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Critical Hire Process FAQs

Last updated March 2, 2020

What is a critical hire?

A critical hire is considered a position that the institution must fill in order to maintain student success, patient/life safety, and to successfully meet required compliance and accreditation standards. A critical hire is not the same as an *important* hire. We have many positions within the university system that are important to institutional success, but would not be considered critical. Important positions will not be approved while the critical hire process is in effect.

The critical hire process and submission link was shared with CBOs and CHROs via email on December 16, 2019.

Institutions should plan early and start the critical hire process as soon as possible. Critical hire requests can be submitted as soon as an institution is aware of new position or vacancy even if the position will be filled later. Justification forms should provide complete details upon submission in order to expedite the response timeframe.

Why are we doing this?

Governor Kemp asked all state agencies to think strategically about how to improve business processes by eliminating duplication, better utilizing technology, or other methods of efficiency, to include thinking strategically about workforce needs and how to best leverage existing positions and personal services funding. Additionally, the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) asked all state agencies to institute a strategic hire (critical hire) approval process.

What type of documentation will be required for the justification?

The institution should provide a compelling case for critical nature of a position in the critical hire form. Any supporting data regarding student success, patient/life safety, and compliance or accreditation requirements that must be met should be provided. For grant or contract funded positions, an institution should submit the award letter and documentation that supports the requirements for personnel and the compensation rates that have been agreed to.

How long will the critical hire process be in place?

The critical hire process went into effect December 15, 2019 without a defined end date. If and when the process changes, a notification will be sent to the President, Chief Business Officer, and Chief Human Resources Officer.

What positions will be subject to the critical hire process?

As of December 15, 2019, all full-time (30 hours or more) regular positions, faculty and staff, above \$40,000 will be subject to the critical hire process.

A justification form will not be required for positions posted prior to December 15, 2019; however, positions filled December 15, 2019 and after should be reflected on the monthly institution report.

Are grant-funded and contract positions included in the critical hire process?

Yes, the critical hire process is applicable to all fund sources.

Are administrative faculty required to be submitted to the system office for approval?

Yes, faculty only positions may be determined at the campus level and reported on the monthly response. Administrative positions in Academic Affairs with or without a faculty appointment must be submitted to the University System Office for review and approval.

Are hourly (bi-weekly paid) positions included in the process?

Yes, the hourly rate for a position should be annualized to determine if the salary amount for the year will exceed \$40,000. If the projected compensation rate is expected to exceed \$40,000, the position must be submitted to the University System Office for approval.

Will the use of temporary staff require approval?

No, the critical hire process is only applicable to full-time regular employees. Temporary staffing decisions should follow existing institutional review and approval processes.

If an institution chooses to reclassify an existing position, should a critical hire form be submitted? (Response updated 3/2/20)

It depends.

An institution has the ability to restructure existing roles to find efficiencies and accommodate changes to the workforce. Please note that a reclassification could include a compensation increase, which does not result in a title change, or increase in pay grade. System office approval through this critical hire process is not required for reclassifications of this nature. However, the USG Salary and Wage Administration policy may apply and should be followed for associated compensation changes, in accordance with the policy guidelines. We also encourage institutions to incorporate reclassification requests into your internal critical hire review process.

Position changes that include a paygrade and title change with additional duties will be considered a promotion and must be submitted for approval.

Can existing employees be promoted without approval?

It depends.

Promotions which move an employee to the next position in an established career path structure do not require system office approval. An example of this would be movement from Administrative Professional I to Administrative Professional II.

All other types of reclassifications or position changes that will result in a promotion must be submitted to the critical hire process for approvals. For this purpose, promotions are defined as position changes that result in an increase scope of duties, title change, and increase in paygrade and/or compensation. Changes in exemption status or position number may also be an indicator of promotion.

Can an institution hold a position to save funds?

Yes, an institution can make the determination to hold a position during the strategic review process or as a fiscal management strategy. When and if the institution determines that they would like to proceed with filling the role, a critical hire form will be required at that time.

Are positions within my institution's approved CAR plan subject to the critical hire process?

Yes, newly created positions that are included in your institutions approved CAR plan must be submitted for approval through the critical hire process before posting. Any additional changes or consideration given should be included in the justification narrative.

Can campuses continue existing projects that involve position description reviews and compensation equity analysis?

Yes, existing organizational effectiveness and compliance projects may continue. If an institution considers making compensation strategy changes or adjustments, a notification to the University System Office should be provided along with a summary of the proposed activity. This notification may be submitted to criticalhire@usg.edu.

What response will I get from the system office review team?

