

SEARCHING FOR
EXCELLENCE
&
DIVERSITY

A GUIDE FOR SEARCH COMMITTEES
National Edition

*“We need diversity in discipline,
intellectual outlook, cognitive style, and
personality to offer students the breadth
of ideas that constitutes a dynamic
intellectual community.”*

Eve Fine and Jo Handelsman

WISELI: Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute

Searching for Excellence & Diversity

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A Guide for Search Committees, National Edition.

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This guidebook incorporates information, experiences, questions and concerns shared with us by the many faculty and staff at UW-Madison and at universities and colleges across the nation who have participated in our workshops for search committees. We thank them for their participation and hope that this guidebook proves useful in their ongoing efforts to recruit and hire new faculty members.

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IMPORTANT NOTES

This guidebook is intended to supplement, not to replace, any official search handbooks that may govern the search process at your institution.

All search committee chairs and members should be thoroughly familiar with the policies and procedures outlined in any official documents developed by your institution.

This guidebook provides advice from experienced and successful search committee chairs and from research and advice literature on academic search strategies.

It is expected that you will modify, adjust, and/or adapt these recommendations in accordance with such factors as the size of your search committee and pool of candidates, the breadth of areas encompassed in the position description, and the standards of your discipline.

INTRODUCTION

Hiring and retaining an excellent and diverse faculty is a top priority for colleges and universities nationwide. Vast amounts of time and considerable monetary resources are devoted to searching for and hiring new faculty. If the search is successful and results in the hiring of productive faculty who make valuable and lasting contributions to the discipline and the university, the time and money are well spent. If the search is unsuccessful or newly hired faculty do not remain in their positions, the time, effort, and expenses incurred in conducting repeated searches can become burdensome. Consequently, many universities are looking critically at their hiring processes and are recognizing that faculty search committees receive little education about the process. These schools are implementing programs to provide faculty with information, advice, and techniques that will help them attract excellent and diverse applicant pools, conduct fair and equitable evaluations, and successfully hire new faculty members who will contribute to the excellence and diversity of their institutions.

This guidebook serves as a useful resource for schools, colleges, and/or universities seeking to implement educational programs for faculty search committees. It can also serve as a resource for individual members of a search committee.

The guidebook consists of six sections—Six Essential Elements—each targeted at a specific stage of the search process.

- Element I, “Run an Effective and Efficient Search Committee,” focuses on the earliest stages of the search process—before the committee has begun recruiting applicants. It provides advice and suggestions for building an active and involved search committee and for establishing policies and practices that will help increase the effectiveness of the search.
- Element II, “Actively Recruit an Excellent and Diverse Pool of Applicants,” recommends that search committees engage in discussions of both diversity and excellence before writing position descriptions or announcements, developing evaluation criteria, and recruiting applicants. It provides suggestions for initiating such discussions. This section recommends that search committees take an active approach to recruiting and provides suggestions and resources for doing so.
- Element III, “Raise Awareness of Unconscious Assumptions and their Influence on Evaluation of Applicants,” presents research findings from a variety of disciplines (including cognitive psychology, social psychology, economics, and organizational behavior) that demonstrate how unconscious assumptions can influence the evaluation of applicants.
- Element IV, “Ensure a Fair and Thorough Review of Applicants,” relies on research findings to suggest methods for overcoming the influence of unconscious bias and assumptions on the evaluation of applicants. It also provides suggestions and instruments for conducting equitable evaluations.
- Element V, “Develop and Implement an Effective Interview Process,” provides advice and recommendations for conducting interviews and on-campus visits. This section stresses the importance of recognizing that interviews and on-campus visits not only provide search committee and departmental members with the opportunity to evaluate candidates, but also provide candidates with opportunities to evaluate their potential colleagues, the department, the college or university, and the community. This section presents advice for utilizing principles of “universal design” to conduct interviews and on-campus visits that meet the needs of candidates with and without disabilities. It recommends designing a campus visit

that will be a good experience for all candidates—whether or not they are the candidate hired.

- Element VI, “Close the Deal: Successfully Hire your Selected Candidate,” provides advice and suggestions for encouraging your selected candidate to accept your job offer.

Each of these six sections aims to help search committees improve the effectiveness and efficiency of all activities related to recruiting and hiring new faculty members. By following the recommendations outlined in this guidebook, search committees can expect to attract applicants who not only meet or exceed expectations in terms of qualifications, but also reflect the diversity present in the potential applicant pool. The advice and recommendations in the guidebook aim to help search committees improve their chances of hiring faculty who will contribute to the excellence and diversity of their institution.

