



How to Approach Hiring a Higher Ed Executive Search Firm



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Every institution is unique, so every approach to Higher Ed executive search needs to be just as unique. While every search firm has its own particular style, that shouldn't translate to a one-size-fits-all approach to every client. Remember: the people (and firms) you hire make a huge difference in where you go and how quickly you get there. It's imperative to bring people on board who will support the culture you are building, on the timeline you want. When selecting an Higher Ed executive search firm, keep these questions in mind.

Will the Firm Invest to Learn Your Goals?

When choosing a Higher Ed executive search firm, one of the most important factors to consider is whether that firm truly takes the time to understand your objectives. It's not just about a checklist of traits – it's about a deeper understanding of your institution's plan for the future and your vision of its culture.

Higher Ed executive searches are, at heart, about asking the right questions – so you need to be confident from the beginning that the firm you hire knows how to do just that. Look for a firm that doesn't just ask about your institution's objectives, but goes the extra mile to find out why those objectives exist in the first place.

Will the Search Firm Be the Right Brand Ambassador for Your Institution?

Choosing a Higher Ed executive search firm isn't just about finding the firm that can help your institution hire the right employees – it's also about finding a firm that can attract those employees by representing your brand in the best possible light. To get quality candidates who will fit in well with your institution, you need someone who comes across the way you would if you were personally conducting the search.

The search firm's representatives should listen actively and seek to understand the view of potential candidates, guiding the candidate's experience and creating a positive connection with the opportunity. Most important, though, are two traits: relatability and respect. Look for a firm that can be relatable on both sides of the process – to your institution and to candidates – and for people who always treat others with the respect they deserve, even when they are not interested in the opportunity being presented.

Who Is on the Team?

At Blue Rock Search, you'll have a full team to support you, with experienced individuals who all bring different skills, expertise, and types of involvement. One key thing to look for is prioritizing open communication: you should have open communication with your team, with direct access as needed. Keeping the lines of communication open will improve the likelihood of a successful working relationship – not to mention successful searches!

When hiring a Higher Ed executive search firm, you should also be asking if they have the bandwidth to support you and your institution's needs. This means ensuring that the team you hire has the specific skills as well as the time and space to devote to what you need.

Do They Understand Higher Education?

A basic question, to be sure, but it absolutely cannot be overlooked. Knowledge of the positions and the necessary skills matter, as does experience on the job. An experienced Higher Ed professional will be able to become a consultative partner, ensuring the skills of the desired role meet the needs of your institution. An effective search partner is not just an order taker, but instead is there to assist you in defining the scope and scale of your requisition. They should be able to help figure out exactly where your needs and their expertise line up and how to find the right people to support your cultural objectives in order to get your institution where it needs to go.



Do They Understand Your Culture?

When you extend trust to a search partner, you are extending your brand. This means that, by proxy, the search firm is an extension of your institution to the broader community. It is imperative that the search firm understands your culture, after all, the people they hire will help shape and guide the culture of your institution for years to come. This is a tremendous responsibility that must be taken seriously; it is deeper than just putting people in roles, it is really about creating a trusting partnership that allows your institution to achieve stellar results, year after year.

Do They Have Contacts?

One of the major advantages of hiring an Higher Ed executive search firm is being able to utilize the connections and information they have built up – information that you, as an individual college or university, may not have access to on your own. Before deciding to hire a firm, you will want to ask questions about their database. Just as important: check in with the potential firm to determine whether you'll be impacted by any off-limits restrictions, and, if so, how restrictive that will be.

What Is the Firm's Process?

