

# Faculty Search Manual

## SEARCHING FOR EXCELLENCE & DIVERSITY

### A GUIDE FOR FACULTY SEARCHES AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Boston University is committed to fostering a diverse University community within a supportive and respectful environment. We believe that faculty diversity is essential to our success as a leading research university with a global reach, and that diversity is an integral component of faculty excellence. Diversity is multidimensional and may encompass life experience, gender, sexual orientation, race, national origin, ethnicity, physical ability, spiritual beliefs, and intellectual approach. As students and faculty engage and are challenged by one another, diverse perspectives will enhance the quality of intellectual exchange and the creation of knowledge.

A university that develops and sustains a diverse community must support the diverse needs of community members so that they can participate in university life to their fullest capacities and with wholehearted commitment. Faculty, staff, and students need to feel respected and valued for who they are and the talents they bring to their work. Respect for a diverse faculty includes respect for all aspects of faculty identities including their community, family, and religious roles, as well as faculty roles and identities as scholars and teachers.

A university that fosters diversity must support the quality of life of its faculty in order to maximize their productivity and the caliber of their scholarship and intellectual contributions.

This guidebook provides advice from experienced and successful search committee chairs and from research and advice literature on academic search strategies.

It is expected that you will modify, adjust, and/or adapt these recommendations in accordance with such factors as the size of your search committee and pool of candidates, the breadth of areas encompassed in the position description, and the standards of your discipline.

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*This document is based on Searching for Excellence & Diversity: A Guide for Search Committee Chairs, a guide developed by the Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI) at the University of Wisconsin Madison as part of the ADVANCE grant. Permission for use of that guide was given to Boston University on January 26, 2007.*

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## Forming the Search Committee

The BU faculty handbook says:

*For the Charles River Campus:*

The chair, in consultation with the full-time faculty of the department, shall appoint at least one search committee **subject to the approval of the dean** drawn usually from among the full-time faculty of the department. The committee may include members from other departments, or from outside the University. The search committee shall solicit nominations to the position and applications for it through appropriate professional channels, and it shall also accept nominations from within the University. The committee shall recruit in conformity with the requirements of affirmative action.

*For the Medical Campus:*

The chair, in consultation with the full-time faculty of the department, shall appoint at least one search committee, subject to the approval of the dean, that draws at least half of its members from among the full-time faculty of the department. The committee may include faculty from other departments, from other Schools in the University or from outside the University, as appropriate. The chair of the department shall designate one of the members to serve as committee chair.

In addition all are encouraged to build a diverse search committee. The inclusion of faculty with different research and teaching pedagogies and faculty who are from underrepresented groups in the department and/or college will give rise to diverse perspectives and new ideas that may enhance your efforts to recruit and evaluate candidates. When appropriate, one should consider inviting graduate student representatives, delegates from the academic staff, and members from external but related departments to join the search committee.

## Running an Effective and Efficient Search Committee

(Pages 5-13 in WISELI Book)

### *A. PREPARATION: BEFORE YOU MEET WITH YOUR SEARCH COMMITTEE (pp. 6-7)*

**Review the relevant data** concerning representation in your department and nationally. The websites listed on our recruitment page make available a wide range of information and links to relevant resources: <http://www.bu.edu/apfd/recruitment/>. Pages 25-33 of the WISELI Book also list a number of useful recruiting resources.

**Review the candidate pool data:** You can use the survey of earned doctorates found at:

- [www.sedsurvey.org](http://www.sedsurvey.org)

**Hold your first meeting as soon as possible:** Holding your first meeting early will enable you to develop and implement an effective recruitment plan, publish the advertisement early, and provide the time needed to discuss and establish criteria for evaluating applicants.

### *B. TIPS AND GUIDELINES: RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT SEARCH COMMITTEE (pp. 7-13)*

#### 1. Building rapport among committee members (pp. 7-8)

**a. Gain the support of your committee members.** Active involvement of every member of the committee can help you reach a broad base of potential candidates. To generate active participation, set the tone in the first meeting. In productive search committees, the committee members feel that their work is important, that each of them has an essential role in the process, and that their involvement in the search process will make a difference. Some tips include:

- Begin with brief introductions to get your committee members talking and comfortable with each other. The assumption that members already know one another may not be correct— particularly if the search committee includes a student representative or members from outside the department.
- Be enthusiastic about the position, potential candidate pool, and composition of the search committee.
- Remind committee members that in this age of tight budgets each position is precious and that it is up to them to ensure that the best candidate is in the pool.
- Explain that the search process is far more idiosyncratic and creative than the screening process and stress that committee members can put their individual stamp on the process by shaping the pool.

