



Best Practices Equity & Inclusion in Faculty Recruitment¹

The purpose of best practices in faculty recruitment and hiring is to recruit exceptional faculty. We also wish to ensure that faculty searches serve the university's mission of diversity, equity and inclusion by removing bias and guaranteeing all candidates receive fair and equitable treatment.

Step 1: Crafting the Position

1. Define the search broadly when possible; open rank and open specialty positions enable you to cast the widest net in terms of recruiting applicants.
 - ⇒ *Consider targeting positions to subfields where women and BIPOC scholars are more likely to specialize.*
2. Communicate a commitment to inclusion within the job description, including a specific disability accommodation statement, but avoid blanket EOP statements (ie, "diversity stamps").
 - ⇒ *Avoid gender-coded language in the job description that may discourage women applicants. Run the job description through the [Gender Decoder](#) to eliminate any subtle bias in the language of the ad.*
3. Consider inviting applicants to submit a statement outlining their commitment to inclusion (e.g., ability to attract, teach and mentor students and/or the ability to contribute to the university's diversity and inclusion mission).
 - ⇒ *e.g., "Please address how your cultural, experiential and/or academic background would contribute to USU's mission of equity and inclusion."*
4. Discuss potential sources of bias in letters of recommendation and student evaluations and consider the role those will play in the evaluation of candidates; if these will play a minimal role in the initial evaluation, consider not requiring them or only requiring them of candidates on the short list.

Step 2: Forming a Committee

1. Membership should be inclusive of skills, perspectives, backgrounds, rank and expertise.
 - ⇒ *Avoid using women, LGBTQ+ and BIPOC faculty as token members or "diversity covers" on committees as token representation reduces influence and increases bias.*
2. Recognize and reward a high-level commitment to best practices on faculty search committees.
 - ⇒ *But avoid burdening any member of your unit—particularly women, early career faculty and BIPOC faculty—with excessive committee service.*

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3. Discuss and define the criteria for evaluation; create an evaluation rubric specific to the “required” and “preferred” qualifications in the job description that clearly indicates how each qualification will be measured, evaluated and weighted.

4. Discuss research on bias openly with committee members and develop an open commitment to limiting bias in the search process.

⇒ *Areas of discussion might include research showing significant gender bias in recommendation letters, racial bias in grant success and student evaluations, etc.*

⇒ *Particular biases that impact faculty recruitment include:*

Elite Bias: privileging elite credentials net of other factors.

Social Cloning Bias: preferring candidates with similar cultural backgrounds and/or career trajectories as our own.

Relationship Status Bias: assuming that candidates’ parental and/or marital status prevent their career mobility.

Subfield Bias: devaluing scholarship in subfields (e.g., applied, qualitative or interdisciplinary work).

Burden of Doubt Bias: scrutinizing and/or devaluing the credentials and accomplishments of candidates from underrepresented groups.

Blindspot Bias/Backlash: discounting/dismissing bias and/or resistant practices aimed at reducing bias.

Step 3: Recruiting Applicants

1. Treat “search” as a verb. Increasing representation within the applicant pool reduces bias; when women and BIPOC candidates are underrepresented, bias is more likely to influence evaluations. The goal is to achieve a broad, deep and diverse pool of excellent candidates.

2. Set clear goals for representation and engage all faculty in the search process.

⇒ *Use the [NSF’s National Availability of Earned Doctorates](#) in your field as a benchmark for your recruitment goals.*

⇒ *Before reviewing applicants, compare the composition of your pool to national availability. If your pool does not reflect the available pool, consider extending the application deadline and increasing recruitment efforts.*

3. Develop a collaborative and coordinated plan regarding where to recruit and post the ad; engage all faculty and graduate students in the recruitment process.

⇒ *Invite candidates from relevant professional societies, publications, job boards social media groups, listservs, and programs where you are likely to reach qualified women and BIPOC candidates.*

⇒ *Contact graduate directors and graduate students in programs that graduate large numbers of women and BIPOC PhD students, including*

[Historically Black Colleges and Universities \(HCBUs\)](#), [Latinx Serving Institutions \(HSIs\)](#) and [Tribal Colleges and Universities \(TCUs\)](#).

