

## **Faculty Recruitment**

Discussion Leader, Faculty Recruitment Toolkit: Denice Denton, Dean of Engineering,  
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Discussion Leader, Diverse Faculty: Janie Fouke, Dean of Engineering, Michigan State  
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### **Summary of Key Themes:**

- Strong leadership and accountability are important in recruiting faculty
- Every candidate should come away impressed with the university and its people
- National conferences and professional meetings are excellent ways to meet prospective faculty candidates.
- The faculty search process is an opportunity to review the university's publicity materials and search processes to see if improvements can be made.
- Faculty search committees need to be educated about best practices for proactive faculty search processes that identify a diverse and outstanding applicant pool.
- Reviewing department policies and legal and illegal questions with the members of the search committee and interview teams is important.
- Conducting broad searches for the best candidate rather than narrow searches based on research interest can help diversify the candidate pool.
- Interviews can be made more "candidate friendly" by putting the candidate's seminar earlier in the day and scheduling the meetings so the candidate has a smooth schedule.
- Dual career issues should be addressed carefully.

\*\*\*Recruiting and retaining female faculty members in engineering was a common topic of discussion at the LEAP Conference, even outside of the sessions specifically devoted to the subject. Two sessions dealt specifically with faculty recruitment: "Diverse Faculty," led by Dean Janie Fouke, and the "Faculty Recruitment Toolkit," led by Dean Denice Denton of the University of Washington. What follows is a synthesis of the major themes of each of the sessions, grouped by topic.

## **Importance of Leadership**

First and foremost, it is essential that the leadership at the university is committed to diversity. Deans and department chairs need to be involved to monitor faculty searches and nominations of faculty for leadership positions. Academic leaders should openly discuss diversity issues, and should hold departments accountable for returning a diverse pool of candidates. At MIT, the dean reviews the resumes of all female candidates, making sure that qualified candidates are not overlooked because of gender. At Stanford, there is a “reward” for each hire who is a minority or woman. The reward is in the form of funding for half of a position which is put into a university-wide pool to allow for a hire elsewhere at the college.

Leadership is important in encouraging faculty to attend diversity workshops, such as the Diversity Forums started at Purdue, or the Interactive Theatre presentations started at University of Michigan. However, support from the faculty is also important. One conference participant noted that having a dean “force” a department to hire a candidate without strong support among the faculty is a recipe for failure. Developing a strong sense of support among the faculty – also a leadership task – is an essential step. Some ways of developing that support are detailed in the section on Institutional Change.

## **Encourage Undergraduate and Graduate Students**

One way that current faculty can help to increase diversity in the pool of new faculty is to actively encourage undergraduates to consider graduate school, and encourage graduate students to consider academic research careers. Some conference participants commented that women gravitate towards teaching positions at small colleges rather than positions in research institutions, and that the lure of a more lucrative career in industry may reduce the pool of female faculty. Faculty can present the advantages of working in research and in academia and “groom” graduate students for academic careers.

## **Tips on Finding Good Candidates**

### **1. Always be searching**

A few institutions mentioned that searching for qualified candidates only at the time of need is too late. They mentioned that the search process at their universities is continual—they are always networking with candidates at conferences and meetings.

When an official search begins, a potential list of candidates already exists. At Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, ongoing “floating searches” have resulted in seven new female faculty after only two years.

## **2. Review your publicity materials**

Searching for a candidate is a good opportunity to take a look at the university, school, and department websites, brochures, and other publicity materials and to ensure that the materials present a positive picture. What are the “selling points” of the university? Do the materials seem inviting to people of all backgrounds? The implicit messages in a university’s materials can be encouraging or discouraging to candidates. Many conference participants noted a paradigm shift towards a “recruitment mindset,” where the administration at the university is trying to make the candidates want to work at their university as much as the candidates want to be hired by the university. Presenting the university in the best light possible is important, since the goal of the search is to have each candidate be impressed with the institution.

## **3. Create search criteria with care**

The position description is an essential aspect of the search. Who at the university is in charge of determining what goes into the position description? What skills, capabilities and experiences should the candidate possess? As the position description is created, it is important to balance the intellectual focus and the diversity goals of the school.

In the past, departments have searched for new faculty based on their research interests. However, research interests can change, and many conference participants mentioned that their schools have been moving away from narrow searches based on research interests and towards broad searches for the best candidate. However, searching for good candidates is tougher than sorting through candidates to find the one that best matches the position description.

