

**IANR Search Strategies that Encourage a Diverse Pool of Candidates
September 6, 2018 (with updates for 2019-2020, June 14, 2019)**

Intentionality, reflective practice, and accountability are the key elements of inclusive excellence.

Start before the position is approved

To ensure that we have a deep and diverse pool of candidates the process of recruiting must begin long before the search process begins. Pre-search strategies include:

- Sponsor and encourage engagement in diversity and implicit bias training for administrators, faculty, staff, and students.
- Ensure that diversity is evident in web and social media presence. The first-place people go after seeing the position advertisement is the web page.
- Tap into existing pipelines. For example, sponsor women and minority targeted events, such as conferences or meetings.
- Build our own pipeline of qualified faculty members. Recruit and retain students who reflect the kind of diversity that we aspire to see among our faculty. Whether we hire these people, or others hire them, we will be known as a place that values diversification of the field.
- Implement intentional search processes that facilitate the exploration of potential implicit bias. For example, implementing a search advocacy initiative similar to that done by Oregon State.

Give careful attention to the job description and position announcement

Ensure that the job description and position announcement are written in a way that is free of gender or ethnicity bias.

- For required qualifications, include only those skills and qualities that are essential to do the job. Ask: does someone really need this characteristic to do the job? Could we envision a situation where someone without that characteristic could fulfill the job with excellence? The shorter the list the better. (Research indicates that women are more likely than men to disqualify themselves if they don't meet 100% of the required qualifications. Men are more likely to apply when they meet fewer than the total number listed.)
- While the list of preferred qualifications can be longer than the list of required, keep this list to a small number of skills or qualities that, if someone possessed, would give them priority in the pool. This list should be small. The longer the list, the less inclusive it is; the less inclusive it is, the less diverse the applicant pool will be. A tendency is to treat the list of preferred qualifications as a list of what we would like to have in an ideal candidate. Avoid this trap. Limit this list to include only those qualifications that would give the person an edge.
- Write the list of required and preferred qualifications in a way that allows them to be demonstrated, observed, and evaluated. Ask: how will the candidate be able to demonstrate that they meet this qualification? In what context will we be able to observe and evaluate whether the candidate meets this qualification, and what will we be looking for? If the candidate can't demonstrate it and it will be difficult for us to assess with reliability, it should be rewritten or not included.
- Eliminate the use of gendered pronouns. Gender decoding software is available online (e.g., <http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/>; <https://www.totaljobs.com/insidejob/gender-bias-decoder/>).
- Recognize that the use of certain words appeals to or don't appeal to certain people. For example, a masculinized position description will predominate in the use words like confident, decisive,

independent, outspoken, self-sufficient, superior, and strong. However, women may respond more favorably to words like committed, cooperate, develop, enthusiastic, inclusive, interpersonal, and responsive. A list of masculinized or feminized words can be found by following the link to the gender decoding software identified above.

- Ensure that language indicating our valuing of diversity and inclusiveness is prominently represented in the announcement.
- Towards the beginning of the announcement, indicate that we are seeking a diverse candidate pool. Normally, this language appears at the end in the form of the approved university statement. While this must be included, include something similar to the following towards the beginning: “[department name] invites inquiries, nominations, and applications for the position of [position title]. We actively encourage applications from and nominations of persons of color, women, persons living with disabilities, and veterans.”
- Don’t be overly detailed about the job in the job description.

