

Hello. I'm Blannie Bowen, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at Penn State. I want to take this opportunity to personally thank you for agreeing to serve on this search committee.

Although many people contribute to making Penn State a world class university, I believe it is our faculty that most profoundly shape our reputation. There is, then, no activity more critical to demonstrating our core values than searching for new faculty members. In the course of identifying and attracting outstanding scholars and teachers, search committees touch dozens of candidates whose impression of Penn State will be shaped by the courtesy, competence and candor of the faculty members who serve on our search committees.

Among our core values is a commitment to diversifying our faculty. This commitment is reflected in Penn State's mission statement, in our strategic *Framework to Foster Diversity at Penn State*, and in our federally mandated Affirmative Action Plan. The implementation of this commitment and the demonstration of how deeply we value diversity rests on the leadership of faculty, like you, who agree to serve on search committees.

The following short video is designed to provide guidance for your participation in this endeavor. I ask that you pay close attention to the important information it contains.

Again, thank you again for agreeing to serve on this committee.



[Slide 1 – Search Committee Briefing]

- Guidelines for Search Committee Members



Hello, I'm Ken Lehrman, Director of Penn State's Affirmative Action Office.

Today I'd like to provide you with some guidelines for participating on a faculty search committee. The chair of your committee will participate in a longer briefing, designed to provide comprehensive explanation of Penn State's administrative framework for conducting faculty searches. If you have questions regarding the process that are not answered in this video, please consult the committee chair or contact me at the Affirmative Action Office.

I'd like to begin with a brief account of some of the legal obligations that provide a backdrop for conducting faculty searches. These legal obligations include, but are not limited to:



[Slide 2 – Legal Framework]

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
- Executive Order 11246



Title VII prohibits discrimination in hiring and in the terms and conditions of employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The Americans with Disabilities Act (as well as the Rehabilitation act of 1973) prohibits discrimination in hiring and conditions of employment on the basis of disability, and require employers to take affirmative action to employ and promote qualified persons with disabilities. Executive Order 11246 requires federal contractors, like Penn State, to develop a written affirmative action plan with goals and timetables to which the contractor's good faith efforts must be directed to correct deficiencies in the utilization of minority groups and women. In essence, Executive Order 11246 requires Penn State to make extra effort to correct underrepresentation of women and minority group members in all areas of the university, including academic departments. Failure to demonstrate these good faith efforts can result in a contractor being barred from receiving federal contracts.



[Slide 3 – Important Concepts]

- Equal Employment Opportunity
- Affirmative Action



Two important legal concepts emerge from these laws equal employment opportunity and affirmative action.

Equal employment opportunity refers to the legally protected right of all people to be evaluated on their ability and potential to perform a job. Affirmative action refers to good faith efforts of employers to eliminate barriers in recruiting, hiring and promoting women and minorities under Executive Order 11246 and people with disabilities under the ADA, and Vietnam era veterans under the Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Act. I make particular reference to these two legal concepts, EEO and AA, because many people believe there is a tension between them. In reality EEO and AA are complementary not contradictory. Properly understood, AA is designed to remove barriers to employment, thereby enhancing and promoting EEO.

Various people and offices play an important role in ensuring that the University meets its legal obligations.



[Slide 4 – Important Roles]

- The Affirmative Action Office
- Deans and Department Heads
- Search Committee Chair



The Affirmative Action Office is a service unit, responsible for developing and

overseeing the institutional framework for ensuring that all candidates receive fair and equitable treatment throughout the hiring process. In addition, AAO offers advice on the best practices for promoting diversity in the search process. It is important to know that the role of AAO does not include evaluation of the substantive judgments of a search committee. You are the substantive expert in your discipline. AAO provides expertise in matters of process and procedure.

As accountable executives, deans and department heads should provide the search committee with its charge, and clearly define the extent of the committee's authority. The charge includes recognition of the affirmative action goals for your department and clarifies that the search committee is advisory, with the dean reserving final appointment authority.

