

Recruiting an Excellent and Diverse Faculty: Resources for Faculty Search Committees



Created by the Office of the Provost and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion
In collaboration with the Chairs of the Academic Units' Diversity Committees

2016 - 2017

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The *Plan for Pitt*, the University-wide strategic plan for 2016-2020, includes as one of six major goals, “Embrace Diversity and Inclusion.” This underscores the commitment to growing and sustaining a diverse community, as well as recognition and appreciation of the value of diversity in all its forms. This packet of resources, which supports the *Plan for Pitt*, was created to strengthen faculty search processes. It is intended to be a resource for faculty search committees, and to support efforts to recruit an excellent and diverse faculty.

This packet consists of three sections. The first is “**Strategies for Creating a Fair Faculty Recruiting Process**” (pp. 3-5). This section provides a wide array of ideas and tips related to strengthen faculty search processes, including suggestions for increasing the diversity of the search pool, mechanisms for providing a fair review of all candidates, and interview tips. The second section is “**Interview Questions in Faculty Searches**” (pp. 6-8) and offers guidance on two topics: using behavioral questions in interviews and avoiding illegal questions during interviews. The third section is a “**Sample Candidate Evaluation Sheet**” (pp. 9-10). This template provides a model evaluation form that will encourage consistent assessment of all job candidates by all evaluators. The template can be modified by a search committee to reflect specific evaluation criteria for a particular faculty search.

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University of Pittsburgh
Strategies for Creating a Fair Faculty Recruiting Process

Office of the Provost and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion
In collaboration with Diversity Committee chairs
2016-2017

Learn about research on implicit biases and consciously strive to minimize their influence on your evaluations.

- Awareness of the problem and a desire to evaluate candidates fairly can reduce the impact of implicit biases.
- Each year the Office of the Provost offers workshops on campus that address implicit bias. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion also has a presentation that covers implicit bias.

Increase the diversity of the search committee.

- If necessary, bring in faculty from related departments to ensure a diverse group will be reviewing applications.

Increase the diversity of the applicant pool.

- Research shows, e.g., that having 30% or more women in the pool increases the likelihood that a woman will be hired.
- Be active in seeking female and minority candidates – don't wait for them to apply.
- Ensure that the job advertisement is sufficiently broad to cast a wide net.

Develop evaluation criteria prior to evaluating candidates and apply them consistently to all applicants.

- Research shows that people use different standards to evaluate candidates of different genders and ethnicities, and can shift the weight of these criteria to favor white male candidates.
- Establish *a priori* structured, job-related criteria in order to obtain more accurate evaluations. Establish weights for the criteria *a priori*.
- Require both positive and negative comments for every candidate to help avoid bias.
- Review the document "Interview questions in faculty searches."
- Have all interviewers use a version of the document
- See the document "University of Pittsburgh Sample Candidate Evaluation Sheet"

Spend at least 20 minutes reviewing each applicant's file.

- Time matters: for example, research shows that when rushed or distracted, evaluators tend to rate women lower than equally qualified men.

Consider all elements of an applicant's file.

- Read letters of reference carefully looking for descriptions that might reflect implicit bias. Research suggests that letters of recommendation, in particular, tend to include weaker descriptors for women than for men due to the implicit bias of the letter writer.

In completing the Candidate Evaluation form, apply weights uniformly across candidates.

Consciously ask yourself whether each female and minority candidate is being fairly reviewed.

- Are certain assumptions being made, *e.g.*, about authorship, accomplishments, possible family responsibilities, whether the candidate would "fit in", etc. that would unfairly impact certain candidates over others?

Be able to defend all decisions about eliminating or advancing a candidate.

- Holding reviewers to a high standard of accountability reduces the influence of biases and assumptions.
- Don't evaluate candidates based on real or perceived protected classifications. Underrepresented status is not a tie breaker.

Require every search committee member to discuss each candidate during the committee meetings.

- Don't let a vocal minority unfairly sway the discussion of candidates.

Place at least two diverse candidates on the short list / campus visit list.

- Having more than one diverse candidate prevents "tokenism".
- Consider creating several short lists, weighting different criteria highly (*e.g.*, research productivity vs. teaching experience); then take the top candidates from each separate list as your final short list.
- If you don't have at least two highly qualified diverse candidates in your pool, take a step back and engage in additional active recruiting efforts to produce a more diverse pool.

During interviews, focus on the candidate's scholarship and his/her ability to perform the functions of the job.

- Use pre-determined interview questions that are connected to the evaluative criteria. Employ these interview questions consistently to all applicants; be sure they are distributed to all faculty members meeting the candidate.
- Every faculty member (not just members of the search committee) should review the types of questions that are illegal or inappropriate.
- See the document "Interview Questions in Faculty Searches"

During interviews, provide opportunities for candidates to meet a diverse range of people.

- Ensure that candidates will see people like them on campus
- Market the campus as a positive and welcoming environment

Want to learn more? These online resources are good places to start:

U. Michigan's Advance Program: <http://advance.umich.edu/good-practices.php>

Bowling Green State University College of Arts & Sciences Diversity Site: <http://www.bgsu.edu/arts-and-sciences/diversity.html>

Ohio State University's Advance Program: <http://advance.osu.edu/resources/faculty-recruiting-and-retention/>

U. Wisconsin-Madison Program & Guidebook: <http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/searchguidebooks.php>

This document borrows extensively from Bowling Green State University: "Strategies for Creating a Fair Recruiting Process," prepared by Peg Yacobucci (Geology); revised Fall 2012, 2013, 2014.

