

How to expand and diversify the pool of faculty candidates in searches: Best practices

September 2015

Current faculty demographics in CNS

- 453 faculty in CNS: 69% tenure-system, 31% non-tenure system)
- Gender ratio: 66% men and 34% women
- Tenure-system only: 69% men and 31% women
- Race distribution: 83% White and 17% racial minorities
- Non-Asian minorities: 4% (Black, Hispanic, Native Amer.)

Taking a more proactive approach to increasing diversity in faculty searches

Six stages in the search process where we can proactively increase diversity in the pool, interview list, and enhance fairness in evaluations

1. In the creation of job ad
2. In the dissemination of job ad
3. What we do as a committee before reviewing files
4. How we review applicants
5. During campus visit
6. How we create “acceptable” list and make hiring recommendations

Step 1: Creating job ad

- Broaden description of content area; avoid narrow subfield. Increases chance of missing excellent candidates who don't perfectly fit within subfield
- On average, men apply for jobs if they fit 60% of the criteria whereas women apply if they fit 100% of the criteria.
- Use open-rank ads if possible
- Ask candidates to describe their experience with, or contribution to, diversity in academic/professional life

Step 2: Be proactive in disseminating job ad

- Personal invitations increase the probability of receiving applications
- Send ad to colleagues, department heads, other PIs who have a history of mentoring women and minority PhDs and postdocs.
- Send ad to faculty at other institutions who may be moveable (lateral moves)
- At conferences, identify postdocs and advanced grad students based on presentations and invite them to apply. Esp. if women or minority
- Send job ad to the diversity committee of your professional society and ask them to distribute the ad to their email list.
- Send ad to departments at minority serving institutions with PhD programs. E.g., Univ of California campuses, Univ. of Texas campuses, Texas A&M, Howard University

Step 3: Before reviewing candidates develop well-defined criteria for evaluations

- Ensure these criteria are shared by all on search committee
- Assessing candidates' fit with department priorities: How?
- For research excellence, which is priority: quality of publications or quantity?
- Is an active grant required or not? What type of grants count?
- Will you count candidates' contribution to diversity through their teaching, service and research, group membership?
- What if a candidate's written record is outstanding but job talk was not stellar?
- Prioritize evaluation criteria *before reviewing files*. Why? Ambiguous criteria nudge evaluators to ascribe excellence to candidates who fit the "science stereotype"

Step 4: While reviewing applicants' files here are some strategies to avoid unintended bias

- At least 15 minutes of undivided attention to review each candidate. Decision-making is prone to implicit bias when multi-tasking, distracted
- Gender differences in self-promotion: on average men tend to self-promote more than women. Notice it if relevant, compare candidates' actual CVs.
- Recognize that letter-writers may show implicit bias in how they describe candidates. E.g., use of superlatives may be different despite comparable CVs.
- Create long-ish list to pre-interview as a way of increasing diversity in the interview pool (skype, phone)
- Expand size of the interview list if it will enhance diversity

Step 5: Campus visit

- Aim for a group meeting of the search committee with candidate to ask a set of standard questions to all candidates
- Assess candidates' interest in, and experience with, diversity in research, teaching, or service. Have they thought about it?
- Give candidates some control over their visit. Are there specific people/research groups they want to meet? Check out the town? Learn about school districts?
- Candidates are evaluating us too, so highlight all the strengths of the department, UMass, and pioneer valley

Step 6: Hiring decisions

- Create standard evaluation form for department members to use
- Form should indicate how much of the candidate's work the evaluator was exposed to (job talk, read CV, papers, letters, meet candidate).
- Is evaluator's opinion is based on lots of data or only one data point?
- Reasons given for low ratings of a candidate shouldn't be vague (e.g. "not as mature as other candidates"). Concrete examples
- Recommend more than one acceptable candidate
- Two-body problem: Over a third of academics have an academic partner. 54% of men and 83% of women scientists have a partner in academic science. Move quickly to see if spousal accommodation is possible