The search committee chair plays a special leadership role, reinforcing the committee's charge and coordinating committee activities. Chairs participate in a more detailed briefing and can offer you additional procedural guidance and leadership. Chairs will inform you of the specific affirmative action goals for your department



[Slide 5 – The Role of Search Committee Members]

- Keep affirmative action *goals* in mind
- Refer all external inquiries to the chair
- Identify and ***actively recruit*** highly qualified candidates from a diverse population



The other important participant in the process is you, the search committee member. As a member of a faculty search committee you are expected to:

Keep affirmative action goals in mind; maintain confidentiality and refer all external inquiries to the chair; and to identify and actively recruit highly qualified candidates from a diverse population. All search committee members are designated as recruiters in this process.

Successful recruiting requires a good deal of thought and planning. I'd like to offer you some tips or "best practices" that will enhance your prospects for success.



[Slide 6 – Initial Committee Meeting]

- Carefully review the position in light of emerging trends in the discipline that may attract a more diverse pool
- Consider inviting cross-disciplinary applicants
- Use flexible terms like "should" instead of "must"



At the initial committee meeting, take time to carefully review the position. Do not simply rely on the last position announcement used to fill the position. Emerging trends in your discipline may afford you the opportunity to refine the position announcement in a way that will attract a more diverse pool. Inviting cross-disciplinary applicants, when appropriate, may also provide a more diverse pool. Finally, when designing the announcement, use terms like “should” instead of “must.” Terms like “should” will allow you more flexibility in screening candidates.

One other important consideration should be addressed at the initial meetings of the search committee. In order to ensure equal opportunity, the committee should reach consensus regarding the selection or screening criteria. In order to advance affirmative action goals,



[Slide 7 - Initial Meeting (cont)]

- Reach consensus regarding screening criteria
- Include among the screening criteria the contribution a candidate can make to intellectual and cultural diversity



the contribution a candidate can make to the intellectual and cultural diversity of the department should be included among these criteria.

After these initial meetings and the posting of the position announcement, all committee members should become actively engaged in recruiting candidates. Advertising alone is passive and will not attract a diverse pool of candidates. Attracting a diverse pool will take extra effort and commitment to the value Penn State places on diversity. The key to success is networking.



[Slide 8 – Recruit Aggressively]

- **Network!**
- Consult with faculty of color and women already on campus
- Make personal contacts at professional conferences
- Don’t take an initial “no” as the final answer



Use all of your professional contacts. Consult with faculty of color and women already on campus (both at UP and other locations); take the extra good faith step to introduce yourself to colleagues of color and women at professional conferences, and don’t always take the first “no” as the final answer. A second or third follow up phone call or email may be essential to persuading someone to become an applicant for the position.

Even if the colleague you correspond with does not want to leave their current institution, they will network for you if you have demonstrated your commitment to attracting a diverse pool of applicants. Moreover, you should always remember that recruiting is an ongoing activity. Your department will undoubtedly go back on the market in the near future. Every contact you make in this search enhances the prospects for greater diversity in the next search and the search after that.

In order to measure the success of your recruiting efforts, you may review the diversity in your pool at any point in time by going to the Affirmative Action Office web site



[Slide 9 - Review Applicant Pool Diversity]

- Consult “Applicant Pools” at <http://www.affirmativeaction.psu.edu/>
Pools are listed by search number
- Consider extending search if pools do not reflect appropriate diversity



at this address.

Click the hot link to “pools” and scroll to your search number. If you do not know your search number, you can obtain it from the chair of your committee. This information is updated twice a week. If your pool does not reflect sufficient diversity, the committee can consider extending the search deadline and increase its networking and recruitment efforts.

Once you have finished recruiting, you will begin the screening process. At this point it is essential to reaffirm your consensus regarding screening criteria, including intellectual and cultural diversity. This is important in order to ensure that all committee members are evaluating candidate files according to the same standards. A defensible search requires consistency in evaluation.



[Slide 10 - Screening]

- Reaffirm consensus
- Be thoughtful when looking for “excellence”
- Avoid short-cuts that contribute to inadvertent bias



When evaluating candidate files, take the extra time to be thoughtful in identifying “excellence.” Being thoughtful means avoiding short cuts that may contribute to unintentional bias in screening.

