

UIC Faculty Search Toolkit
Fundamentals of Building a Stellar and Diverse Faculty:
The Role of Faculty Search Committees¹

Necessary Environment:

- Highly visible commitment on the part of top administration to create a diverse faculty
- Benefits of a diverse faculty regularly communicated to Deans, Department Heads, and faculty
- Institutionalized rewards and sanctions attached to the goal of increasing faculty diversity

Elements of a Successful Search:

1. Run an effective and efficient search process.
2. Raise awareness of unconscious assumptions and their influence on candidate evaluation.
3. Actively recruit an excellent and diverse pool of candidates.
4. Develop and implement an effective interview process.
5. Ensure a thorough and fair review of candidates.
6. Review and evaluate the search process when concluded.

Run an effective and efficient search process:

Preparation

- Build a diverse committee—if no women or minorities are in your dept, bring in from another dept, make sure members are committed to diversity and can be ambassadors for the institution.
- Hold the first meeting well before the application deadline.

Committee Operation

- Dean gives charge to committee.
- Discuss and develop roles and expectations of search committee members.
- Discuss and develop goals for the search.
- Raise and discuss issues of diversity, research on differential evaluation, and accumulation of disadvantage.
- Review university policies and procedures for search committees.

Actively Recruit an Excellent and Diverse Pool of Candidates:

- Why diversity? Because it creates a more dynamic intellectual community, because it mirrors the reality of the world outside academe and, increasingly, the student body, and because heterogeneous groups consistently outperform homogeneous groups.
- Everyone hired at UIC should understand that they were hired because they were the best person for the job not because they are a woman or minority.

¹ Much of this material was adapted from the University of Wisconsin, “Searching for Excellence and Diversity” Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute. <http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/>

- Recruiting a diverse pool of candidates is key: expansion before selection. As Laurie McNeil, UNC, said, “Be a search committee, not a letter-opening committee.”
- Develop a broad definition of the position, desired scholarship, experience and disciplinary background of desired candidates. Be clear on what is required and what preferred; make sure it is reflected in the language of the Position Vacancy Listing (PVL) or Job Announcement.
- Very narrow searches disadvantage women and minorities and eliminate candidates who would qualify for your position but have a different profile. Don’t just focus on the Pedigree; you’re not running a beauty contest. Candidates from historically Black Colleges and U’s, who are underplaced in less highly ranked institutions than UIC, often have non-traditional career paths (time spent outside of academia, unusual undergrad degrees or work experience).
- Consider including “experience working with/teaching diverse groups/diverse students as one of the preferred criteria.
- Use multiple channels to recruit, first listing committee member connections to professional societies—phone calls, emails, letters, postings, curbsides at professional meetings to identify potential candidates. Also contact potential candidates and encourage them to apply.
- Deal with assumptions:
 - “We shouldn’t have to convince a person to apply.”
 - “Viable candidates need the same credentials as the person leaving the position.”
 - “People from Grp X make lousy _____.”

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

- Large body of research on evaluation bias.
- Overcome bias by:
 - Being familiar with the phenomenon and research.
 - Discuss evaluation bias in the committee and commit to working against it.
 - Red flags should go up when you hear (taken from D. Rollison):
 - “Gender never even enters the picture, we just hire the best candidate”
 - “She overlaps with us too much”
 - “His overlaps will build on our strengths”
 - “Women don’t work in this area”
 - “Hiring him is an opportunity we can’t miss”
 - “She’s good but not a star”
 - “He isn’t a star but fits a critical need”
 - “She just didn’t impress me”
 - “The experts think he’s great”
 - “I’ve never heard of her”
 - “I’ve known him for years”
 - “A woman supported him too”

Source: WISEST Faculty Search Toolkit, 2007

- “I’ve supported a woman in the past”
 - “You’re a woman and you were hired here”
 - “We can’t let diversity affect quality”
- Look for opportunities to structure initial evaluations to make them gender neutral and avoid triage via pedigree.
- Spend sufficient time evaluating each applicant (15-20 min); research suggests that gender schemas play more of a role when consideration time is brief. Filling out the *Candidate Profile Template* in the Tool kit keeps the focus on factual information for comparison of applicants across the board.
- Try to have more than one woman or minority on the short list; research shows that gender and ethnicity will then become less of a factor in the decision-making process.
- Bring 5 rather than 3 candidates for interview; expand the shortlist (of course this has budget implications).
- Evaluate the entire application rather than immediately culling the pile by relying too heavily on one element—letters of recommendation, prestige of degree-granting institution or post doc program; use the Tool kit instruments.
- Be able to defend your decision to retain or reject a candidate.

Ensure a Fair and Thorough Review of Candidates:

Conduct review in stages.

1. Create a “long short list.”
 - Ensure that each candidate receives a thorough and in-depth review from at least 2 members of the committee.
 - Expect to spend between (15 to 20 minutes per application). The factual information in the *Candidate Profile Template* in the Tool kit will help to keep focus on achievements, experience, and proposed research topics.
 - Select all potentially strong candidates irrespective of personal preferences.
 - Create the long short list and evaluate. Are there qualified women and minorities included? If not, consider whether evaluation biases or assumptions may have influenced the rating.
2. Select “short list candidates” for interview.
 - Selection of “short list” conducted at a later meeting, to allow all members to review all applicants on the “long short list.”
 - Consider evaluating applicants on several different rating scales: teaching, research potential, mentoring potential, etc
 - Evaluate the short list. If no women or minorities are represented consider whether evaluation biases or assumptions may have influenced the rating.

Source: WISEST Faculty Search Toolkit, 2007

Develop and Implement an Effective Interview Process:

- Have committee list interview goals.
- Develop a core set of questions and guidelines for interviewing; utilize the *Interview Scoring Sheet* from the Tool kit.
- Know which questions are inappropriate or illegal.
- Set up interview schedule and adhere to it.
- Provide opportunities for candidates to meet with women and minority members of the dept and with a FAAC member.
- Committee members should attend candidates' seminars.
- Provide a sheet with UIC life-friendly policies and units.
 - Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
 - Part-time Tenure
 - Tenure clock extension
 - Dual career hiring
 - On-campus childcare
 - Mentoring program
 - FAAC, WISE, CCSW, OWA, CRWG, OFA, etc

Evaluate Interviewed Candidates:

- Meet as a committee as soon after the conclusion of interview as possible
- Follow the agreed-upon process for selection.
- Make plan for how to proceed if the top candidate passes.

Source: WISEST Faculty Search Toolkit, 2007