The definition of “excellence” will necessarily vary by institution, department, and even position. This guidebook encourages search committees to think carefully and strategically about what is “excellent” or “best” for each position given the needs and resources of their department, school, college, or university at a particular point in time. It recommends that search committees rely on their developed definition/s of excellence to inform their advertisements or announcements, efforts to recruit applicants, and criteria for evaluation.

The definition of “diversity” may also vary. Consequently, this guidebook encourages search committee to discuss what “diversity” means to them individually, what “diversity” means for their department, and why it is important for the department to strive to increase faculty diversity. In general, this guidebook encourages search committees to develop very broad definitions of diversity. Our nation’s universities and colleges need diversity in discipline, intellectual outlook, cognitive style, and personality to develop a dynamic intellectual community. Diversity of experience, age, class, physical ability, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation are just some of the qualities that contribute to the richness of the environment for teaching and research.

In discussing diversity, search committee members should examine their own departments and consider the extent to which they do or do not reflect the diversity they desire. Because women are underrepresented in many disciplines (especially in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and academic medicine) and specific minority groups are underrepresented in most disciplines, this guidebook offers suggestions and advice for recruiting and ensuring fair evaluation of women and members of underrepresented minority groups. The term “underrepresented,” in this context, means that a particular group’s proportionate representation in the academy, or in a field of study, is smaller than its representation in the population at large.

It is important to recognize that considerable diversity exists within the categories “women” and “underrepresented minority groups.” “Women” includes not only white, heterosexual women but also women of color, of different sexual orientations, physical abilities, religions, ethnicities, and more. Members of “underrepresented minority groups” include men and women with varying sexual orientations, physical abilities, religions, and ethnicities, who are also of African American, Hispanic, Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Native Alaskan descent. In some areas of the country, other minority groups, such as the Hmong, may be underrepresented. In some academic disciplines, additional minority groups may be underrepresented. For example, Asian Americans are not underrepresented in the academy in general, but may be underrepresented in leadership positions and within some fields in the social sciences and humanities.

While this guidebook concentrates on advice and resources for recruiting and evaluating underrepresented groups, search committee members can and should extrapolate from this advice to ensure that their recruitment efforts and evaluation processes will help them achieve the breadth of diversity they desire in their applicants. For example, schools or departments that are and have historically been female dominated, such as social work or nursing, can adapt the advice provided to ensure that they reach male candidates and avoid bias in the evaluation and interviewing processes. Similarly, departments seeking to be more inclusive of persons with disabilities, to expand research and enrich curricular content surrounding disability studies, and/or develop assistive technologies can adapt these recommendations for active recruiting to ensure that they are reaching individuals who study and/or have disabilities. In addition, they can use other portions of the guidebook to avoid biases and barriers in their evaluation and interview processes.

Each department's efforts to diversify its faculty in ways that are relevant to the department, its students, and the discipline will not only enrich the scholarly work of the department and the educational experience of its students, but will also contribute to the establishment of universities and colleges that reflect the students and communities they serve.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS of a SUCCESSFUL SEARCH

I. RUN AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT SEARCH COMMITTEE

Preparation: Before the search committee meets (pp. 6–7)

**Tips and guidelines: Running an effective
and efficient search committee (pp. 7–13)**

- Building rapport among committee members
- Tasks to accomplish in initial meetings
- Anticipating problems
- Concluding meetings

(Pages 6-14 not included)

II. ACTIVELY RECRUIT AN EXCELLENT AND DIVERSE POOL OF APPLICANTS

Discussing diversity and excellence (pp. 16–19)

- Opening the discussion
- Common views on diversity in hiring—and some responses

Tips and guidelines for building a diverse pool of applicants (pp. 19–24)

- Active recruiting for an open position
- Building and developing diverse professional networks
- Dispense with assumptions that may limit your efforts to recruit actively and broadly

Resources (pp. 25–33)

- Resources for writing a job description
- Campus resources for building a diverse pool of applicants
- Online sources of information, research, and advice
- Directories of women and minority doctoral candidates and recipients
- Recruiting and networking resources

(Pages 16-34 not included)

III. RAISE AWARENESS OF UNCONSCIOUS ASSUMPTIONS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON EVALUATION OF APPLICANTS

Research on unconscious bias and assumptions (pp. 36–41)

- Examples of common social assumptions or expectations
- Examples of assumptions or biases that can influence the evaluation of applications
- Examples of assumptions or biases in academic job-related contexts

Potential influence of unconscious bias and assumptions on your search (pp. 41)

Conclusion (p. 42)

(Pages 36-42 not included)