Be intentional about who serves on the search committee

- Only include individuals on the search committee that will best allow you to recruit and screen candidates. Recognize that acquiescing to internal politics about who should be on the search committee can diminish the effectiveness of a search.
- Select a chair who strives to engage in practices that are inclusive of diversity.
- Keep the search committee small. Keeping the search committee small will allow for nimbleness and flexibility in recruitment, screening, interviewing, and evaluation.
- Diversity must be reflected in the search committee membership. Be intentional about ensuring that there are diverse perspectives, informed by a diversity in attributes, characteristics, and experiences, that will enrich the search. Given that the members of the search committee will be those that have the greatest contact with candidates, the search committee membership should reflect what we want people to see about us.
- Be aware of who is not on the search committee. Develop strategies to engage individuals or groups not represented by someone on the search committee. For example, if a staff member is not on the search committee, the search committee should develop a plan for how to engage staff in the search/interview process and how to elicit feedback so that staff perspectives are considered in evaluation. Ask: what relevant group is not represented by someone on the search committee? How might we ensure that that group feels engaged in the search and that they have opportunities to provide feedback on candidates?
- Appoint from among the members of the search committee someone whose unique role is to guard against implicit bias. This person’s role is to help ensure that all practices are inclusive of diversity. While they have a role as a full member of the search committee, they have an additional role to help committee members test their thinking; asking people why they value certain qualifications or how they will measure required skills. The primary way of doing this is to examine all search activities from a position of curiosity and to hold search committee members accountable for how they are approaching advertising, recruitment, screening, interviewing, and evaluation. It is recommended that this person to be from a unit outside of the one into which the incumbent will be hired.
 - It is a best practice to be intentional in selecting someone for this role who is reflective about their own practices and who recognizes practices (and barriers to those practices) that are inclusive of diversity.

- Ensure that they have been instructed about the expectations of the role and given strategies for fulfilling the role. (Rich Bischoff is available to assist in providing this instruction, or in consulting about what this instruction should entail).
- Ensure that committee members are aware that the person has been asked to do this, and ask committee members for their permission, before the search begins, to be held accountable by this person and by one another for comments during meetings and search practices.

Take advantage of/Provide training in inclusive excellence and take advantage of ongoing support

While it would be ideal if all members of the faculty were trained in practices inclusive of diversity, at minimum, three people should be trained, supported, and completely onboard:

- The unit leader. If this person is not committed and does not have a vision for inclusive excellence, it will be impossible to be successful. This person issues the charge to the committee, which should include an explicit expectation of inclusive excellence, and should check in regularly for accountability.
- The search committee chair. This person is responsible for the work of the committee, the flow of information, and the conversation both in and outside of the committee meetings.
- Someone, not the chair, who is on the search committee who has explicit responsibility to observe process and look for inclusive excellence (and/or times when it is not being demonstrated). And, who, with permission of the group, can call people out.

Issue a charge to the search committee that clearly states the importance of intentionally recruiting for diversity

It is essential that the hiring official clearly communicate their commitment to engaging in search and hiring practices that are inclusive of diversity.

- A best practice is for the hiring official to meet with the committee to issue the charge and to answer questions. The hiring official should clearly state the expectation that the committee intentionally recruit for diversity.
- A best practice is to put the charge in writing (see attached for example). This can be given to the members of the committee at the time the hiring official meets with them, or as a follow up to that meeting.
- Ask each committee member to take one or two Project Implicit tests (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>) or something similar. Doing so will sensitize members of the committee to implicit bias.

Be intentional and proactive in advertising and recruiting

Advertising, while essential, is the most passive search strategy. In general, creating depth and diversity in the applicant pool requires intentional efforts to build the pool through active recruitment.

- Given the search committee represents only a small cross section of the members of the university community, they should be empowered to engage other members of the community to nominate and get the word out about the position.
- Advertise in publications that have underrepresented groups as target audiences (e.g., latinosinhighered.com, blacksinhighered.com, wihe.com). Even if you don't think that this will draw anyone more than the customary advertising outlets, just the fact that you are advertising in these

specific places increases awareness (on the part of the search committee) and visibility of the fact that we are sensitive to issues of diversity (on the part of the candidate).

- Use non-traditional recruitment strategies. Ask, what haven't we tried before? Or, where haven't we advertised before?
- Recruit from universities (or places) where we don't normally recruit from. We should recruit from our peer and aspirational peer universities, and from other universities that perhaps aren't considered our peers.
- Contact individuals in the field who themselves are minorities or otherwise reflect the diversity that we are striving to attract and achieve. Make those individuals aware of the position and ask them for help in identifying suitable candidates.
- Advertise on list serves that address women, veteran, abilities/disability and minority issues.
- Post announcement through student groups of associations.

Develop strategies for recognizing the signs of implicit bias in screening and evaluation.

