

Best Practices

Throughout recruiting, hiring, tenure and promotions processes

1. Send a clear message that stereotypes exist, but that they can be overcome—and that the institution has a commitment to controlling them. An experiment found that merely informing people of the existence of stereotypes risks increasing the penalties incident to stereotyping. This can be controlled by communicating that a “vast majority of people try to overcome their stereotypic preconceptions”—a simple statement that sharply reduced stereotyping, and the penalties to diverse candidates often associated with it. <http://psycnet.apa.org/psycinfo/2014-43472-001>.

Recruiting and hiring

Guide to best practice: <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/advance/files/HandbookforFacultySearchesandHiring.pdf>.

1. Defining the parameters of the search. Defining the parameters of the search in too narrow a way can bleach women out of the application pool in many fields, particularly those with few women. For excellent guidance on how to define a search, see <http://advance.cornell.edu/documents/planning-the-search.pdf>.

2. Drafting the advertisement. Ads that use masculine gendered words like “competitive,” “assertive,” and “ambitious” tend to decrease the number of women applicants (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011). Because women in STEM are far more likely than men to have a professional spouse, it is important to signal openness to dual-career hiring. For a good example of language that signals openness to diversity and dual-career hiring, see <http://advance.cornell.edu/documents/Sample-Lang-for-Ad.pdf>.

3. Reviewing resumes. When women musicians began to audition behind a screen, the percentage of women hired by symphony orchestras increased by 46% (Goldin & Rouse, 2000). Initial resume screenings should be blinded for race and gender wherever possible. Establish criteria before screening begins to avoid “casuistry”: an experiment found that, when a man had more education, subjects tended to choose the man and cite education as important, whereas when a woman had more education, they tended to hire the man and cite experience as important (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005).

4. How to conduct a search process to control for bias. For an excellent, evidence-based protocol for the search process that is designed to control for bias, see <http://advance.cornell.edu/documents/Vet-School-Search-Process.pdf>.

5. Require an evidence-based bias training of each search committee. For examples: <http://search.committee.module.rutgers.edu/otherAAUs.shtml>. A training available to all will soon be posted on toolsforchangeinstem.org. Best practice: the University of Florida requires that every search committee member participate in an online training module; a refresher course is required every three years.

6. Manage the campus visit to control for bias. For an excellent, evidence-based protocol for how to handle the campus visit to control for bias, see <http://advance.cornell.edu/documents/Managing-the-Campus-Visits.pdf>.

7. Provide structured way to provide feedback on the candidates. For an excellent form designed to control for bias, see <http://advance.cornell.edu/documents/CandidateEvaluationTool.pdf>.

8. Legal and illegal questions. For a good brief guide, see <http://www.hr.umich.edu/empserv/departement/empsel/legalchart.html>. A fast-growing area of employment law involves lawsuits by mothers, and others, for discrimination based on family responsibilities. To avoid problems, see <http://advance.cornell.edu/documents/October2010EmployerAlert.doc>.

9. Dual-career hiring and other family friendly policies. Women scientists are far more likely than male scientists to be married to other scientists, so a dual-career hiring program is vital to successful recruitment of women. For a good model universities can use in preparing an FAQ for search committees, see <http://www.advance.rackham.umich.edu/FAQDualCareer.pdf>. For a good guide for university administrators on how to establish a best-practice program, see http://gender.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/DualCareerFinal_0.pdf.

11. Start-up packages. Women who negotiate hard tend to encounter backlash (Bowles, Babcock & Lei, 2007). Some department chairs at the University of Michigan negotiate for resources with a list of requested items from potential new hires. <http://worklifelaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Effective-Policies-and->

Programs-for-Retention-and-Advancement-of-Women-in-Academia.pdf#cb2.

Committee Assignments & Other Office Housework

Divide high-profile glamour work committees from low-profile “office housework” and keep track of how many committees and other service obligations male and female faculty have. If there’s a significant imbalance, interrupt the bias by redistributing assignments (or at least limiting the number of low-power committees women serve on).

Promotion and Tenure

1. Self-promotion. Processes that require people to brag will push women onto the tightrope—disliked but respected if they do, and liked but not respected if they don’t (Rudman, 1998). Self-promotion should be limited to formal contexts in which both men and women are sent the message that everyone is expected to share his or her accomplishments. Best practice: the department chair asks everyone for their accomplishments periodically and sends around a list. Best practice: establish a norm discouraging self-promotion in informal contexts.