**b. Actively involve all committee members in discussions and search procedures.** A broad pool is generated by a broad group of people. You will need assistance from every member of the committee, and the more work the committee does, the less you have to do. Try to make sure that each member of the committee feels involved, valued, and motivated to play a significant role in the search. **Some tips include:**

- Include in your first meeting at least one exercise in which you ask for a contribution from each committee member—this might be a discussion of the essential characteristics of a successful candidate or a brainstorming session about people to contact to help identify candidates.
- Be especially sensitive to interpersonal dynamics that prevent members from being full participants in the process. Many of us may assume, for example, that senior faculty are more likely than junior faculty to have connections or ideas about people to contact for nominations, or that students will be less critical in their evaluations. Sometimes these assumptions are correct, but we have all had our assumptions challenged by the junior colleague who nominates a great candidate or the student who designs an insightful interview question.
- Before leaving a topic, be sure to ask if there are any more comments, or specifically ask members of the committee who have not spoken if they agree with the conclusions or have anything to add. Be sure to do this in a way that implies you are asking because the committee values their opinion; try not to embarrass them or suggest that they need your help in being heard.
- If you notice that a member of the committee does not speak at all, you might talk with them after the meeting and mention that you are grateful that they are donating their time. Ask if they feel comfortable in the meeting and if there is anything you can do to facilitate their participation. This may be particularly important if your committee has a student member who is intimidated by having to speak in a room full of faculty.

**c. Run efficient meetings.** The first meeting can be a lot like the first class of a semester or the first day of rounds—it shapes the attitudes of the committee members about the process and their role in it. The goal is to make the committee members feel that what they are doing is important so that they will make time for the meetings and for work outside the meetings. It is essential that the committee members feel that attending committee meetings is a good use of their time and that their presence will make a difference. **Some tips to achieve this include:**

- Present an agenda with time allotted to each topic and generally try to stick to the plan.
- Begin by reviewing the agenda and obtain agreement on agenda items. If one committee member is digressing or dominating a discussion, gently and politely try to redirect the discussion by referring back to the agenda (e.g., “If we are going to get to all of our agenda items today, we probably need to move to the next topic now”).
- If you deviate from your agenda or run over time, acknowledge it and give a reason (e.g., “I know we spent more time on this topic than we had planned, but I thought the discussion was important and didn’t want to cut it off”) so that your committee members feel that their time was well spent, that the meeting was not a random process, and that they can anticipate useful and well-run meetings in the future.
- Try to end your meetings on time so that all committee members are present for the entire discussion.

## 2. Tasks to accomplish in your initial meetings (pp. 8-10)

**a. Discuss and develop goals for the search** and use the agreed upon goals to develop recruitment strategies and criteria for evaluation of candidates.

**b. Discuss and establish ground rules** for the committee. These should cover such items as:

- Attendance: It is a good idea to require all search members to attend all search committee meetings and activities. The work of a search committee is cumulative and it can be very frustrating if a member who has missed one or more meetings raises issues and/or questions that have already been discussed at previous meetings. More importantly, evaluation of candidates can be hampered when one or more committee members have missed discussion of all candidates' qualifications. In order to help search members attend all committee meetings, it is important to schedule meetings well in advance. If you can, establish a schedule of meetings at the outset.
- Decision-making: How will your committee make decisions? By consensus? By voting? It is important to determine this at the outset. Specifics of the search should not be discussed with anyone outside the search committee until finalists are announced. This policy respects and protects the privacy of candidates and protects the committee or hiring group. Those making the selection must be free to discuss the candidates during committee meetings without fearing that their comments will be shared outside the deliberations. The names of candidates who have requested confidentiality should not be brought up even in casual conversations. This information should be held confidential in perpetuity, not just until the search is over.
- Other common ground rules you may wish to establish include turning off cell phones, routing pagers to an assistant, being on time, treating other committee members with respect even if there is a disagreement, etc. Whatever ground rules you establish should represent a consensus and should be accepted by the entire committee. They may need to be reviewed and updated periodically.