- Appoint a Search Advocate (see above) from among the members of the committee. Make explicit the role of the Search Advocate so all know what the person is doing and why.
- Develop a matrix of qualifications, how each relates to the job, the screening criteria for each, and when each qualification will be evaluated. While it would be easy for a staff member or the search committee chair to determine how to populate this matrix, this should be done with discussion and input from all members of the search committee prior to reviewing any applications. See attached for template.
- Do not allow candidates to be rejected based on feelings, conjecture, or intuition. For example, designate someone to ask questions about why a candidate is being discredited or is being seen as a good candidate for the job. Don't let people get away with statements such as "I'm just not comfortable with this applicant", "I don't think the applicant would be a good fit here", "I don't think the applicant would be comfortable working here" without questioning what is meant by the comment. (A rejection questions check list could serve this purpose)
- Ensure that there is enough uninterrupted time to evaluate applications as a group. When we are stressed, tired, or short on time, we often default to the more emotional, less neutral forms of judgment found in fast thinking.
- While committee members can and should review applications independently prior to the meeting, evaluating the applications during the meeting guards against unchecked implicit bias.
- For each application start with a discussion of the strengths of the candidate. Don't let anyone be dismissed without an identification of their strengths.

Inclusive excellence in interviewing

- Develop an interview schedule far enough in advance that it can be sent to the candidate for review. Ask the candidate if there is any one not on the schedule that they would like to meet with, or anything that they would like to have built into the schedule that is not already there. We are interviewing the candidate, and the candidate is interviewing us. Allowing them to have input into the schedule will demonstrate that we acknowledge this.
- Provide candidates with multiple opportunities to meet with a variety of people representing the diversity that they are likely to encounter and the cross section of the unit in a variety of different settings ranging from formal (e.g., presentation, interview) to informal (e.g., escorting from one location to another, reception).

- Develop an interview plan that allows candidates to demonstrate qualification/competency in the venue and with the group or individual that is in the best position to obtain and assess that information. For example, if knowing how a candidate interacts with staff is important to the job, providing ample opportunity for directed and non-directed candidate-staff interactions will be important.
- As appropriate, the search committee should prepare individuals or groups meeting with the candidate to help them know what the expected outcomes of their interactions with the candidate are. This may include helping them craft questions or structure interactions so that they are able to get to information about the candidate's qualifications/competencies, and so that the candidate has the best opportunity to demonstrate their qualifications. Without guidance, groups or individuals on the schedule may not know how they are contributing to the interview or what information they should be looking for. This kind of preparation diminishes duplication of questioning and increases the likelihood that candidates will be able to demonstrate their qualifications.
- If someone interacts with the candidate, make sure that they have an opportunity to provide feedback and that that feedback is recorded in a way that it is accessible to the search committee and the hiring official.

Provide a report of candidate strengths and weaknesses to the hiring official

- Schedule a search committee meeting for a sufficient period of time that discussions can occur in an unhurried manner. If someone is watching the clock to rush off to the next meeting or if someone is distracted with technology during the meeting, inclusive excellence is compromised. Every effort should be made to be fully present in the meeting.
- Discuss each interviewee separately, first identifying strengths and what they would bring to the job. Do not start with a discussion of weaknesses or areas of growth.
- The Search Committee Chair should ensure that everyone on the committee has an opportunity to comment on each candidate. This means that they may need to invite less vocal committee members to share their observations and comments.
- After considering all the available evidence, the search committee writes a letter identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate in relation to the expected qualifications and job responsibilities. This list of strengths and weaknesses should be developed in the search committee meeting after careful discussion. This letter should identify candidates as acceptable or not acceptable.

Confidentiality, respect, and honoring differences are keys to inclusive excellence in searching

- Search committee members must protect the confidentiality of feedback they receive about candidates, and treat search committee discussions and evaluations about candidates as confidential. Nothing can ruin the reputation of IANR as we strive for inclusive excellence faster than a breach of confidentiality.
- The act of striving for inclusive excellence exposes implicit bias. Sometimes bias is revealed in embarrassing ways. Individuals must be treated with respect and dignity, assuming that all of us are striving together for inclusive excellence. While it is sometimes necessary to draw someone's attention to a sign of implicit bias or to change the nature of a conversation, it should always be done with respect and dignity. While it is sometimes impossible to avoid embarrassment, do everything possible to not contribute to it in someone else. Among those striving for inclusive excellence, change is not only possible, it is inevitable. Give people space to recognize and explore

implicit bias and change. Embarrassment and confrontation may inhibit change more than it encourages it.