Interview Questions in Faculty Searches

*Office of the Provost and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion
In collaboration with Diversity Committee chairs
2016-2017*

Interviews with job candidates serve to provide the search committee with answers to job-relevant questions about the candidate and to provide answers to the candidate about the University of Pittsburgh. In the sections below we focus on two topics: using behavioral questions to obtain information useful for addressing how well the candidate meets the agreed-upon search criteria and avoiding questions that are not allowable under US law.

Behavioral questions.

Often interviews with faculty candidates focus on topics of interest to the faculty member: detail on particular research projects, connections with faculty at other schools, and so on. Though the answers to these questions may be useful, they are invariably narrowly focused. A better approach is to develop a set of questions that are tied directly to each of the search criteria. In addition, it is useful to get the candidate to talk about their own experience rather than their attitudes or beliefs.

So, for example, if a criterion for the search involves teaching using active learning approaches, a traditional approach might be, "Tell me what you think about/know about active learning." A behavioral approach alternative would be, "Tell me about ways that you have used active learning in your classes," and a follow up: "How did it work out in terms of student satisfaction, interest, and learning?" For candidates without experience you could ask, "Tell me about a time that you have seen active learning used in a class," or, "Tell me the ways that you would plan to engage students in a class you teach."

The best approach is to develop a set of such questions for each of your search criteria. If there are many criteria and/or many behavioral questions, it is acceptable practice to assign a subset of the questions to each member of the committee. You can obtain guidance on developing behavioral questions by contacting the Recruiting and Client Services Department of Human Resources at 412-624-8150 or visit www.hr.pitt.edu.

Illegal questions.

As noted above, interviews are intended to provide the search committee with answers to job-relevant questions. Over the years a number of types of questions have been determined to be illegal and discriminatory. In this section we review such questions dealing with religion, race, color, age, marital status, gender, sexual preference, ethnic background, disabilities, and country of origin.

1. Race and Religion

Questions about a person's color, race and religion are prohibited.

Example of Illegal Questions

- What religion do you practice?
- Which religious holidays do you observe?
- What is your race?
- Do you belong to a club or social organization?

2. Age

Questions about age and questions whose answers would imply age are prohibited.

Example of Illegal Questions

- How old are you?
- When is your birthday?/ What year were you born?
- What year did you graduate from college/high school?
- How much longer do you plan to work before you retire?

3. Marital and Family Status

Questions about marital status, family, children, and so on are prohibited.

Example of Illegal Questions

- Is this your maiden name?
- Do you have children? Do you have or plan to have children?
- If you get pregnant, will you continue to work, and will you come back after maternity leave?
- Who is your closest relative to notify in case of an emergency?
- What do your parents do for a living?

4. Sex and gender

Questions about a person's sex and gender are prohibited.

Example of Illegal Questions

- We've always had a man/woman in this slot. How do you think you will stack up?
- How do you feel about supervising men/women?

5. Nationality

University administration will secure appropriate work permissions and visas for a chosen candidate. Questions about nationality, ethnicity, and citizenship are not appropriate in faculty interviews.

Example of Illegal Questions

- Are you a U.S. citizen?
- What is your native tongue?
- How long have you lived here?

6. Health and Physical Abilities

Questions about health, disabilities, and health-related behaviors are generally not allowed.

Example of Illegal Questions

- Do you smoke or drink?
- Do you take drugs?
- How tall are you?
- How much do you weigh?
- How many sick days did you take last year?
- Do you have any disabilities?
- Have you had any recent or past illnesses or operations?

University of Pittsburgh
Sample Candidate Evaluation Sheet

Office of the Provost and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion
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2016-2017

The following template offers a method for providing evaluations of job candidates for faculty positions. It is meant to be a template that faculty search committees can modify as necessary for their own uses. The proposed questions are designed for junior faculty candidates; however, alternate language is suggested in parenthesis for senior faculty candidates.

Candidate's Name: _____

Please indicate which of the following are true for you (check all that apply):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read candidate's CV | <input type="checkbox"/> Met with candidate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read candidate's scholarship | <input type="checkbox"/> Attended lunch or dinner with candidate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read candidate's letters of recommendation | <input type="checkbox"/> Attended candidate's job talk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other; please explain: | |

Please comment on the candidate's scholarship as reflected in the job talk:

Please comment on the candidate's teaching ability as reflected in the job talk:

Please rate the candidate on each of the following criteria:	Excellent	Good	Neutral	Fair	Poor	Unable to judge
Potential for (evidence of) scholarly impact						
Potential for (evidence of) research productivity						
Potential for (evidence of) research funding						
Potential for (evidence of) collaboration						
Potential for (evidence of) effective classroom teaching						
Potential for (evidence of) alignment with department's priorities						
Ability to make positive contribution to department's climate						
Potential (demonstrated ability) to be a conscientious university community member						
Potential (demonstrated ability) to teach and supervise diverse undergraduates*						
Potential (demonstrated ability) to attract and supervise diverse graduate students*						
Potential (demonstrated ability) to mentor diverse students*						

* Diversity is an institutional priority and featured in the *Plan for Pitt* as one of six institutional goals. Appropriate and legal questions to ask about diversity could include items such as:

- Please describe how you have worked (would work) to create a campus environment that is welcoming, inclusive, and diverse.
- Describe how as a faculty member you (would) function and communicate effectively and respectfully within the context of varying beliefs, behaviors, and backgrounds.
- What opportunities have you had to work and collaborate in diverse, multicultural and inclusive settings?

Other comments?

Source: Template adapted from a similar document from the University of Michigan