**Faculty diversity and the search process: a role-playing activity for search committees**

*The following activity is adapted from an activity used at a Project Kaleidoscope (PKAL) Leadership Institute (LI).*

Many institutions have charges in strategic plans that call for diversifying the faculty. For many search committees this charge usually entails advertising more broadly and an additional conversation with the Dean or College Diversity Officer about the institution’s goal to hire more faculty of color.

Some search committees, however, receive additional training as preparation for the search process. Such training may include case studies or role-playing scenarios that call attention to implicit biases of committee members and assumptions that are made yet never articulated throughout the search process.

The goals of this activity are to:

1. Raise awareness of the existence of stereotypes and implicit bias in searches.
2. Demonstrate the need for establishing screening criteria and credential review exercises for search committees.

**Instructions for participants**

1. You are one of four faculty members on a Biology department search committee for an Assistant Professor of Ecology. The Department has advertised broadly and you are finally at the point where you are meeting to select three candidates for campus interviews. Brief profiles of the applicants and their experiences are included. Your search committee has been reminded by the Dean about the institutional priority to diversify the faculty.
2. Working in groups of four, adopt the identity of one of the four hypothetical biology department search committee members described on the following page.
3. As individuals, read the attached search ad and make a list of the criteria you would use to identify the possible candidates. Using your criteria, identify your top three candidates to invite for campus visits (15 minutes).
4. Working together as the entire search committee (25 minutes):
   1. Discuss individual search criteria and the basis for the criteria. Was there significant overlap of criteria used by all search committee members? How did individual criteria address the institution’s diversity initiative?
   2. Discuss each committee member’s list of candidates for campus interviews. Was there overlap on candidate selection? How consistently were criteria applied to the selection of candidates?
   3. Based on this exercise, suggest two or three concrete steps a search committee could take to improve the process for candidate selection.

**Assistant Professor of Biology (ecology and related areas)**

**Type:**Tenure-track faculty   
**Department:**Biology

The Biology Department at Small Liberal Arts College invites applications for a tenure-track Assistant Professor in ecology and related areas, to begin August of 2016. A strong commitment to both undergraduate teaching and research is expected. The ideal candidate should be prepared to conduct and publish original research and incorporate undergraduates into his or her research program. The 3/2 teaching load includes introductory biology, a senior seminar course, courses in areas of specialty, and contribution to the department’s new major in Global Ecology. A Ph.D. is required by August of 2016, but post-doctoral experience is desired. The successful candidate will possess teaching experience, research publications, and a commitment to work with a socially and economically diverse student population.

In addition to the biology and global ecology majors, the biology department contributes to the neuroscience and molecular biology and biochemistry majors. In addition, the department contributes courses to programs in environmental and sustainability studies and public health. The biology faculty benefit from excellent laboratory space on campus in a building dedicated to the sciences, and the opportunity to work with other biologists in the metro Big City area. Small Liberal Arts College is a highly selective, independent national liberal arts college located in metropolitan Big City, a cosmopolitan and ethnically diverse region with a vibrant cultural life. The College is committed to providing its faculty with a supportive academic environment that includes a balance of teaching, research, and service. Excellence in undergraduate teaching, the establishment of an effective and sustainable research program, and service to the department and the college are necessary for tenure and promotion. Support for faculty development includes travel funding, a one-semester research leave at full pay after successful completion of the third-year review, a post-tenure sabbatical program, and the opportunity to apply for many internal professional development awards. Small Liberal Arts College has a strong commitment to diversity. The College urges members of underrepresented groups to apply. EOE.

**Search Committee Members**

**Assistant Professor of Biology.** Helped develop the College’s new Global Ecology major, and has taught intro ecology and related environmental studies courses. Has strong opinions about the existing intro ecology course and knows that the new hire will share in teaching this course and others in the new major. Is concerned with maintaining rigor in all courses offered by the Department, but particularly those in their area.

**Associate Professor of Biology.** Does not teach ecology courses but is heavily invested in building student community in the Biology department. Has promoted and achieved increased use of student study and social spaces in the department. Has a strong commitment to training student researchers in their lab and looks forward to a new colleague who is committed to mentoring students.

**Endowed Prestigious Chair and Professor of Biology**. Does not teach ecology courses but has a consistent track record of grant funding, more than any other Biology faculty member. For this reason, they consider themselves in the know about what is required to be a successful researcher in the department. As a result of a successful funding record, believes their opinion should carry a lot of weight in departmental decision-making.

**Associate Professor and Chair of Biology.** Also a successful ecology researcher and author, has a strong interest in the role that undergraduate research plays in the development of biology students. Aware that while the diversity of the student body has increased over their time at the College, the diversity of Biology faculty has not changed and the Department has no faculty of color.