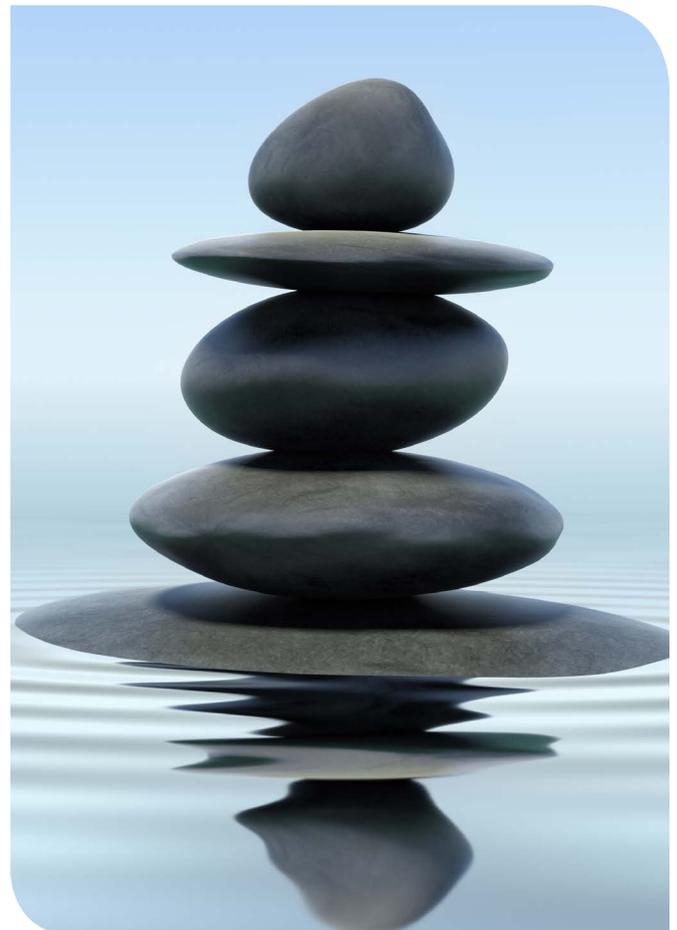
Always be sure to find out more about a firm's search process to ensure that your priorities are aligned. For instance, at Blue Rock Search, we divide our process into four steps, each of which is then broken down into individual actions. We start with a launch phase, during which we work with clients to create a search strategy tailored to each position and begin assembling potential candidates. The recruiting phase then involves more direct information gathering about candidates ahead of presentations to the client. From there, we move to the interview phase which, just as it sounds, is the stage where client companies are put into direct contact with candidates for a formal interview. At the final stage, placement, we offer assistance with transitioning new hires into their new roles.

Any good process will also include assessments throughout. Blue Rock takes stock during every stage of the process, assessing the best matches between roles and candidates early on, then helping to prepare for interviews and figuring out what's needed for a smooth transition after hiring.

Do The Appropriate Fact-Checking

As with any decision, it's crucial to do your due diligence before hiring a Higher Ed executive search firm. Confirm important things like the details of fees and expense reimbursement and the length of their guarantee period. Of course, check references too – it's just as important to check the references of a firm as a whole as it is to check references for an individual that you're considering hiring!

Hiring a Higher Ed executive search firm can be an important step for your company, but it's important to find the right fit. Blue Rock Search offers an expert team who's ready to assist you in filling the roles your institution needs to succeed. We'll stay in touch with you long after the placement to ensure that everything is working out and to help adjust your personnel needs as requirements change.. The goal is developing long-term relationships so you can build the institution you envision, and Blue Rock is ready to assist you with making that vision a reality.





About Blue Rock Search

Blue Rock Search is an MBE Certified, minority-owned executive search firm, an SRA Network member, a Hunt Scanlon **Top 10** Global Recruiting firm, and one of the Hunt Scanlon **HR/ Diversity Recruiting Power 65**. We specialize in the targeted identification, assessment, and placement of executives across four distinct practice areas: Human Resources, Franchising, Customer Experience, and Higher Ed Executive Search. Blue Rock's founding partners are respected and trusted thought leaders with more than 75

years of combined experience in their respective practice areas. Our systems, processes, and tools are designed to flex to fit our clients' unique needs and reflect our philosophy of built-to-last relationships.

As your Executive Search Consultant, we partner with you to curate an experience designed to attract leaders that will make a positive impact on your institution's culture and business performance.

If you seek a partner who takes time to understand your goals, is highly connected in their respective talent communities, and can help you land desired talent, Blue Rock Search can help.

About Ruben Moreno

After a 25-year career in Corporate Human Resources and HR Executive Search, Ruben and his two partners co-founded Blue Rock Search based on a simple but ambitious vision of creating a firm that would "Change Lives and Organizations One Relationship at a Time." Ruben leads the Blue Rock HR Executive Search and Higher Education Executive Search practice specializing in identifying, assessing, recruiting, and onboarding key executives in HR, Diversity, Enrollment, Student Affairs, and Advancement. Ruben is a thought leader who has helped place hundreds of executives. His clients consider him a trusted partner who takes the time to understand their organization and add value beyond executive search.



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About Jacquelyn D. Elliott, Ed.D.

Dr. Jacquelyn (Jacqui) D. Elliott has 30 years of leadership experience at private, public, two and four-year institutions. During her career, she held the chief enrollment officer seat at three institutions, and served as the chief student affairs officer and head institutional advancement officer. Jacqui's experience gives her a deep understanding of the distinct differences among institution types, and she has brought value through consulting to over 100 campuses nationally and internationally.

Jacqui has served on the boards of SACRAO and AACRAO, and is the recipient of one of AACRAO's highest honors, the Award for Excellence in International Education. As an avid participant in the national higher education ecosystem, Dr. Elliott has given over 200 conference presentations, contributed to multiple books and journals, and actively works to identify rising enrollment management stars to support their talent development and personal growth.

