Best Practices for Conducting Online Interviews

Before the interview:
- Determine a date and time that works for the candidate and your interview panelists. *A candidate may be in a different time zone then you; make sure the start time is clearly communicated (e.g., CST, EST, PST).*
- In your communications to the candidate:
  - Provide link and meeting instructions for Zoom.
  - Offer set-up assistance.
    - Provide Job Aids on how to download, change meeting settings, or troubleshoot basic errors.
    - Offer to have a staff member call the candidate, prior to the interview, to walk the candidate through the set-up process. *We recommend a staff member who will not participate in the interview to perform this task.*
  - Reassure the candidate their technical ability (or lack thereof) will not impact their candidacy one way or the other; explain the reason(s) why your search committee has decided to pursue this unique method for interviewing.
- Test out Zoom prior to conducting the interview.
  - This is often recommended for candidates to do prior to their online interview; however, it is also a good idea for the interview panelists to do this as well, particularly if you are responsible for leading the interview.
  - Learn the basics of Zoom like how to create a meeting or what features to turn on or off (e.g., mute/unmute participants; turn on/off participants video at start of meeting; etc.).
  - Invite a colleague to a Zoom meeting and ask for feedback on your background environment. Check to see if you need to remove any noise, clutter or personal effects. *If you are unable to change your environment, Zoom has a setting that allows you to change your background (see Settings / Virtual Background).*
  - Test to see if you have sufficient lighting in your room. If you are sitting with a window or bright light directly behind you, you will be backlit, making it difficult to see you on camera. Try moving to another side of the room or reposition the light source.
- Determine a set of interview questions you will use for all candidates.
- Decide who will lead the interview and who will ask the interview questions.

During the interview:
- At the beginning of the interview, go over a few housekeeping items:
  - Ask if the candidate can hear you clearly; make adjustments accordingly.
  - Discuss how unforeseen technical disruptions will be handled (e.g., loss of internet connection; audio distortion, etc.).
  - Introduce the interview panel.

- Review agenda with the candidate, such as the length of the interview and what you plan to accomplish.
- If you decide to record the interview, inform the candidate you are recording the interview and why. This can be communicated in advance as well.
- Ask the candidate if he/she has any questions before the interview begins.

- Use nonverbal cues to create a comfortable environment for the candidate, who may be under stress or uneasy in participating in an online interview:
  - Smile
  - Make eye contact
  - Speak at a regular tone/pace; use short sentences.

A few tips to remember during the interview:
- Look directly at the camera when you speak instead of at the candidate on the screen (or at your image). This will create eye contact.
- Have good posture. Your posture should convey that you are relaxed and attentive; sit up straight and do not sit too close to the camera.
- Listen and wait for the candidate to complete his/her answer before proceeding to the next question. There may be connection delays which can make for an uncomfortable conversation if active listening is not practiced.
- Be mindful of self-touching (such as repeatedly touching your face, scratching your nose or adjusting your hair). Your movements become more obvious when someone is staring directly at you on their screen.

At the end of the interview:
- Allow time for the candidate to ask the interview panel questions about the position, your Department/College or the University.
- Provide an overview of the next steps in the interview process:
  - Will there be additional round(s) of interviews?
  - What is the timeframe for making the decision?
  - How will the candidate be informed of the decision?

Sources/Articles:
CBS News: 8 mistakes to avoid in an online job interview
Flexjobs: Best practices for conducting remote interviews
InterCall/WestUC: How to conduct an online interview
Wright State University (Human Resources): Conducting effective Skype Interviews