2. Language in P & T Letters. Put language in all Rank and Tenure letters to ensure that people are not penalized for stopping-the-clock and/or using parental leave policies, following the example of the University of California, Davis. <http://worklifelaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Effective-Policies-and-Programs-for-Retention-and-Advancement-of-Women-in-Academia.pdf#cb2>.

3. Bias check. Have someone trained in the Four Patterns of Gender Bias read through all P & T letters to check for common patterns of gender bias. Provide a feedback loop to faculty colleagues whose letters consistently reflect bias; obviously, this feedback loop has to be designed carefully in order not to trigger backlash. Trainings will soon be available at www.worklifelaw.org.

4. Student evaluations. Evaluations should be presented as distributions rather than averages, in order not to penalize women for polarized evaluations (Fleming, Petty, & White, 2005; Linville & Jones, 1980). When evaluations are polarized, analyze whether the dynamic has been affected by race and/or gender. Provide coaching for women and minorities who have polarized evaluations.

Climate

In addition to the many excellent climate surveys available on-line, two specific issues emerge from the bias literature.

1. “Screamers” and Bullying. A department climate that tolerates bullies and “screamers” will systematically disadvantage women and people of color. This is because prescriptive gender bias means that women often are punished for open displays of anger even in environments where men find that displays of anger actually increase their status (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). Both Black men and Black women tend to encounter backlash if they are seen as “angry Blacks.” In addition, in a social context where Latinos (probably of both sexes) are often written off as overly emotional (“fiery Latinos”) even if they don’t show anger, open displays of anger may well also carry negative consequences for Latinos.

2. Self-promotion. A departmental climate that encourages open self-promotion also will systematically disadvantage women. This is because prescriptive gender bias means that women who self-promote often trigger dislike and other forms of backlash, even when men are doing precisely the same thing (Rudman, 1998). The Interrupter is to limit self-promotion to formal contexts or, if that’s impossible, at least to establish formal ways in which women can publicize their accomplishments in a way that seems socially appropriate. Examples are a monthly email from the Chair publicizing publications, conference presentations, grants, prizes and other accomplishments of members of the department or—better yet—a section of departmental meetings that does so. This also will help modest men, who encounter pushback when they don’t self-promote (Moss-Racusin, Phelan & Rudman, 2010), as well as Black men, who often encounter a backlash when they do (Hall & Livingston, 2012).

Trainings

An influential study found that trainings did not improve outcomes for women and diverse candidates (Kalev, Kelly, & Dobbin, 2006). This study did not control for the quality of the training provided. Its findings probably were influenced by the many unscientific, sensitivity-type trainings offered by diversity trainers.

Particularly in science, evidence-based trainings are required. The ideal is where information about subtle

biases is built into trainings that also cover other, “hard” topics. An example is a Training for Search Committees that discusses their duties and university procedures, and also discusses how biases can creep into hiring decisions. Bias training should be incorporated into annual workshops for Department Chairs and Search Committees.

For online trainings to address gender bias in STEM, see <http://www.toolsforchangeinstem.org/workshop-catalog/> and <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/gendertutorial/tutorial1.html>.

For an online training on bias designed for department chairs, see <http://www.toolsforchangeinstem.org/workshop-catalog/> (Building a Department in an Era of Tight Budgets: It’s Cheaper to Keep Her).

For an online training that focuses on how to avoid legal liability related to gender bias, see <http://www.toolsforchangeinstem.org/workshop-catalog/> (Some Things Are Illegal).

An effective model for delivering bias training is the STRIDE program at the University of Michigan. STRIDE recruits full professors to participate in an ongoing committee that provides advice on how to recruit and retain a diverse faculty. Each STRIDE member attends three half-days of training and reads from a recommended reading list. They receive teaching relief for participating in the program. Colleagues then can request that a STRIDE member lead workshops for department chairs, search committees, and in other venues to educate their peers.

Parenthood and family caregiving

For trainings for department chairs and others on parenthood and science, see <http://www.toolsforchangeinstem.org/workshop-catalog/> (Do Babies Matter?; The Competitive Edge: Best Practices for Family Friendly Policies).

For a comprehensive list of best family friendly practices, see http://www.worklifelaw.org/pubs/worklife_academia_FINAL.pdf.