



DIVERSITY IN FACULTY RECRUITMENT

When it comes to recruiting diverse faculty members, many search committees report they cannot find qualified women and underrepresented minorities (URM) to apply. Research, however, has shown that committees succeed in hiring women and URMs when they commit to diversity, transform the search process, and proactively build a diverse applicant pool.

Research on Bias and Assumptions Influencing Candidate Searches



Letters of recommendation differ by applicant gender: In letters of recommendation, differences exist in the way recommenders describe male and female applicants. Agentic terms (“daring, outspoken, intellectual”) are more likely ascribed to male applicants while communal terms (“kind, sensitive, nurturing”) are more likely ascribed to female applicants. Research shows communal terms and negatively correlated to academic hiring decisions¹.



STEM Faculty evaluation bias: In a study where science faculty rated applicant CVs for a laboratory manager position, male applicants were rated more competent and hireable than female applicants. Male applicants also received more career mentoring and higher salaries, even though male and female applicant CVs were almost identical².



Identical faculty candidate CV, different evaluation: When evaluating identical CVs whose only difference was the assignment of a male or female applicant name, both male and female reviewers rated male candidates

“Minority professors in majority settings often must struggle against the presumption that they are incompetent.”

-Moody, 2014

as more qualified —and were more likely to hire male candidates—than female candidates³.



Resumes with White names viewed stronger than those with African-American names: Job applicants with white sounding names were more likely to receive a call back than equally qualified applicants with African-American sounding names. Moreover, highly skilled candidates with African-American sounding names were less likely to receive a call back than lower skilled candidates with white sounding names⁴.

Strategies for Recruiting Diverse Faculty

- Always be recruiting. Create a standard slide on department recruiting that can be used by faculty who give talks at other institutions.
- Ask visiting seminar speakers about promising students at their institutions—make a point to ask about outstanding students who are women and/or URM.
- Include proactive language in the job announcement encouraging candidates to highlight their efforts to address diversity.
- Review research on bias in decision making and discuss with search committee members ways to mitigate the impact of bias on the faculty hiring process.
- Decide how search committees will actively recruit women and members of underrepresented groups and document these processes.
- Reach committee consensus on how qualifications will be weighted (e.g., research vs. teaching experience). Consider designing and using an evaluation rubric to help guide the evaluation process.
- Consider interviewing more than one member from an underrepresented group.
- Ask search committees to explain to their department chair their reasons for not selecting female or URM applicants for interviews for open faculty positions. This may help avoid implicit bias and encourage accountability.

Group Activity: Discussion Questions

- What is the difference between “best in field” and “best for a department”? How do these differences impact the faculty search and hiring process and discussions?
- Do you request a diversity statement from applicants? How might a diversity statement be useful to your faculty hiring process?
- How much weight do diversity and citizenship have in the hiring rubric compared to productivity and teaching experience? How do you determine the weights?
- What do people mean when they talk about “fit”? How might a fit argument lead to biased decision making?

Additional Readings

University of Washington ADVANCE’s Interpreting Bias in the Faculty Search Process.

Film & Facilitation Guide: enr.washington.edu/lead/biasfilm/

University of Washington’s Faculty Recruitment Toolkit.

Website: washington.edu/diversity/faculty-advancement/faculty-recruitment-toolkit/

University of Wisconsin’s Reviewing Applications: Research on Bias and Assumptions. Brochure: http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/BiasBrochure_3rdEd.pdf

JoAnn Moody’s Rising above Cognitive Errors: Guidelines for Search, Tenure Review, and other Evaluation Committees. Booklet: <http://diversityoncampus.com/id2.html>

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