

# Making Informed Hiring Decisions

## *Steps to Prevent Rehiring Employees with History of Unsatisfactory Performance*

### 1. **Check the Appointment System to Obtain UW Work History – BEFORE Making Offer**

All Human Resources (HR) departments should have access to APPR on 3270. Before making an offer, the HR department should check APPR to see if the person has a UW work history or if he/she has listed a complete work history on their resume. It is not unusual for an applicant to omit from a resume short periods of employment. If there are such omissions, the candidate should be asked why it was omitted. Other information that might suggest further follow-up is needed includes but is not limited to: frequent job hopping, recent resignation, termination, appointments of short duration, etc. This additional information should be shared with the supervisor for consideration.

While HR departments may not have access to APPI (which shows the reason for the termination of an appointment) for employees outside of their department, all divisions do have such access. HR departments should contact their division HR person to ask them to check APPI for the reasons why appointments ended.

### 2. **Check References**

Unlike stocks, past performance is generally the best predictor of future performance; therefore reference checks are essential to hiring the best candidates.

The three biggest problems in this area are:

- failure to contact references,
- ineffective reference checks, and
- only checking the references given by the candidate

While references are sometimes unreliable (with biases for and against employees), it is still an essential part of the selection process. Too often UW-Madison employers forego references, rely only on written references or conduct poor reference checks. Here are a few tips.

- ✓ Always obtain oral references - call the references; do not rely solely on written references. People are more likely to be frank in conversation.
- ✓ Ask specific open-ended questions; not yes/no questions or vague “tell me about John.” See section 4 for sample questions.
- ✓ Make sure that you speak to former supervisors of the candidate; not just colleagues, friends or relatives.
- ✓ If you know from APPR or the resume that the candidate worked on campus but did not provide a reference for that unit, contact them anyway. It is perfectly legal to check references the candidate did not list. As a matter of courtesy, however, you should inform the candidate that you will need to contact a reference from department X. You may also take that opportunity to ask why he/she did not provide a reference from that unit.

### 3. Classified Employees Terminated For Cause

Classified employees who are fired due to work rule violations are not eligible for reinstatement. Such employees may take an exam and apply again as a new hire, and they frequently do this. Of course, your employing unit may decide not to offer a job to an employee who has previously been terminated for work rule violations based on the employment history or reference checks.

In addition, if an individual was terminated from a permanent classified position due to work rule violations from the University, your employing unit can pursue removal of the candidate from the employment register. However, this step may not be necessary if you merely decide, based on the employment history and reference checks, to not offer the position.

### 4. Reference Tips

The principles that apply to interview questions also apply to reference questions: ask only work-related questions; ask the same or similar questions for all candidates; ask open-ended questions, not those that can be answered Yes/No.

Before asking questions, briefly describe the position for which the person applied. Be respectful of the person's time and limit to questions to those you think are most important.

Sample Questions (select based on type of job you are filling):

- What were the beginning and ending employment dates for Pat?
- What position(s) did he hold? Salary history?
- How long have you worked with or supervised this individual?
- What were his most recent job duties?
- How would you describe his attitude toward work?
- How would you describe his overall performance?
- How was his attendance? Was he punctual?
- How well did he prioritize his responsibilities?
- What areas of performance did he excel in?
- What areas of performance did he have to work on?
- How would you compare his work to the work of others who performed the same job?
- How would you describe his ability to work independently? Can you give me an example?
- How would you describe his ability to work under pressure? Can you give me an example?
- Is he a self-starter? Can you give me an example?
- How would you describe his ability to meet deadlines?
- How would you describe his verbal and written communication skills?
- How would you evaluate his organizational skills?
- How would you evaluate his ability to take constructive criticism? Can you give me an example?
- How would you assess his interpersonal skills?
- How does he handle conflict situations? Can you give me an example?
- How does he get along with co-workers? With Managers?
- How does he respond to supervision? What kind of supervision does he work best under?
- How would you describe his ability to share information needed to get the job done?
- Why did he leave his job with you?
- Do you have any advice that would help him be successful in this position?
- Based on your experience with him, do you think he would be successful in this type of position?
- Would you rehire this person? Why?
- Were there any issues that we need to be aware of before making a hiring decision?
- Is there anything else job-related that you can tell be about him that would be helpful?

## **5. Criminal Background Checks**

Under state law, it is unlawful to discriminate based on arrest records or conviction records of applicants for employment unless the following is true.

Arrests - Applicants can only be excluded from consideration based on arrest record if there are pending charges that are substantially related to the circumstances of the job. All other arrests must be ignored.

Convictions - Applicants can be excluded from consideration based on convictions if the conviction is substantially related to the circumstances of the job. All other convictions must be ignored.

It is important to be consistent and fair in the use of criminal background checks. If you are going to check criminal records, you should decide that based on the needs of the job before you receive any applications and you should state that in job announcements. This is essential to avoid the possibility of bias based on the identity of the finalists.

Questions about whether a position is substantially related should be directed to your HR department, who may consult with Administrative Legal Services.