You will receive a letter with one of two responses: approved or denied. It is the responsibility of the institution to provide adequate justification and documentation for the critical hire as a part of their submission. Please note that the USO review team will not be able to assist a campus with developing their justification statements.

Is there a way to expedite a request?

Institutions should plan early and start the critical hire process as soon as possible. Critical hire requests can be submitted as soon as an institution is aware of new position or vacancy even if the position will be filled later. Justification forms should provide complete details upon submission in order to expedite the response timeframe.

Urgent positions that involve patient/life safety such as medical personnel or public safety officers can be posted immediately on a contingent basis if deemed necessary through this campus critical hire process. A critical hire form should be submitted simultaneously to the USO for approval to continue. If the request is denied, the institution should immediately remove the contingent posting and discontinue the recruitment process. This process is only acceptable for positions that are deemed critical to patient/life safety by the president and CBO.

Once approved, is the campus required to take action on a position within a certain timeframe?

A campus may seek approval for a position as soon as a vacancy or need arises. An approval from the system office does not expire, so a campus can hold a position or delay filling the position to reserve funds. If the intent for the position or attributes originally submitted change before the recruitment process begins, the campus would need to resubmit the request and updates for approval.

When is the campus monthly report due? (Response updated 1/17/20)

The campus report of all full-time regular faculty and staff hired during the preceding calendar month will be due by the 10th of the month or closest Monday if the 10th falls on the weekend. The December 2019 report will be due on January 17th for all full-time regular faculty and staff

positions with start dates on or after December 15, 2019 above \$40,000 annually. While the report will capture both action date (date of entry) and effective date of the position change, the report data should encompass activity with an effective date within the reporting period. The action date is informational only. Reports should be emailed to criticalhire@usg.edu.

Additional monthly reporting requirements effective February 1, 2020 (which should be reflected on the March 18, 2020 report submission):

- Each institution must provide a summary of their internal critical hire activity to include the positions submitted and the campus determination. This report applies to full-time faculty and staff positions over \$40,000.
 - Fields required include: Institution name; position number; position title; job code; job code description; budgeted salary; FTE; funding source; reason for request: Vacancy; New Position; Retirement; Reclassification; date position became vacant; approval decision; decision reason
 - Report should be added as a second tab to the monthly Critical Hire Report that is due on the 10th of each month. Please label the tab “Internal Requests” to distinguish from the Critical Hire Report.
- Positions with a salary above \$100,000 must include a justification statement of the salary level. This justification statement will be added to the critical hire submission form for positions that are submitted to the USO for approval.

If we did not have any position activity meeting the report criteria, are we required to submit anything?

Yes. If your campus did not have any position activity which meets the reporting criteria, please send an email to criticalhire@usg.edu indicating your institution did not have any activity for that month’s reporting period by the report due date. Please include your institution name and the reporting period in the email.

Can the president or Chief Business Officer delegate their signature authority?

Generally speaking the USG submission process requires the approval and signature of both the president and CBO, not a designee. If the president or CBO are away for extended travel and unable to authorize, notification of a designee may be sent to the criticalhire@usg.edu inbox along with the timeframe of designation.

Are electronic signatures acceptable for the president and CBO?

Yes, if routed through a secure process or system such as DocuSign. It is expected that the campus process will engage the president and chief business officer directly on requests that proceed to the system office for approval.

Are recruitment position extensions permissible?

Positions approved through the critical hire process on before December 15, 2019 can be extended to allow additional recruitment as long as the position structure and attributes do not change. Positions posted prior to December 15, 2019 that formally close will require a critical hire request prior to reposting.

Do interim appointments require critical hire approval?

No, interim and acting appointments do not require approval as this is a temporary action. To formally appoint a person currently serving in an interim or acting capacity, critical hire approval is required.

What should be included in the vacant position review process due April 30, 2020?

All funded vacant positions that are not posted by April 1, 2020 must be included in the review. An internal assessment should be completed to determine if the position is still needed. If the position is deemed necessary, the institution should develop a plan for the recruitment process within the next 3 months.

For positions that will not proceed to recruitment, the position should be eliminated and the funds should be redirected to student success when possible. A summary of the vacant position review will be due to the system office April 30, 2020. A sample template is available, but the following minimum categories must be included in all reports.

Vacant Position Review Fields:

- Position Number
- Department
- Current Budget Availability
- Fund Source
- Position Title
- Will the position continue? Y/N
- If yes, when will the position be posted or submitted to the critical hire process?
- If no, identify where the funds will be redirected?

Who should I contact with questions?

The critical hire process has an email address that will be monitored by the USO review team. Questions may be submitted to criticalhire@usg.edu.