

CONDUCTING A FAIR AND EQUITABLE SEARCH: BEST PRACTICES

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- ✓ Assemble a diverse group to serve as your search committee. Consider background, ethnicity, gender, age and any underrepresented groups for your area or discipline when possible.
- ✓ Communicate to all search committee members that diversity and fairness are everyone's responsibility. All candidates will receive due consideration.
- ✓ Contact Employment Practices at 6-5608 to discuss ways to diversify the search and work towards fairness and equity in the hiring process. EPO is available for in-person consultations with the search committee (recommended) and phone or email consultations. There is also information on our website: www.uwyo.edu/diversity.
- ✓ Add language to the job ad signaling special interest in candidates who contribute to the department's diversity priorities. Example: "The Search Committee is especially interested in candidates who have experience working with diverse populations and/or diverse initiatives as well as those who, through their research, teaching and/or service will contribute to the diversity and excellence of the academic community."
- ✓ Develop a clear position description including minimum qualifications and experience desired and the priority of the criteria. This will be your screening criteria for all candidates.

- ✓ Create a search plan, including broad outreach.

DURING THE SEARCH

- ✓ Reach out to colleagues at institutions that have diverse faculty and students to identify high-potential female and underrepresented minority candidates and encourage them to apply to the position.
- ✓ Advertise broadly, including interest groups with diverse faculty audiences. A list of recruitment resources can be found at <http://www.uwyo.edu/diversity/epo/hiring/index.html>
- ✓ Discuss, PRIOR to screening and interviewing candidates, how criteria listed in job ad will be scored and valued. Review research on unconscious bias and assumptions: http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/BiasBrochure_3rdEd.pdf
- ✓ Ensure that each candidate is evaluated on the qualifications LISTED IN THE JOB AD.
- ✓ Make sure that each candidate interviewed is asked questions regarding their experiences in diverse environments and/or a demonstrated commitment to diversity - preferably at the onset of the interview.

ASSESSING A CANDIDATE'S ABILITY TO WORK/TEACH IN A DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT

OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

- ❖ Suggested opening remarks: “Our university/college/division/department values diversity among its students, faculty, and staff, and we have made a commitment to promoting and increasing diversity. We would like to discuss your experience in diversity and working/teaching in a multicultural environment.”
- ❖ “What do you see as the most challenging aspects of an increasingly diverse academic community? “
- ❖ “What have you done, formally or informally, to meet such challenges?”
- ❖ “How have you worked with students and others to foster the creation of an environment that’s receptive to diversity in the classroom, in the curriculum, and in the department?”
- ❖ “How have you mentored, supported, or encouraged students on your campus? What about underrepresented minority students, women, veterans, international students or individuals with disabilities?”
- ❖ “In what ways have you integrated diversity as part of your professional development?”

EVALUATION:

- ❖ Is the candidate at ease discussing diversity-related issues and their significance to the position? Or is the candidate reluctant to discuss diversity issues?
- ❖ Does the candidate use gender-neutral language?
- ❖ Does the candidate address all the members of the interview committee?

ADDRESSING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS AND ASSUMPTIONS

READ THE RESEARCH

While we all like to believe that we are objective and neutral, each person has a unique lifetime of knowledge and cultural experiences that informs our review of applicants. Whether we know it or not, we often apply generalizations that may or may not be valid when evaluating candidates during a position search.

Research shows that unconscious bias and assumptions can impact searches: http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/BiasBrochure_3rdEd.pdf

For example: “In a national study, 238 academic psychologists (118 male, 120 female) evaluated a curriculum vitae randomly assigned a male or female name. Both male and female participants gave the male applicant better evaluations for teaching, research, and service experience and were more likely to hire the male than the female applicant.” (Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute, 2012)

CONSIDER YOUR OWN ASSUMPTIONS

Before evaluating the talent pool, examine your own assumptions:

- ❖ Focus on the contribution that diverse faculty/administrators can bring. Diversity is, for example, necessary to prepare our students for success in the larger world.
- ❖ Don't assume that diverse candidates will not be as qualified.
- ❖ Don't assume that UW cannot attract diverse talent.
- ❖ Don't assume that diverse candidates will require disproportionately higher salaries.

To minimize influence of bias and assumptions:

- ❖ Work to broaden your search and to increase the number of minorities, women, veterans and individuals with disabilities in your pools.
- ❖ Learn about and discuss research on bias with your search committee before beginning to evaluate applications.
- ❖ Decide upon screening criteria prior to evaluating applications and apply this criteria consistently to all candidates.
- ❖ Give each application sufficient time.
- ❖ Evaluate the ENTIRE application. Don't focus too heavily on one component (such as letters of recommendation or the prestige of the degree-granting institution.)
- ❖ Be able to defend each decision for eliminating or advancing a candidate.
- ❖ Step back and evaluate yourself. Are biases or assumptions influencing you? Are you applying equal scrutiny to each applicant? Are you worrying about how a candidate will “fit in” to your department or program?
- ❖ Be open to what constitutes excellence in a candidate:
 - Value non-traditional career paths.
 - Appreciate non-traditional or outside-the-mainstream research interests or publications.

REFERENCES

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