization might indicate, that fact should also be stated in the position listing. If your position is a language position, you may want to request that a teaching demonstration cassette (in VHS format, so that all that are submitted may be viewed easily on a VCR) be included as part of the application.

Initial screening of applicants' files by the members of the search committee should be carried out independently. Individual members of the committee should take notes on the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate and come up with individual short lists of eight to ten semi-finalists. One detail that I have found very useful to note in the screening of files is the undergraduate institution attended by the candidate. If the B.A. is from a good liberal arts college, that may be a better indication than a Ph.D. from the most prestigious graduate institution in that the candidate will understand the positives that can be had from teaching at your school. Obviously, this will be a less important factor if the undergraduate institution is outside the United States,

and such may often be the case with applications for language positions.

The search committee should then meet to compare notes and decide on a common short list of semi-finalist candidates, generally to be drawn from candidates who appear on two or more of the individual short lists. Those candidates should then be interviewed. If the opening is for a language position, it is important that some time be allowed during the interview for a brief presentation, or a discussion, in the language under consideration; if no one on the search committee speaks the language in question, arrangements should be made to tape that portion of the interview and have it evaluated by a native speaker. You may also want to let your candidates know in advance that this will be a part of the interview.

Ideally, personal interviews of semi-finalists should be conducted face to face, by two or more members of the search committee, at the annual meeting of a professional conference. The AAS annual meeting is a logical possible setting for that round of interviews, but, as with this past year, the dates of the annual meeting can be too late in the academic year to be a practical choice; even in the best of years, the AAS annual meeting falls later in the process than one would wish.

The alternate option for initial personal interviews of semi-finalists is the telephone interview, using a conference call format. Be sure that all members of the search committee are familiar and comfortable with the equipment and procedures you will be using. It is best, perhaps, to coordinate this “performance,” with prepared questions that different committee members will be ready to ask at certain times during the interview. It is not good to have “down” time during the conference call itself, with committee members floundering about what to say next. If you follow a set sequence of questions for each call in the series, it will also be easier later to compare the responses of the different candidates.

At the beginning of a conference call interview, members of the search committee should identify themselves and their disciplines. For language positions, don’t forget to provide a few minutes for discussion or a presentation in that language, and tape that segment, so that native speakers not on the search committee can evaluate it. Provide time for the candidate to ask, as well as to answer questions. Finally, it is probably better, at this stage, to be straightforward about the fact that you are a small liberal arts college, perhaps located in a small town outside of major metropolitan areas, with all of the pros and cons that that can mean in your particular situation.

### **PRACTICALITIES OF THE FINAL SELECTION PROCESS**

When finalists are invited to campus, it is important to allow enough time, preferably longer than a one-day period, for the scheduling of meetings, lectures, and other activities. It is highly preferable, if at all possible, to have the candidates come in on a Thursday or Friday, and leave

Sunday morning, or to arrive on a Saturday and leave on a Monday or Tuesday. The Saturday night stay-over saves hundreds of dollars on airfare, which the Dean’s Office should appreciate.

Some things that can be scheduled for the extra Saturday or Sunday that a candidate may be with you include: a campus tour; time for a driving or walking tour of the area beyond the campus, so that the candidate can see the sorts of amenities that are in your area; time scheduled for the candidate to meet with a local real estate agent; and a group reception or dinner for the candidate and members of your Asian Studies Committee.

While on campus, the candidate should have meetings scheduled with each individual member of the Search Committee, with the director of the Asian Studies program (if that person is not also on the search committee), and with the Dean. A formal “public” presentation, based on the candidate’s research, should be scheduled, as well as a less formal, typical classroom lecture.

There should be a chance for the candidate to meet over dinner with members of the search committee, and also at a reception or dinner with members of the Asian Studies program. Finally, a chance should be provided for the candidate to meet with majors and other interested students, to ask and be asked questions without any other faculty present; this can perhaps take place over lunch. The latter opportunity is particularly good in helping candidates to see your campus and your program from a point of view other than that of the faculty. It will also not hurt your relations with your students, who will feel involved in the process and who never mind being treated to lunch!

Once all finalists have made their campus visits, feedback should be gathered, a decision reached, and an offer made, as quickly as possible. There may need to be negotiations between your candidate and your Dean, but once the offer has been accepted, the appointment letter from the Dean should state specifically that the person will be teaching for the Asian Studies program as well as for the disciplinary department. This can be an important detail to have included, for the sake of accountability when the time eventually comes for tenure and promotion decisions.



Joan O'Mara