Requesting References for Non-Academic Positions

References should be obtained on the final candidate for your position before making an offer of employment. Candidates should provide references that are meaningful and job related. Former employer and supervisor information is provided by each candidate in their employment application (online).

Checking References

The purpose of checking references is to verify the individual’s work and performance history in order to select the best-qualified applicant for the job. It is best practice to contact at least three references which should include previous employers for the finalist. There are instances where it is not possible to collect three relevant references such as when the candidate has worked for the same employer for most of their career. References must be checked prior to making the job offer.

Preparing for the Reference Check

The Office of Human Resources is best prepared to complete this step in the process for the search chair and turn over reference check forms for review. If a search chair choses to contact an applicant’s references please remember the following:

- Be consistent. Ask the same question in each reference check. Never allow the individual to give you “confidential” or “off-the-record” information.
- If references were checked for some applicants, do not hire another applicant without checking his/her references.
- Develop a set of behavior-based reference check questions from the interview questions used for each applicant interviewed.
- Weigh information in the same manner for all applicants. What disqualifies one should be the basis for disqualifying any other.
- Consider the source. Remember that information is limited by the perception of the person giving it. If negative information is received about an applicant, weigh it with information from other references before making a hiring decision.
- Never raise questions that fall under the EEO discriminatory practice areas, such as questions regarding sex, race, color, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin.
- On the Utica College application for employment completed online, candidate’s release and give consent for the College to check references with previous employers. It is customary to contact the candidate notifying them of your intent to contact their references. Applicants should never
be told that references are being checked because they have been “selected” for the position. You should only indicate that the applicant is “being considered”.

- Do not put anyone’s job in jeopardy. We recommend a delay in contacting the applicant’s current employer until they have been determined as the finalist.

Conducting the Reference Check

1. State the purpose of the call and briefly describe the position for which the applicant has applied.
2. Confirm the relationship between the person giving the reference and the applicant
3. Verify basic data such as job title, functions, salary, and dates of employment
4. Ask job-related questions about the applicant’s knowledge, skills and abilities as they relate to the vacant position.
5. Ask questions that are designed to bring out the supervisors observations of the applicant’s work behaviors.

Remember

1. A previous employer may have rules regarding supplying references and may provide only the position title, dates of employment, salary and eligibility for rehire. If this is the case, it should be documented on the reference check form.
2. Some organizations may have a policy of not providing references when contacted because of potential liability in the misrepresentation of information. If this is the case, it should not be held against the job applicant. Organizations with this policy typically provide no information, either pro or con; so the withholding of information should not be viewed as negative.

Internal Applicants

If an internal employee is the final candidate, the hiring manager/search chair should notify the employee that they will be contacting the candidate’s supervisor to obtain a reference. Hiring managers may contact the HR department to obtain information regarding the employee’s performance as contained in the personnel file.

Conclusion

All completed reference check forms should be sent to the Office of Human Resources.