## **4. Prepare the department**

It is important to prepare the people in the department for the search. In addition to reviewing the university’s publicity materials about school, the administrators should review each step in the process, the logistics of the search, and provide a refresher to all

people involved so they understand relevant and valuable questions and areas of focus and avoid illegal questions and topics.

### **5. Select the search committee carefully**

It is important to have discussions early on about the importance of diverse searches, and make sure the chair and the committee members are committed to diversity. In some schools, the dean meets with the committee prior to beginning a search to engage in a discussion about the goals of the search and the importance of diversity. If the people involved understand the objectives of a diverse search in the beginning of the search process there is less chance for misunderstanding later on. Consequences such as halting or terminating a search must be identified at the start of the search and employed if the committee is not earnestly seeking and fairly reviewing diverse candidates.

#### Ideas for Committee Structures

Some universities have developed systems to ensure diverse committees. At Purdue University the Diversity Action Committee has helped oversee faculty searches and developed surveys to evaluate campus climate. Both Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Washington have implemented interdisciplinary search committees. At Carnegie Mellon, this committee reviews candidates and provides assessments of candidates. At the University of Washington, the dean shares search information across all departments, allowing the university to have a strategic plan for to faculty hiring. MIT has an institutional hiring committee administered through the Provosts Office, preventing female and minority faculty from being overwhelmed by committee work.

### **6. Review and evaluate resumes**

It is important to avoid adding “diversity candidates” after the search is closed. At Michigan State University, the search committee reviews resumes as they are received, keeping track of applicants so that additional candidates can be solicited before the search closes, if necessary. The search deadline marks the end of evaluating resumes, not the beginning.

Another strategy is to talk to the candidates’ references before choosing interviewees. In addition to interviewing the people who match the position description, consider interviewing people who have unusual backgrounds or who sound particularly

intriguing. At some institutions, the dean reviews the resume of each female candidate to make sure that qualified candidates are not overlooked.

### **Interviews**

At Michigan State University, interview invitations are sent promptly after the application deadline, and interviews are completed within 2-4 weeks after the deadline. It was noted that stronger candidates interview earlier in the academic year.

At the University of Washington, each interviewee is assigned an ambassador at the university. The ambassador keeps the candidate informed of the search process, which can be extremely helpful if delays occur.

The interview itself can be structured for success. By scheduling the candidate's seminar or presentation in the morning, all subsequent meetings with individual faculty members can discuss the seminar topic during their meetings. The logistics of the visit should be smooth and make sense so the candidate does not have to run all over campus. Everyone involved in the interview process on campus should be given an agenda for the visit at least a week in advance. Honoring the candidate's special requests to speak to graduate students or faculty in other departments should be accommodated to the greatest extent possible. Finally, the people involved in the search should focus on presenting the benefits of working at the university so the candidate leaves with the impression that the university is a great place to work.

### **Evaluating the candidates**

Consider evaluating each candidate individually rather than ranking the candidates. What does each candidate bring? How would they partner with others on campus? Is there an obvious mentor on campus? By not ranking candidates, one eliminates the embarrassing situation of having the person who is eventually hired find out that he or she was not the first choice of the committee.

Some schools have to deal with substantial input from outside the department for new hires. Ensuring that those participants in the administrative review understand and are supportive of the diversity consideration is critical. Conference attendees commented that establishing this type of accountability can be very difficult and at times, impossible.

Hiring women and minorities is also important at the senior levels, and can help place women into leadership roles in the university. Also, universities consciously

consider all types of people for special positions such as endowed chairs, positions that have traditionally not gone to women and minorities.

### **Making the offer**

In some universities the chair makes the offer, at other universities the dean and provost make follow-up calls to the candidate. At Michigan State University, one goal of the search is to have each candidate be impressed with your institution. During the offer phase, it is important to find out about the candidate's concerns, such as finding a job placement for a partner. Some campuses have an office that helps partners find jobs in the area; other universities try to develop partners at the university in different departments and in local industry.

### **Dual career couples**

Dual career couples are an important issue for universities. Candidates may be uncertain about discussing the fact that they have a partner or family if they feel it might hurt their chances of being hired. It is also illegal to ask a candidate about marital status. Thus, it is helpful to be aware of every resource you have to make the partner hire work as quickly as possible. One strategy is to establish relationships with other departments at the university and local industry to find opportunities for the "trailing partner." This can be very difficult for universities located outside major metropolitan areas, so some universities have established an office on campus that can help facilitate this process.