Return to camera

By way of example, utilizing so-called “red-flags” like breaks in research records, non-traditional career paths or research interests often inadvertently screen out

well qualified candidates, especially women and minorities. Other short cuts like research journal elitism or graduate school elitism also tend to disproportionately screen out under-represented candidates. Of course avoiding these short cuts means extra work, but that extra work demonstrates that Penn State's commitment to diversity involves more than ink on paper.

After initial screening, you will develop a "short list" of candidates. A short list represents those semi-finalists from which you will choose several for on campus interviews. If your department is under-represented for minorities or women, the chair of your search committee will be given the affirmative action data -- the race, ethnic and gender status -- of the named individuals on the short list.



[Slide 11 – Reviewing the “Short List”]

- If department is underrepresented for minorities or women, review the Affirmative Action data before recommending finalists
- Affirmative Action data may be used to break a tie between equally well qualified candidates



This information may be used to break a tie between equally well qualified candidates when deciding who to invite for interviews. As experts in your discipline, you are in a unique position to assess the relative qualifications of candidates.

If you determine that two candidates are ostensibly equal, you should invite the candidate from the under-represented group for an interview as an opportunity to evaluate the candidate further. Doing so does not elevate a less qualified candidate over a less qualified candidate. Moreover, inviting a candidate for an interview does not determine who will ultimately be selected. It merely affords you department the opportunity to interview the candidate.

When candidates do come to campus for interviews, you must exercise care with regard to questions you may ask. In particular, it is best to avoid asking questions regarding



[Slide 12 – Campus Visits]

- Be careful not to ask questions regarding:
Age, Disability, Gender or Gender Identity, Marital or Family Status, Military Record, National Origin/Citizenship, Race/Ethnicity, Religion, Sexual Orientation



Questions about these issues are irrelevant to professional qualifications, and may be misinterpreted as motivated by discriminatory intent. In some cases the questions are illegal per se. If a candidate brings up any of these issues, such as

asking about child care or reasonable accommodation for disabilities, you should be prepared to direct the candidate to your college human resources representative, the central Office of Human Resources or the Affirmative Action Office. These individuals have the expertise to answer the questions and they do not participate in the hiring process.

Finally, when deciding which of the finalists to recommend for appointment to the dean, keep in mind that Penn State's top priority is excellence -- excellence in teaching, research and service.



[Slide 13 – Determining “Best Qualified” Holistically]

- Top Priority: Excellence in teaching, research and service
- Excellence must be understood in context of core values that define Penn State



But you should also keep in mind that excellence must be understood in the context of an array of core values that define Penn State.

Remember that Penn State's commitment to diversity, as well as our obligations under Executive Order 11246 and federal affirmative action regulations are a central part of our core values. When making a recommendation to the dean, departments that are under-represented for minorities or women should take this guideline into account:



[Slide 14 – Final Recommendation]

- *If among the finalists there is a candidate from an underutilized group, that candidate should be recommended unless another candidate is “demonstrably” better qualified*



Demonstrably better qualified is defined by the professional judgment of the department. If the department believes one candidate is clearly better qualified than the others, that is the candidate they should recommend to the dean. If the department thinks that two candidates are equally well qualified, it is encouraged to recommend the under-represented candidate. The dean, as the appointing authority, is ultimately responsible for making the final decision.



[Slide 15 - Documentation]

- Maintain your notes or other records for three years



When you have finished the search, you should retain any personal notes or other records for a period of three years.

These notes will prove invaluable if the outcome of the search is challenged by a disappointed candidate, as well as in federal audits of Penn State's good faith efforts to meet its affirmative action goals.

This concludes this briefing. I hope the information it has provided will be valuable as you embark on one of the most important service contributions you will make while serving on the faculty at Penn State. As Dr. Bowen indicated in his opening remarks, Penn State's reputation as a world class university depends largely on the efforts of our faculty. For many candidates, the first and most lasting impression of Penn State will be the product of your efforts. A fair and equitable search process will do much to reinforce our reputation for integrity and excellence.

Thank you