

Background Verification Supplement

Dartmouth's largest investment is in human capital – its workforce. As with any significant investment, it is important to identify the information Dartmouth needs to make good decisions and to consider the most effective and efficient way to obtain accurate and reliable information.

Hiring the right person brings new skills, ideas, experience and excitement to Dartmouth. However, hiring the wrong person can hurt productivity and morale, and in the worst case scenario, cause real damage to our current employees and our organization.

Dartmouth's hiring managers have an obligation to avoid negligently hiring people, especially those who might endanger employees or students. Because people sometimes falsify their credentials and background it is important to check references. Further, some candidates interview well but have a record of not actually performing as well as they have indicated in the interview. Therefore, it is important to check out any areas in which there are doubts or uncertainties. Often reference checks will dispel these doubts or give information that will help a hiring manager be a more effective supervisor of the new hire.

Thoroughness in the hiring process can ensure that hiring decisions are based on factual information, and helps hiring managers ensure that they are hiring the right person. Further, effectively engaging in non-discriminatory due diligence is the way to obtain the information necessary to make the right hiring decisions.

A word of caution: Although hiring managers want to have as much relevant information as possible about potential employees, this must be balanced against the privacy rights of individual applicants. There are a number of federal and state laws that regulate when and how Dartmouth may collect and use this information.

Due Diligence Process

Effective July 1, 2008, the background verification process must be complete before salary setting and an offer of employment is made to the final candidate.

The elements of the process are as follows:

Properly Completed Dartmouth's Online Application

Completion of the online application signifies Dartmouth's right to obtain pertinent information about the application. The applicant must complete an online application prior to interviews and reference checking. The online application includes a statement authorizing the College to verify background information. It is not sufficient for an applicant to simply refer hiring managers to his or her resume because information regarding previous employment and education will be subject to verification through the due diligence process. The online application is also the College's official record of application and is used as a basis for EEO reporting.

Successful Application and Resume Review

Hiring managers should confirm that the information on the resume matches the information on the application. If any criminal history is disclosed, hiring managers have the duty to examine the factors of noted convictions. Factors such as age and the time of the offense, seriousness and nature of violation, relationship to position and responsibilities and rehabilitation should be taken into account. Contact your HR consultant for assistance in evaluating noted convictions. Breaks in employment should be analyzed and explored during the interview process. Take into account that layoffs are not unusual in this economy.

Successful Phone and In-Person Interviews

Effectively conducting employment interviews and evaluating applicants takes more time than having an informal conversation. It requires training in the skills, techniques and requirements of success interviewing. HR professionals and classroom and print resources are available to assist in the enhancement of interviewing skills.

Hiring managers should decide on overall structure of the interview process and follow the process uniformly for all candidates, even those candidates who are internal or otherwise “known” to the interviewer(s). Interview questions (technical and behavioral) should be scripted ahead of time so that the same ground will be covered with each candidate. It is important that all candidates be asked uniform questions, although follow-up and probing questions may vary. All questions should be job-related and legal. Know the appropriate and inappropriate questions to ensure avoiding those questions that can be potentially discriminatory.

In-person interviews should be conducted prior to reference checking and verification of background information. Potential candidates should be advised that background information will be verified and should also be afforded the opportunity to contact their references in advance of a call from the hiring manager.

Verification of Employment History

Hiring managers should verify the last ten years of work history or last two to three employers, if available. When contacting former employer verify:

- Starting and ending dates of employment
- Title of last position held with organization
- Reason for leaving the organization
- The job description/duties (confirmation of what is provided on application/resume)
- Eligibility for rehire
- Open ended – “anything else” question.

Verification of previous employment guidelines are available on the HR website at:

http://www.dartmouth.edu/~hrs/employment/recruitment/verification_previous_employment_guidelines.pdf

Satisfactory Reference Checks

If the selected candidate is a Dartmouth employee, contact your HR Consultant regarding performance history. Contact employee's supervisor to verify work background, attendance, performance and credentials.

For external candidates, more detailed information is required and hiring managers need to call former supervisors and two additional people whose names the candidate has provided as a professional reference to establish their job duties, working relationships, performance, behaviors, credentials, dates of employment, etc.

When checking references, limit questions to information that is job-related; don't ask for medical information, information about physical characteristics, and/or other personal information that is not related to the employee's conduct on the job. Consider preparing a list of job-related behavioral-based questions that will be asked during the reference check process. This may help avoid claims of discrimination or claims that the prospective employer inquired about information that it was not legally entitled to have. Reference check guidelines and behavioral-based reference questions are available on the HR website.

