Affirmative Action Office
Search Committee Briefing

WORKING TO ENSURE EQUITABLE RECRUITMENT AND HIRING PRACTICES
Objectives

Explore the concept of implicit bias and how it can impact strategic diversity and inclusion goals and influence the faculty search process.

Identify mechanisms that might be useful in overcoming barriers to diversifying the search process.

Share insights and lessons learned across colleges and disciplines related to faculty searches.
Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Affirmative Action (AA)

• **EEO = Non-Discrimination (Title VII)**
  ◦ Focus is on *Individuals*
  ◦ Implementation through Policies
  ◦ EEO Commission Enforcement

• **AA = Good Faith Efforts (Executive Order 11246)**
  ◦ Focus is on *Systems*
  ◦ Implementation through AA Plans
  ◦ Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) Enforcement
Connecting Equity and Inclusion with the Search Process

AT EVERY STAGE, WORK TO INTENTIONALLY ADDRESS AND IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES FOCUSED ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION GOALS
Excellence or Diversity

“How do we recruit the best and hire for diversity?”

The two are not mutually exclusive.

This question often underlies the unaddressed implicit bias that exists and is prevalent during the recruitment and hiring stages.

It presumes that diverse candidates are inherently NOT the best.

Arguably, the best candidates are the ones who bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the unit.
Recruiting a Diverse Pool
Before the Search

- Affirmative Action Plans
  - Purpose
  - Plan Review
  - Goals and Rationale
Before the Search

• “Candid Conversations”
  ◦ Identified Recruitment Process
    - Who, Where, How
  ◦ Challenges
    - Mechanisms to address needed change
  ◦ Resource Identification
Unconscious or Implicit Bias

Forming a quick opinion about a situation or person without being consciously aware of it. How we take in, tag, and sort information.

Results from one’s “Cultural Programming”.

More likely to occur in moments when we are rushed or under pressure.
Unconscious or Implicit Bias

**Affinity bias:** The tendency to think positively about people like ourselves.

**Halo effect:** The tendency to see one great thing about a person and think everything is good about that person as a result.

**Horns effect:** The tendency to focus on one particularly negative feature about a person, which then clouds your view of their other qualities.

**Confirmation bias:** The tendency for people to seek information that confirms pre-existing beliefs or assumptions about that person.

**Conformity bias:** The tendency to mimic others’ beliefs or hold back your own thoughts and opinions (i.e. group think).
The Search Committee

Determining committee membership

Ensuring that all members understand their responsibility for conducting a fair and equitable search.

Promoting “candid conversations”
- Identifying challenges
- Acknowledging and recognizing the influence of implicit bias and actively mitigating it

Establishing screening criteria to ensure an equitable review process
Beyond “Post and Pray”

- What partnerships can you leverage (internal and external)?

- What conferences or professional organizations have higher percentages of individuals from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds?

- Where can you find lists of award recipients (mentoring, research, fellowships)?

- Explore challenges and limitations within formerly established networks.

- Partner with other units to advertise multiple openings in a variety of publications or networks.
Writing the Job Post

- Research has shown that organizations who move beyond the required EEO Statement (*Penn State is committed to the diversity of its workforce...*) and include a statement on their overall Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion vision/goals/mission have a greater likelihood of increasing the diversity of their applicant pool.

- Generationally, Millennial and Generation Z members also look for alignment with personal and professional values. Can they be a part of an organization where they can make a difference in the areas that matter to them?

- Penn State’s Statement on Inclusive Excellence
  
equity.psu.edu/diversity-statement
Sample Diversity Statement

Penn State is committed to and accountable for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all of its forms. We embrace individual uniqueness, foster a culture of inclusion that supports both broad and specific diversity initiatives, and leverage the educational and institutional benefits of diversity. We value inclusion as a core strength and an essential element of our public service mission.
Promoting diversity & inclusion as a required competency

- Beyond sharing our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, we want to make sure that our workforce has a level of cultural competency as well.

- Including D&I competencies in the job description increases the likelihood of a more diverse pool, and of hiring a candidate, regardless of demographics, who is committed and adept at demonstrating these skills.