- ⇒ *Send personal invitations to distinguished women and BIPOC scholars, including those who have recently received awards from their professional associations.*
- ⇒ *Other sources of potential candidates include:*

Ford Foundation Fellows Directory: includes names and contacts of outstanding BIPOC scholars and searchable by year, discipline.

Mellon Mays Fellowship: includes names and contacts of BIPOC PhDs and their dissertation topics, books and articles from a range of fields.

HBCU Connect Career Center: connects committees to recent graduates of HBCUs.

Recruit Disability: searchable jobs board that connects candidates with disabilities with jobs and employers.

Step 4: Reviewing Applications

1. Do not begin evaluation until the application deadline has passed and avoid evaluating applications in the order of their arrival. Avoid time pressure, ambiguity and distractions, which increase bias in evaluations.

- ⇒ *Encourage committee members to spend adequate time (e.g., 15-20 minutes) on each application and to evaluate applications in multiple sittings.*
- ⇒ *Consider ways you might blind applications (e.g., by removing names and assigning each applicant a number).*

2. Develop a transparent, standardized rubric for evaluating applicants and limit evaluation to criteria specified in the job description.

- ⇒ *Limit discussion of applicants to the criteria on the rubric; avoid summary rankings; avoid elitism; discourage/disallow committee members to consider prestige of graduate institution or status of graduate mentor independent from individual candidate's qualifications.*
- ⇒ *Ensure evaluation criteria and rating scale is understood clearly and similarly by all evaluators; do not allow criteria to evolve to fit an impressive applicant who does not fit the position description.*
- ⇒ *Ensure committee members know they will be accountable for discussing and justifying their scores and evaluations of candidates using criteria specified in the rubric.*

3. Each candidate should be evaluated by multiple committee members to ensure a fair evaluation; all materials should be considered in the evaluation.

- ⇒ *Discourage committee members from evaluating materials other than those required by the job description and/or not submitted by the candidate (e.g., social media, informal discussions with colleagues/peers).*
- ⇒ *Discourage committee members from globally ranking candidates; instead evaluate each candidate on their strengths; create multiple rankings of candidates*

(e.g., teaching, research, service) and reduce the pool to candidates whoscore highly in all areas.

- ⇒ *If engagement with equity and inclusion is a required or preferred qualification, hold all candidates accountable to the same criteria and avoid discussing how some candidates will “add” diversity because of their identity position.*

4. Avoid over-reliance on any one element of the application (e.g., letters of recommendation or student evaluations). Instead evaluate strengths and accomplishments along a variety of dimensions.

- ⇒ *Use caution when using indicators in letters of recommendation or student evaluations as a “red flag” for an applicant.*
- ⇒ *Avoid any discussion of candidate “fit”; research finds such assessments in the context of faculty hiring are highly subjective and tend to reinforce gender, racial and class biases.*
- ⇒ *Be aware of the tendency to hype-scrutinize the accomplishments of women and BIPOC applicants; be cautious about the burden of doubt biases and evaluate all candidates against the same criteria.*

5. Compare your medium and short list to the overall characteristics of the applicant pool and to national availability. Have women and BIPOC candidates been weeded out? If so, consider revisiting the evaluation criteria.

- ⇒ *Avoid tokenism in your interview pool because it will increase the salience of stereotypes and bias.*

Step 5: Interviews & Final Evaluations

1. Emphasize “cues of belonging” for all candidates.

- ⇒ *Ask about pronouns, dietary restrictions, interference with religious observances and accessibility needs.*
- ⇒ *Provide information about gender neutral bathrooms, lactation spaces, LGBTQ+ and family friendly policies, land acknowledgements and information about relevant centers, facilities, and campus/community resources.*

2. Develop a structured interview protocol for candidate interviews that relates only to criteria in the job description and do not subject candidates to different expectations or evaluation criteria.

- ⇒ *Characteristics of effective structured interviews include:*

Characteristics of structured interviews include: ²

- Same questions are asked of each candidate
- Use of prompts and follow-up questions are limited
- Questions not related to job qualifications are limited
- Candidates encouraged to ask questions after structured phase is complete
- Evaluations rely on a standardized rubric
- Same interviewers conduct each interview

² McCarthy, J.M., Van Iddekinge, C.H., & Campion, M.A. (2010). Are highly structured job interviews resistant to demographic similarity effects? *Personnel Psychology*, 63(2), 325-359.