Reference Information Checklist:

- Confirmation of dates of employment, job title, reason for leaving, and salary.
- Summary description of position
 - o Obtain information and understanding of candidate's job duties/ requirements
 - o Discuss how the candidate performed, especially in comparison with others
- Strengths and weaknesses
 - o Identify and discuss the ways in which the candidate used their strengths on the job and the ways in which s/he improved their weak points
- Performance evaluation
 - o Discuss performance history and how current performance compares with past and others; identify the candidate's ratings within that organization
 - o Discuss how the candidate performed, especially in comparison with others
- Interpersonal skills
 - o Inquire about the candidate's interaction with co-workers, leadership and public
- Attendance
 - o This should be quantified by specifics regarding attendance and tardiness.
- Corrective action
 - o Any and all levels and reasons should be noted.
 - o Improvements should be discussed.
- Rehire
 - o Is the candidate eligible for rehire? If not, discuss the reasons why.
- Open summary
 - o Is there any additional information that would be helpful for hire?

Previous employers or supervisors may be reluctant to provide detailed references for former employees for fear of legal repercussions.

Internet Checks

A search of the internet and local and national media for mention of applicant could be a valuable piece of information for hiring consideration as it relates to previous positions held and professional life. For most candidates a 3-5 minute search will be sufficient.

Recommended sites to check can most likely be found on a candidate's application or resume including, for instance, current or previous employer and professional association or networks. Non-third-party verified information such as blogs and social networking sites should be avoided. If something is discovered on recommended sites or national or local news media mention that causes concern, contact your HR Consultant and they will assist with the evaluation process.

More important, if an internet check reveals the mention of a candidate's private political views, life style choices, or religious affiliation, beliefs or activities, these are the things that are not to be considered in hiring and should be ignored.

Verification of Education and Professional Credentials

Many of Dartmouth's positions require applicants to have a certain level of education in order to be considered for employment; these requirements range anywhere from a high school diploma or equivalent, to a 4-year degree, to some type of advanced training. Even more important, some positions require that an individual hold a current professional license. Therefore, it may not only be important, but necessary, for a hiring manager to verify an applicant's education or professional license information.

Hiring managers can delegate the process of verifying education and professional licenses to administrative support staff, if necessary. Hiring managers can also ask applicant for a copy of degrees awarded and, in some cases, licenses that enhance the qualification of the individual. A copy of the verification of licenses should be forwarded to HR for the applicant's/employee's official personnel file.

Contacting the college or university registrar's office listed on the candidate's application or resume is the most effective and efficient way to verify education. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) may prohibit an institution of higher education from releasing educational or other information without the written consent of the student/applicant. If this is the case, a signed release form should be completed by the candidate. The form can be obtained on the HR website. Third-party verification services are also available for a fee. Hiring departments are responsible for these costs. Suggested third-party verification resources are:

National Student Clearinghouse

To create an account, visit: <http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/dvev/default.htm> or call 703-742-4200.

HireRight

To create an account, visit: <http://www.hireright.com/services1a6.html> or contact Kyle Vail at kvail@hireright.com or 949-428-5921.

ADP

To create an account, visit: <http://www.resource.adp.com/employment-screening.html>.

Document Retention

Selection and hiring notes are an important part of Dartmouth's employment records. For selected candidates: On-site search (hiring manager's) files should include:

- Notes from phone and on-campus interviews
- Copies of application, resume and cover letter
- Notes from reference checks
- Notes from on-line search
- Notes from employment history verification
- Copies of education verification
- Copies of any documents submitted to central HR (personnel files)

HR should receive a copy of license verification for personnel files. All interview notes and selection notes from all candidates should be maintained by the hiring manager for two years from the start date of the selected candidate.

Confirming Verification in DORR

Completion of background verification questions (activated July 1, 2008) must be done prior to salary setting request.

Conclusion

Dartmouth invests considerable time and money in hiring and training new employees. As stewards of the endowment, hiring managers need pertinent information before committing to hire. Often, former employers and supervisors can provide the most helpful information about a candidate's work experience, ability to work with others, customer service skills and attendance. There are many resources available from the Office of Human Resources to hiring managers and their delegates. Human Resources Consultants and Recruiters will be able to assist with any portion of this process. On-line resources and tools are also available through the Office of Human Resources website:

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~hrs/employment/recruitment/resources.html>