

Dispense with Assumptions

“I am in favor of diversity, but I don’t want to sacrifice quality for diversity.” Diversity and quality are not mutually exclusive traits. The goal is to hire the best candidate from a diverse pool of candidates.

“We have to focus on hiring the ‘best’.” True. But what is the best? Diverse faculty members will bring new and different perspectives, interests, and research that can enhance knowledge, understanding, and academic excellence in any field.

“Campuses are so focused on diversifying their faculties that heterosexual white males have no chance.” Several studies have found no evidence of discrimination against white men by diverse recruiting practices. Indeed, white men who had some experience related to diversity had a significant advantage in the job market.

Actively Recruit an Excellent and Diverse Pool of Candidates

Develop a **broad definition** of the position and the desired scholarship, experience, and disciplinary background.

Consider including **“experience teaching diverse students”** as one of your preferred criteria.

Make calls and send emails or letters to a wide range of contacts asking for potential candidates. Ask specifically if they have diverse candidates to recommend. Make an effort to identify contacts who themselves have diverse backgrounds or experiences.

Call potential candidates directly to encourage them to apply.

Above all, remember that at this point your goal is to EXPAND your pool of potential candidates. Sifting and winnowing will occur later in the process.

Raise Awareness of Unconscious Assumptions and Their Influence on Evaluation of Candidates

Several research studies have shown that biases and assumptions can affect the evaluation and hiring of candidates for academic positions even when the search committee is committed to egalitarian principles.

Potential Influences of Unconscious Biases

Women and minorities may be subject to higher expectations in areas such as number and quality of publications, name recognition, or personal acquaintance with a committee member.

Candidates from institutions other than the major research universities that have trained most of our faculty may be undervalued.

The work, ideas, and findings of women or minorities may be undervalued or unfairly attributed to collaborators despite evidence to the contrary.

Assumptions about possible family responsibilities and their effect on the candidate’s career path may negatively influence evaluation of merit, despite evidence of productivity.

Negative assumptions about whether female or minority candidates will “fit in” to the existing environment can influence evaluation.

Recognizing biases and other influences not related to quality of candidates can help reduce their impact on your search.

Ensure a Fair and Thorough Review of Candidates

Conduct the review in stages, with the first stage confined to the construction of a “long short list.” This should retain **all potentially interesting candidates**, and not just those regarded initially as the top candidates.

Stage I: Creating a “long short list”

Ask all the members of the committee to review all applications, even if briefly, as they come in to get a sense of the possibilities.

Divide the task of thoroughly evaluating the qualifications of each candidate among the search committee. Evaluators should be able to spend approximately 20 minutes on each applicant.

Evaluate your “long short list” before finalizing it. Are qualified women and underrepresented minorities included? If not, consider whether evaluation biases or assumptions have influenced the ratings.

Stage II: Selecting a “short list”

Review with the committee the objectives, criteria, and procedures. Remind the committee that increasing diversity of the faculty is an important consideration.

Ensure that diversity is considered seriously by reminding the committee of possible biases and by requiring uniform application of standards in retaining or dropping candidates.

Have all members of the search committee thoroughly review and evaluate the applications of those selected for the “long short list.”

ASDAC TIPS

- Be cognizant of diversity and inclusivity when selecting the search committee and representatives to attend national recruitment venues.
- Reach early consensus within the department on the value of diversity, equity, and inclusiveness.
- Search broadly and inclusively, saving sifting and winnowing for later.
- Discuss assumptions and biases and consciously strive to minimize their influence on your evaluation of candidates.
- Use external partners (e.g., ASDAC or AA Officer) to review inclusiveness of all external committee communication (letters, emails, advertisements, etc.).
- Use WISELI materials to strengthen the search committee's resources.
- Consider placing "commitment to diversity" at the top of the evaluation criteria – remember diversity and excellence go hand-in-hand.
- Place position announcement in diverse venues. While many people read the *Chronicle*, placement in more specialized venues reflects a positive attitude toward inclusiveness.

The information presented in this brochure is reproduced with permission from materials prepared and distributed by:



All applicable copyrights and restrictions apply.
<http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/>

College of Arts & Sciences Diversity Advisory Committee (ASDAC)

The purpose of this pamphlet is to provide strategies and procedures for enhancing diversity and equity within a department in the area of personnel. For this purpose, diversity is defined as the *intentional acknowledgment and engagement with differences*—those of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social and economic class, ability/disability, age, religion, and more. Equity is defined as the *commitment to fair and just treatment for all regardless of how these differences depart from the dominant culture of the department*. The pamphlet will help a department to incorporate diversity and equity as meaningful considerations in its faculty recruitment.

Contact Information

College of Arts & Sciences
c/o ASDAC
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire
Eau Claire, WI 54702



Inclusive

Excellence.

In Search of Inclusive Excellence

A Brief Guide for Departmental Search Committees