IV. ENSURE A FAIR AND THOROUGH REVIEW OF APPLICANTS

Minimizing the influence of unconscious bias (pp. 44–54)

Minimizing Bias: What NOT to do

Minimizing Bias: What to do

Logistics for managing the review of applicants (pp. 54–59)

STAGE 1: Selecting applicants who meet minimum qualifications

STAGE 2: Creating the “long short list” of applicants to consider further

STAGE 3: Selecting a “short list” of finalists to interview

STAGE 4: Evaluating the finalists

Resources (pp. 61–71)

Sample forms to help keep track of and communicate with applicants

Sample letters to applicants

(Pages 44-72 not included)

V. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Key aims of the interview (p. 74)

BEFORE: Planning for an effective interview process (pp. 74–87)

- All interview types
- Telephone interviews
- Videoconference or online video interviews
- Interviews at academic conferences
- On-campus interviews

DURING: Guidelines for interviewing (pp. 87–90)

- Interviews by telephone, videoconference or online video,
and at academic conferences
- On-campus interviews

AFTER: Evaluating the interviewed candidates (pp. 90–91)

- Interviews by telephone, videoconference or online video,
and at academic conferences
- On-campus interviews

Resources (pp. 93–102)

- Advice for interviewing
- Video conferencing etiquette
- Sample interview questions
- Appropriate and inappropriate interview questions
- Tips for interviewing applicants with disabilities
- Materials to include in an informational packet
- Sample letter to include in an informational packet

(Pages 74-102 not included)

VI. CLOSE THE DEAL: SUCCESSFULLY HIRE YOUR SELECTED CANDIDATE

Make your offer promptly (p. 104)

Give candidates sufficient time to consider the offer (p. 104)

Offer prospective faculty members a second campus visit (p. 105)

Dual career hiring: Opportunities and challenges (p. 105)

Negotiating the offer (pp. 106–107)

Maintaining communication (p. 107)

Welcoming the new faculty member (p. 108)

(Pages 104-108 not included)

CONCLUSION

Hiring new faculty members provides colleges and universities with an opportunity to shape their future. New faculty are usually hired with the expectation that they will attain tenure and remain with the institution for many mutually rewarding years. They will profoundly influence the institution's reputation in both research and teaching domains. They will educate and inspire generations of students. As we become an increasingly diverse and global society, it is critically important that the faculty we hire offer excellence in research and teaching; provide a rich variety of disciplinary interests, perspectives, and personal backgrounds; reflect the diversity present in our population; and contribute to a dynamic and engaged intellectual community.

Yet, hiring new faculty is a time-consuming and expensive endeavor. A failed search represents a major loss not only of the time and money invested but also of a lost opportunity to hire a potentially valuable colleague. The costs of hiring a person who does not work out or who leaves the institution shortly after being hired can be immense. A 2010 study of faculty hiring at one large research-intensive institution reported that over 50% of offers (135 offers) included at least \$100,000 in start-up costs.¹ Clearly, campuses can benefit from increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of their search processes.

It is our hope that this guidebook will provide faculty search committees with information, advice, and resources that will help them run productive and efficient searches, create diverse and excellent applicant pools, conduct fair and effective evaluations, and ultimately hire new faculty who will make substantial contributions to the excellence and diversity of their institutions.

1. University of Wisconsin-Madison, Office of Academic Planning and Analysis, "Summary of Faculty Recruitment Efforts," 2010-11.

SEARCHING FOR EXCELLENCE & DIVERSITY

TOP TEN TIPS

1. Build a diverse committee and ensure that all members understand the committee's role in the search process.
2. Build rapport among committee members by creating an environment of collegiality, respect, dedication, and open-mindedness.
3. Establish expectations and ground rules for such items as attendance, active involvement, decision-making, confidentiality, treatment of candidates, and more.
4. Air views about diversity, discuss ideas about excellence, and develop a shared understanding of what diversity and excellence mean for a particular search.
5. Recruit a diverse applicant pool by searching broadly and inclusively. Save sifting and winnowing for later.
6. Recruit diligently by making personal contact with potential applicants, advertising in publications targeted to underrepresented groups, and communicating with organizations and people who can refer you to potential applicants.
7. Learn about research on unconscious or implicit biases and assumptions and their influence on evaluation of applicants.
8. Question the objectivity of your own judgments and learn about other ways to mitigate bias. Implement policies and practices that can reduce the influence of unconscious or implicit bias.
9. Ensure that every candidate interviewed—whether hired or not—is respected and treated well.
10. Maintain communication with all final candidates until an offer is accepted.



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