



ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE SEARCH COMMITTEE: COMPOSITION AND CHARGE

Long before a search committee begins reviewing candidates, taking the following steps can help increase its ability to effectively increase diversity among the faculty. Search committees should consider:

- Appointing a search committee that represents a diverse cross section of faculty, including those with a demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion. Search committees should include members with both the ability to genuinely and effectively assess a candidate's potential contribution to the area and an interest in the future demographic composition of the department.
- Being forthright about the need to identify and reach out to outstanding female and underrepresented minority candidates. Ensure that potential search committee members realize that they will be responsible for actively recruiting applicants, including those who are currently underrepresented among the department faculty. Those faculty members with broad and diverse networks within the field are best able to help build diverse applicant pools by leveraging contacts within their own professional networks. However, all faculty – those on the search committee as well as others – should share responsibility for this task.
- Explicitly identifying search committee members who will serve as advocates for women and minorities, and who can draw attention to the assumptions individual members may bring to their evaluation of candidates. Ensure that these advocates have permission to speak up when they believe common, and often incorrect assumptions are leading the committee away from an objective assessment of the knowledge, skills, and experiences necessary to be a top candidate. Individuals need not be female or a member of an underrepresented group to serve in this role. However, since it is sometimes difficult to identify biases “in the heat of discussion” without practice, someone with prior experience identifying subconscious bias may be most effective.
- Asking that your Dean meet with the committee at the beginning of the process to reiterate the importance of inclusion within the University's mission and SU's commitment to equity. Be clear about your own commitments to diversity and inclusion in the search process, and the connection between these commitments and the overall mission of the department, school, and college. Set aside time for the committee to discuss these connections explicitly, particularly the innate compatibility between excellence and diversity.
- Reviewing practices that will mitigate the kinds of evaluation biases which social science research has identified as resulting in unfair evaluations for women and minority candidates. Resources to assist in this activity are available through the SU-ADVANCE team and the Office of Academic Human Resources.
- Determining how committee members will communicate with each other, the campus community and with candidates. Be clear about the need to both solicit information from and provide information to top candidates.
- Developing a plan to involve those faculty members without direct responsibilities to the search committee as much as possible, while still retaining appropriate levels of confidentiality. Faculty members not serving on the search committee may not perceive that they have an important role to play in the search, yet their networks and eventual input into the evaluation of a candidate are vital to the success of the entire process.
- Creating written search plans that describe the underutilization and availability of women and minorities in the field, the methods of recruitment and advertising, the position description, and the criteria to be

used in selecting candidates. For assistance in establishing effective search proposals, contact SU-ADVANCE and the Office of Academic Human Resources.

Adapted from:

University of California *Affirmative Action Guidelines for the Recruitment and Retention of Faculty*
<http://www.ucop.edu/acadpersonnel/documents/affirmative.pdf>

Cornell University/CU-ADVANCE. *Establishing an Effective Search Committee*.
<http://www.advance.cornell.edu/documents/Establishing-an-effective-search-committee.pdf>

University of Michigan *Handbook for Faculty Searches and Hiring*
<http://www.umich.edu/~advproj/handbook.pdf>

University of Washington *Faculty Recruitment Toolkit*
http://www.washington.edu/diversity/avpfa/Faculty_Recruitment_Toolkit_August_2008.doc

Moody, JoAnn, (2004). *Faculty Diversity: Problems and Solutions*. Routledge Press.

Turner, S. (2002). *Diversifying the faculty: A guidebook for search committees*. Washington, DC: AAC&U.

Bilimoria, D. and Buch, K. K. (July/August 2010). The search is on: Engendering faculty diversity through more effective search and recruitment. *Change*, pp. 27-32.