- The search process will lose credibility if search committee members talk to others (not on the search committee) about the implicit bias that they see operating in their fellow search committee members or in those who are providing feedback on candidates.

Conduct a post-search evaluation of the degree to which inclusive excellence was evident in the search.

- Provide a diversity report. This is a report by the search committee chair that documents the specific strategies that were used to develop a diverse applicant pool, and to strive for inclusive excellence throughout the search.
- Compare the composition of the applicant pool with national data that show the available number of candidates in a given field.

References

The following were among several sources referenced in preparing this document.

12 Ways to Attract and Hire Diverse Job Candidates

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2018/04/27/12-ways-to-attract-and-hire-diverse-job-candidates/#48ce41f73a7e>

Want Diversity? 15 Recruiting Tactics to Attract a Wider Range of Candidates

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2017/08/29/want-diversity-15-recruiting-tactics-to-attract-a-wider-range-of-candidates/>

Five Ways to Reach and Recruit More Diverse Job Applicants

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2016/09/01/five-ways-to-reach-and-recruit-more-diverse-job-applicants/#45d480642a0a>

Search Advocate Training at Oregon State University (August 22-23, 2018). See

<https://searchadvocate.oregonstate.edu/>

Search Advocate Handbook, 2017-2018. Oregon State University.

Example of Written Search Committee Charge

The Search Committee for [position title] is charged with recruiting and vetting a broad and diverse pool of candidates with the characteristics and experience that will enable the incumbent to [very brief summary of the job responsibilities].

Please carefully read the position description and position announcement to understand the characteristics and attributes we are looking for in the successful candidate. [In many cases, it will be appropriate to charge the search committee with developing the position announcement based on the position description.]

The Search Committee members are asked to:

- Arrange their schedules to accommodate search committee meetings and interviews so that they are able to participate in the search to the fullest extent.
- Be mindful that confidentiality is essential throughout the search, including the names of all candidates and the substance of all deliberations throughout the process and beyond.
- Play an active role in identifying qualified individuals, recruiting and encouraging nominations and applications, and monitoring the confidential applicant pool to produce a robust and qualified pool of candidates.
- Ensure the diversity of the candidate pool by selecting from among the committee members a Search Advocate who will be responsible for ensuring that we are striving for inclusive excellence and upholding the University of Nebraska's goals and principles of affirmative action and diversity.
- Screen the candidates based on the qualifications and characteristics established for the position.
- By [date], identify [number (may be a range)] candidates for confidential preliminary interviews, compile interview questions, and steward the preliminary interview process.
- By [date], identify and recommend [number] finalists for on-campus interviews.
- Contact the finalists and set dates for on-campus interviews.
- Organize visits for the on-campus interviews and participate, as appropriate, in the visits, which should be concluded no later than [date].
- Solicit feedback from all constituents and prepare detailed strengths / weaknesses analyses of the finalists.
- Conduct reference checks on all finalists.
- Provide the analyses, reference information, and summative constituent feedback to the [hiring official]. At the same time, also provide an unranked list of the individuals the committee deems most highly qualified for the position.

- Once the chosen candidate has been contacted and has agreed to accept the position, inform the candidates not chosen

Qualification Matrix Template*

Qualification	Required? Is this required or preferred? What is the relative importance?	Relationship to the Job What aspects of the job might they not be able to do/do well without this?	Evaluation Criteria What are you looking for to know if they have met this criterion? Is it possible for someone to qualify on this criterion in a nontraditional way? If so, what are the different ways someone might demonstrate it?	When to Assess When and where we can reasonably expect to be able to assess this criterion?
				Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CV • Letter • Other Preliminary Interview Site Interview Reference Checks

*Adapted from Oregon State University

To achieve maximum benefit, the matrix should be completed in conversation with the committee as a whole prior to examining any applications and knowing the identity of the applicants.

When talking through the qualifications, ask: Are there any other criteria (or preferences) not explicitly stated that you, as committee members, are looking for? (e.g., while a Ph.D. meets the minimum requirement, a Ph.D. from a non-R1 university is not as desirable as a Ph.D. from an R1 university). The Qualification Matrix is designed to help get at the nuances of what committee members are looking for in assessing stated and unstated qualifications.