3. Integrate questions and discussions of inclusion throughout the interview process, not as an “add on” at the end of a structured interview.

⇒ *Examples of potential interview questions include:*

- *What are techniques you use to teach in a culturally responsive way?*
- *How would you contribute to inclusive graduate student recruitment?*
- *How have you responded as a researcher and/or teacher to calls for more faculty accountability on issues of racial justice?*
- *Tell us about a time when you advocated for equity and inclusion in your department.*

4. Discuss with committee members and other stakeholders (faculty, staff, students) potential sources of bias and discrimination in job interviews; circulate [“Strategies of Questioning”](#) to all those who will come into contact with candidates.

⇒ *Immediately following a candidate interview, gather input from faculty and students promptly; provide a rubric of clear criteria for evaluation and feedback; discourage rankings by non-committee members.*

5. Upon the completion of interviews, return to the evaluation rubric and revisit the full application of all finalists, incorporating feedback from stakeholders and evaluations from structured interviews.

- ⇒ *Avoid global rankings prior to committee discussion; discourage committee members from considering material or information not relevant to the evaluation criteria (e.g., information learned during informal periods of the interview process).*
- ⇒ *Create multiple rankings and narrow candidates based on strengths in each area of evaluation (e.g., research, teaching, service, commitment to inclusion).*

Step 6: Beyond the Search

1. Debrief and evaluate the search process. Identify areas of improvement and set goals for subsequent searches.

⇒ *Share lessons learned with your colleagues and encourage routine exchange of ideas on best and promising practices across units.*

2. Set specific goals and timelines for achieving representation within your program, department or college. Track data over time to evaluate progress towards goals.

- ⇒ *Each year track data on the composition of job applicants to national availability in your discipline.*
- ⇒ *Compare the composition of your faculty to national availability in your discipline and to peer and leading institutions.*

3. Encourage and support advancements and resources to support inclusive faculty recruitment at USU including:

- ⇒ *A **search advocate program** similar to Oregon State. Search Advocates are trained faculty and staff who serve on search committees to ensure best practices.*
- ⇒ ***Financial resources** for units that implement best practices in recruitment and hiring, including a portion of the new faculty’s salary.*
- ⇒ *An **accountability and monitoring process** modeled on Johns Hopkins University that includes data tracking, public reporting, data metrics that compare the applicant pool and short list of candidates to national availability in all fields and disciplines.*

- ⇒ A **diversity and inclusion plan**, similar to those required at Brown University, in which departments must identify specific steps the committee will take to ensure best practices are followed. department level for each search prior to approval that specifies specific steps that will be taken to ensure best practices in the search.
- ⇒ **Post-doctoral fellowships** and/or a **visiting scholar programs** for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ scholars with a pipeline to a full-time faculty position.
- ⇒ Cross-unit **cluster hires** to support recruitment and retention of women, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ scholars.

Additional Resources:³

University of Michigan's [Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence \(STRIDE\) Program](#).

- Includes evaluation tools, recommended readings and best practices.

University of California-Berkeley 2019 Report, "[Searching for a Diverse Faculty: Data-Driven Recommendations](#)".

- Includes data driven recommendations for best practices.

Columbia University's "[Best Practices in Faculty Search and Hiring](#)".

- Includes resources on recruitment and retention.

Johns Hopkins "[Faculty Diversity Initiative](#)".

- Includes action plans, composition reports and university initiatives.

Oregon State's "[Tenured Faculty Diversity Initiative](#)".

- Includes resources and initiative details.

University of Utah's "[Faculty Diversity Hiring](#)" Initiative.

- Includes principles, funding model and hiring process.

Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute, "[Recruiting Resources for Search Committees](#)".

- Includes search guides.

The University of Washington, "[Faculty Job Advertisement Guidelines](#)".

- Provides sample language for including equity and inclusion in the job advertisement.

³ Contact christy.glass@usu.edu for additional resources including examples of evaluation rubrics and recruitment checklists.