Example statements:

- *Demonstrated ability to work with underserved and/or underrepresented populations.*

- *Demonstrated commitment and ability to successfully advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion.*

- *Successful record of recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, staff, and students.*

- *Demonstrated knowledge, skills, relevant abilities and/or interest in teaching/pursuing research with respect to the following or related topics or issues: (list diversity-related topics, courses, and/or specific diversity populations).*
Selecting Candidates

SCREENING PHASE – BUILDING THE CANDIDATE POOL
Screening Process

Research has shown that removing demographically identifying information from applicant materials greatly increases your chance of diversifying the applicant pool. **BUT**, we also know that looking for cues which indicate candidates’ diversity, or commitment to it, can help diversify the pool.

Recognizing the potential for bias and the willingness to challenge it can help address this dilemma.

- Notions of “fitness” can often be influenced by affiliations of gender, age, race, ethnicity, ability status, etc.
Screening Process

Other areas of potential bias:
- Non-traditional career paths
- Breaks in service
- Screening elitism – Graduate Schools, Publications, etc.
Interviewing and Evaluating
Interview Process

While you may be able to implement some controls during the screening process, it may be harder to do so during the interview stage.

It is crucial to be aware of personal biases at this stage as well. Physical representation, verbal and non-verbal communication styles, and other presentations will trigger cultural notions of “fitness” and can impact the rating of candidate performance during the interview.

Maintain levels of standardization throughout the interview process—asking similar questions (allowing for follow-up as necessary), and similar routines.
Behavioral Based Interviewing

Communicate your Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion while assessing the candidate’s contributions and commitment to these values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Cognition</th>
<th>Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What are the candidate’s beliefs around diversity, equity &amp; inclusion?</td>
<td>• How does the candidate convey their understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion and the value of these concepts in their work?</td>
<td>• How does the candidate demonstrate cultural agility and competency?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Presentations/Guest Lectures

- Ask questions across the three domains in the previous slide.
  ◦ What would we expect the culturally competent candidate to know?
  ◦ What would we expect the culturally competent candidate to be able to do?

- Ask the candidate how they might adapt their presentation to reach a specific audience.
Presentations/Guest Lectures

Sample Questions:

- Please share two different examples of how you taught (or how you might teach – for those with limited teaching experience) a group of students from diverse backgrounds who differed in their approaches to the subject matter.

- How did you determine the best way to incorporate these differences into the learning environment?

- How did these approaches affect students’ learning?

- How did you evaluate these approaches?
Checking References
Maintain Equity through the Reference Checking Process

At the stage of reference checking, we are once again looking to confirm a number of factors.

It is important to be attentive not only to our own biases, but to the potential hidden biases of the person providing the reference.

Are we looking for specific traits, characteristics, or key words? Are these phrases likely to be used regardless of the candidate’s identity?

- Research indicates that the language used to describe female candidates often focuses on soft skills and service related functions rather than on competency related functions that are typically used to describe male candidates.
Preventing the References from Undoing Your Work

Ask the candidate to provide a range of references: supervising faculty, peers, former or current students, etc.

Keep questions aligned to the same competencies used to evaluate the candidate for the position.

Ask the reference about the candidate’s demonstrated commitment to creating diverse and inclusive work and learning environments.
Summary
Countering Unconscious or Implicit Bias

- Acknowledge the potential for bias to exist and influence decision making at various stages; Be willing to disrupt the status quo
  - What types of bias might exist within the field or towards underrepresented individuals?
- Slow down – Be intentional
- Create and communicate structure
- Carefully consider standardized processes (ranking, interviewing, etc.)
  - Implement a process that makes managing the number of applicants reasonable enough to allow for a more thorough review.
Position Creation

Include D&I as a required job skill

Recruiting a Diverse Pool

Extend beyond the typical recruitment strategy

Screening Candidates

Challenge the “Fit” standard

Interviews

Develop questions specific to various domains of knowledge and skill

Reference Checking

Aim to diversify the reference pool provided as well to get multiple perspectives
Contact

Suzanne Adair
Associate Vice President for Affirmative Action
328 Boucke Building
863-0471
sca917@psu.edu