**Final list of candidates for campus visit consideration (select three)**

**1. Antonio M. Alexander**

PhD/Institution: Environmental Biochemistry, University of California Berkeley

Undergraduate degree/Institution: BS Biology, Amherst College

Area of specialization: population genetics and evolutionary genomics

Postdoctoral fellowship/other fellowships and awards: three-year postdoctoral fellowship, Cornell University

Teaching: taught one class every year while at Cornell

Publications: two publications, co-PI on NIH R01 grant.

**2. Sarah Smith**

PhD/Institution: Ecology, Iowa State University

Undergraduate degree/Institution: AA, Liberal Arts, Des Moines Area Community College; BS, Environmental Studies, University of Iowa

Area of specialization: Cross-border issues in climate change; Sustainability studies

Postdoctoral fellowship/other fellowships and awards: two-year postdoctoral fellowship at Iowa State

Teaching: currently a Visiting Instructor in Biology at the University of Michigan

Publications: 6 publications, two with undergraduate co-authors

**3. James Lopez**

PhD/Institution: Harvard University

Undergraduate degree/Institution: BS Biology (magna cum laude), Brown University

Area of specialization: Numerical modeling and computer simulations; computational ecology

Postdoctoral fellowship/other fellowships and awards: NSF Postdoctoral Research in Biology, Yale University

Teaching: Visiting Assistant Professor in Biology, Davidson College

Publications: 6 publications and one NSF grant

**4. David Philips**

PhD/Institution: Biology, University of Minnesota, MS, University of Minnesota

Undergraduate degree/Institution: BS Biology, University of Minnesota

Area of specialization: Producing science that is valued and used by environmentally impacted communities; undergraduate biology education

Postdoctoral fellowship/other fellowships and awards: Three-year postdoctoral associate at Howard University

Teaching: Biology 101 several semesters at University of Minnesota; advanced seminar in environmental ecology; interdisciplinary course on Global Migration with economics professor at Howard

Publications: 3 publications

**5. Alicia Alonso**

PhD degree/Institution: Environmental Biology, North Carolina State University

Undergraduate degree/Institution: BS Biology, Florida International University

Area of specialization: wetland restoration, quantitative mapping of water flow in stressed ecosystems

Postdoctoral fellowship/other fellowships and awards: Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Teaching: Visiting Assistant Professor, Eckerd College

Publications: 1-multi-authored publication in Science

**6. Kimberly Williams**

PhD/Institution: Stanford University

Undergraduate degree/Institution: BS Chemical Biology, University of Maryland Baltimore County (Meyerhoff Scholar)

Area of specialization: Ecology and biochemistry on the global scale; ecosystem responses to interacting threats

Postdoctoral fellowship/other fellowships and awards: one-year post-doctoral appointment in PhD mentor’s lab; two year AAAS Fellowship in Science Policy at NSF

Teaching: teaching assistant at Stanford for a chemical ecology course

Publications: one publication, contribution to policy white paper on science education published while at NSF

**7. Wendy Robinson**

PhD/Institution: Biology, University of Pennsylvania

Undergraduate degree/Institution: BA in Biology, Rutgers University

Area of specialization: agricultural expansion and its impact on ecosystems in rural communities

Postdoctoral fellowship/other fellowships and awards: two-year fellowship from the Ecological Society of America

Teaching: two graduate teaching awards at University of Pennsylvania

Publications: two publications in the Journal of Ecology and Evolution

**8. Jared Khoury**

PhD/Institution: Ecology, University of Georgia

Undergraduate degree/Institution: BS Biology, Florida State University

Area of specialization: coastal wetland restoration and ecology

Postdoctoral fellowship/other fellowships and awards: Emory University Department of Biology

Teaching: Ecology 101, Biology 101, Advanced Ecology Seminar at Emory

Publications: 11 publications, 5 with undergraduate co-authors

**9. Stacy Daniels**

PhD/Institution: Biochemistry, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Undergraduate degree/Institution: BS Biology, Xavier College (LA)

Area of specialization: ecological biochemistry

Postdoctoral fellowship/other fellowships and awards: One year postdoctoral fellow at MIT

Teaching: Visiting Assistant Professor, Goucher College

Publications: Three publications, including one publication in Journal of Biological Education

**10. Mark Fisher**

PhD/Institution: Biology, University of California Davis

Undergraduate degree/Institution: BS Biology, Occidental College

Area of specialization: field establishment of plants for ecological restoration

Postdoctoral fellowship/other fellowships and awards: Teaching Postdoc at UC Riverside

Teaching: Scripps College, Visiting Assistant Professor, Biology

Publications: 3 publications, all with undergraduate co-authors