**c. Discuss roles and expectations of the search committee members.** Make sure your committee members know what is expected of them in terms of attending meetings, building the candidate pool, evaluating candidates, etc. **Make sure your committee members know that participation in this search will require considerable time and effort.**

Some of the roles/expectations for search committee members include helping to:

- publicize the search
- recruit candidates
- develop evaluation criteria
- evaluate candidates
- develop interview questions
- interview candidates
- host candidates who interview on campus
- assure that the search process is fair and equitable
- maintain confidentiality

**d. Discuss the search process time line.** Make sure that committee members understand both the importance of moving quickly and the extent of their commitment in terms of plausible closure dates.

**e. Raise and discuss issues of diversity.** Use the material on pages 11-12 and 14-17 of this document to guide your discussion.

### 3. Anticipating problems (pp. 12-13)

Despite your best efforts to gain the support of your search committee and to actively involve them in the search process, your meetings and efforts may not proceed as smoothly and effectively as you would like. It may help to anticipate problems and think about how to resolve them. You can seek advice from your department chair or from past search committee chairs. Some common problems that former search committee chairs have identified are listed below, along with resources that may help you overcome them:

#### a. Resistance to efforts to enhance diversity

- Allow all members of the search committee to voice their opinions and participate in a discussion on diversity and the search committee's roles and responsibilities in recruiting and evaluating a diverse pool of candidates.
- Remind your search committee that they represent the interests of the department as a whole and, in a broader context, the interests of the university.
- Stress that failure to recruit and fairly evaluate a diverse pool of candidates may jeopardize the search; that it may be too late to address the issue when and if you are asked, "Why are there no women or minorities on your finalist list?"
- Rely on your discussion of diversity in this workshop and on the materials in Elements II and III to help you facilitate a discussion of diversity within your search committee and/or to respond to resistance.
- Consider inviting someone with expertise on research documenting the value of diversity to your committee meetings (e.g., a representative of the Council for Diversity and Inclusion).

**b. One member dominates the meetings.** Review and/or refer to the ground rules you established for your search committee meetings.

**c. Power dynamics of the group prevent some members from fully participating.** Although a search committee composed of a diverse group of individuals is recommended and helps you to incorporate diverse views and perspectives into your search, you should also recognize that differences in the status and power of the members of your search committee may influence their participation. Junior faculty members, for example, may be reluctant to disagree with senior faculty members who may later evaluate them for tenure promotion. Minority and/or women search committee members may not be comfortable if they are the only member of the search committee to advocate for minority and/or female candidates. Though minority and/or women search committee members can help you recruit a more diverse pool, it is not reasonable to expect them to be the only advocates for diversity. As search committee chair you should evaluate your committee's interactions to assess whether such power imbalances are influencing your search. If so, you can attempt to improve the group dynamics by:

- having private conversations with relevant members of the search committee
- reviewing/establishing ground rules that encourage participation from all members

#### 4. Concluding your meetings (p. 13)

**a. Assign specific tasks to committee members.** For example, each committee member could be asked:

- to identify or contact a specified number of sources who can refer you to potential candidates
- to suggest a certain number of venues for posting job announcements
- to review a specified number of applications

**b. Remind committee members of their assigned tasks.** Before your next meeting, send committee members a written or emailed reminder of their assigned tasks so that they know they are expected to follow through and to report on their activities at the next meeting.

**c. Hold committee members accountable.** Ask each committee member to report on his or her search activities at every committee meeting.

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# Advertising For and Actively Recruiting an Excellent and Diverse Pool of Candidates

(Pages 15-33 in WISELI Book)

## **A. ADVERTISING**

Ideally, the search committee will be engaged in developing the advertisement for the position and in deciding where to publish the advertisement. Committees are encouraged to think broadly as they advertise the position. The Provost's Office produces and updates a [Faculty Advertisement Guide](#) for your use. Early advertisement is also encouraged as it helps to create a larger candidate pool.

### 1. Language for the advertisement

The traditional summary statement found in position announcements —“BU is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer” — is required by federal regulation and must appear in all advertisements. To be more attractive to potential candidates, additional language should be considered. Proactive language conveys a level of commitment beyond that required by regulation and tells potential applicants that the University values diversity.

