

SOME TIPS ON RECRUITING A DIVERSE STAFF/FACULTY

A vacancy presents an opportunity for the university to re-think a position and the type of person needed now and in the future. The position should reflect support of the institution's mission and strategy and pervade all of your thinking about the attraction and selection of talent.

Preparation

1. Delay filling positions until you have had an opportunity to carefully analyze your programmatic needs and develop an up-to-date job description. This promotes long-range planning and counters the tendency of current department members to simply clone themselves and others.
2. Start thinking a bit like an athletic coach. Coaches go out and find the talent they need. They don't put ads in the paper and then sit back and wait.
3. Tell people about the great things going on at OU. Our success ranges from new partnerships formed in various disciplines to ground breaking research to new initiatives in staff areas.
4. Always be in a recruitment mode – do not wait for searches to announce vacancies. This means keeping an eye out inside and outside the University for potential staff members of color and women. Establish friendly relationships with them so that if you call and ask them to be a candidate for an open position they'll be likely to agree.
5. Have women and people of color on search committees. If that is absolutely impossible, assign the role of affirmative action liaison to one of the committee members.
6. Discuss hiring goals with your Employment Representative prior to any hiring or recruiting activity. The profile of the department, the availability figures for women and people of color, and any affirmative action goals should be reviewed and understood by all members of the committee.
7. Emphasize results as well as process; be positive rather than defensive and negative; aggressive and visible rather than passive and bureaucratic, flexible and innovative rather than mechanical and predictable.
8. Seize the opportunity recruit and network at national meetings even if you don't have open positions. Share the great things going on in your department,

- including research projects and collaborations recently formed. Post a generic advertisement on the recruitment board and collect resumes. You might even want to schedule interviews with candidates who look promising. Take the information back to the office and follow up with a friendly note. Then when openings occur, you will have a couple of pre-screened candidates to recruit more specifically.
9. Treat every vacancy as if it is the only shot you'll ever get to find and hire a candidate who will increase your department's diversity. This means that if you don't get good candidates of color in the initial pool, repost and consider outside advertising.
 10. Diversity needs to be framed as an essential component of excellence without which the University cannot hope to achieve greatness. That message should be clearly understood and each committee member should be comfortable articulating the University's commitment to diversity.

Expanding the Pool

11. Create student internships and/or part-time positions for people of color or women until regular positions open for which these individuals can be actively considered.
12. Write position descriptions to ensure that they attract the widest possible range of candidates. Think broadly rather than narrowly about the types of experiences candidates might bring to you.
13. If you have actual open positions, follow up casual contacts at professional meetings with recruitment letters which describe your department and demonstrate interest in an individual's candidacy.
14. Utilize faculty, administrators, women, and professional staff of color to help uncover the available pool.
15. Keep a file of articles from publications, such as Black Issues in Higher Education, which feature people of color in your field.
16. Keep resumes of prospective candidates on file.
17. Find out if the professional organization of your discipline has a caucus or committee for women or people of color.

Recruiting Candidates

18. Recognize that candidates of color will probably need to be quite aggressively recruited. Competition can be intense and candidates must be “courted” as you would any other outstanding candidate.
19. People of color need to feel that they will be truly welcome at the institution; that they will find a place in the University community. Frequently it helps to have other staff of color meet informally with candidates to give them a sense of the institution. It also helps if higher level administrators make themselves available to meet with candidates of color during the recruitment process. The personal touch can make a great deal of difference in recruiting success.
20. Include interviews with staff of color for candidates to discuss quality of life issues such as housing, schools, and the nature of the minority community.
21. Address family issues, including maternity/paternity leave, tenure clock stoppage, family care leaves, etc. with all candidates, not only women.
22. Seek positions for spouses not only within the University but also in the larger community.

Screening Candidates

23. Practicing affirmative action means practicing inclusion. Race and ethnicity should be considered as positive qualities which enhance a candidate’s opportunity to be considered for a position. It may mean broadening the concept of the “best” candidate.
24. Search committee chairs should resist strongly the impulse to label one or more candidates the “most promising” because this may make it difficult for other candidates to be fully considered.
25. Do not make assumptions about candidates. Assumptions that a member of a particular racial group would not feel welcome in the community, or would not be able to relate well to others of different groups are damaging to candidates of color and will work against your diversity efforts. Also, do not make assumptions about a person’s willingness to move; their spouse’s willingness, etc. Let candidates decide these issues for themselves.
26. Committee members need to examine continually whether their judgements on a person’s character, types of experience, or accomplishments are being affected by subjective factors, stereotypes, or other assumptions.

27. Candidate “fit” – into the campus and in the community – generally means finding a person who will blend in easily with the existing structures, someone who will not alter dramatically the status quo. People of color, and most particularly people of color who come from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, may be presumed not to “fit” as well as white candidates. Beware of these sorts of presumptions; make every effort to show candidates that they will fit, and then let them decide for themselves. This may also occur with women in cases where a faculty may be primarily male.
28. Be aware of the trap of measuring everything against one standard. Candidates who got their degrees later in life or from historically Black institutions, candidates who worked part time when their children were young, or who experience is off the beaten path may bring rich experience and diverse background to the campus.
29. Screen to include candidates. Screening with the primary purpose of narrowing the pool may cause you to miss very attractive candidates.
30. Do your homework. Read the files of candidates thoroughly before offering opinions.
31. Select someone on the committee to take minutes when the committee meets. Documenting your process will serve you in many ways as the selection process goes on. First, meeting minutes will serve as reminders regarding time lines, votes and discussions. Secondly, if another party outside your committee asks your committee to document or discuss efforts that have taken place to ensure affirmative action is a priority to the committee, it will be in the meeting minutes.
32. Think about the new dimensions that diverse candidates will bring to the department.
33. Other than professional reasons, a candidate’s motivation for applying for a position is simply not the business of the committee, neither a screening committee nor an interviewing committee. Unless a candidate offers other reasons in a letter of interest, the committees should operate with an understanding that professional interests motivate the application. To go further invites assumptions and those assumptions frequently lead to negative judgments.
34. All candidates should have adequate advance notice that you expect them to do a group interview, provide work or writing samples, make a presentation, etc.
35. Subtle messages from an interview committee to a candidate can have devastating effects. Consequently, judgements about a candidate’s performance may be biased as much by the effect the committee had on the candidate’s performance in and of itself. A search committee that is viewed by a candidate as “going through the motions” being hostile to candidates of color, or being generally cold and

uncaring is very likely to create the self-fulfilling prophecy of not being able to find any good candidates of color. Conversely, a search committee that exhibits warmth, flexibility, supportiveness, and genuine interest is likely to bring out the best in all of its candidates.

Adapted from:

Achieving Faculty Diversity: A Source book of Ideas and Success Stories, University of Wisconsin, 1988

The University of California in the Twenty-First Century: Successful Approaches to Faculty Diversity, U. Cal., 1987

Toward a Re-Vision: Examining Old Patterns and Practices in Screening and Hiring, (Trainer's Manual) University of Wisconsin Centers, 1989

The Search Committee Handbook: A Guide to Recruiting Administrators, American Association for Higher Education, 1989

Office of University Diversity & Compliance
September, 1996