Proactive language can be included as a specific job qualification or as a summary statement at the end of job announcements. Examples of proactive language include the following:

- BU is committed to building a culturally diverse faculty and strongly encourages applications from female and minority candidates.
- Women, minorities, individuals with disabilities and veterans are encouraged to apply.
- BU is dedicated to the goal of building a culturally diverse and pluralistic faculty committed to teaching and working in a multicultural environment and strongly encourages applications from minorities and women.
- Candidates should describe how multicultural issues have been or will be brought into courses.
- Candidates should describe previous activities mentoring minorities, women, or members of other underrepresented groups.

### 2. Places to advertise position openings

The ad should appear on the college and department websites.

For print or web advertisements, determining where an ad is placed is as important as the wording of the advertisement. Departments should be cautious about spending large sums of money to advertise in special diversity newsletters or publications. Reputable publications such as the Chronicle of Higher Education or those distributed by national discipline-based organizations can be counted on to actually reach intended audiences.

The growth of the internet has introduced a large number of additional venues for placing ads. A thorough list of resources concerning professional and academic organizations, professional publications and web resources, and organizations that maintain databases of potential recruits can be found on our recruitment page: <http://www.bu.edu/apfd/recruitment/>

Please consult this website for ideas on where your faculty position advertisement could be listed.



### 3. Public Relations for the University

The process of advertising for a faculty position provides the University with a public relations opportunity for the University, College, and Department. The search committee, in conjunction with the Dean's office, should consider preparing an information packet to be sent to all candidates who respond to the advertisement upon receipt of their application. All search committees are encouraged to present final candidates with an information packet that is tailored to the school or college that is conducting the search. General information that may be of interest to all faculty candidates may be found at the [Quick Guide to Faculty Life at Boston University](#). This includes links to maps, governance documents, assistance with information about childcare, the current Research magazine for the University, and more. The [Faculty Central website](#) is also publicly available, and may be of interest to prospective faculty. Finally, the [Strategic Plan for Boston University](#) is easily accessible, and prospective faculty may be curious about it.

#### *B. DISCUSSING DIVERSITY (pp.16-19)*

##### 1. Statement on diversity in searches (pp.16-17)

Diversity is an issue that inevitably surfaces in every search. The diversity of the university's faculty and staff influences its strength and intellectual personality. At the campus level as well as at the departmental level, we need diversity in discipline, intellectual outlook, cognitive style, and personality to offer students the breadth of ideas that constitutes a dynamic intellectual community. Diversity of experience, age, physical ability, religion, ethnicity, and gender contributes to the richness of the environment for teaching and research and provides students and the public with a university that reflects the society it serves.<sup>1</sup>

In order to build a diverse pool of candidates, it is necessary to consciously strive to do so as it may not happen by simply advertising an open position. The time to discuss diversity is at the beginning of the search. **It is too late to address the issue when and if you are asked, "Why are there no women or minorities on your finalist list?"** Frequently, search committees answer such questions by claiming that "there weren't any women or minority applicants," or "there weren't any good ones."<sup>2</sup> One goal of your search should be to ensure that there are outstanding women and minorities in your pool of candidates. Think broadly and creatively about recruiting candidates. The typical route of placing an ad and waiting for applications is no longer sufficient. In this competitive hiring market, some of the best candidates may not see your ad or may not see themselves in your advertised position without some encouragement.

**Finally, it is important to emphasize that every person hired at Boston University should know that they were hired because they were the best person for the job.<sup>3</sup> By generating larger and more diverse pools of applicants for every position, the best candidate for the position will be a woman, minority, or disabled person more often than in the past.**

##### 2. Common views on diversity in hiring—and some responses (pp. 17-19)

Previous search committee chairs have sometimes heard the following, or similar, statements from their search committee members and other faculty in their departments. These views may

be raised during your discussions of diversity. Some suggestions for responding to such statements are provided.

**“I am fully in favor of diversity, but I don’t want to sacrifice quality for diversity.”** No one wants to or recommends sacrificing quality for diversity; indeed, no qualified minority/female candidate wants to be considered on the basis of diversity alone. The search committee should be responsible not only for finding and including highly qualified minority and female candidates, **but also for ensuring** that the candidates and the department/university in general know that they were selected on the basis of merit.

**“We have to focus on hiring the ‘best.’”** True. But what is the best? If we do not actively recruit a diverse pool of candidates, how will we know we have attracted the best possible candidates to apply? What are the criteria for the “best?” What is “best” for the department? The university? The students? Diverse faculty members will bring new and different perspectives, interests, and research questions that can enhance knowledge, understanding, and academic excellence in any field. Diverse and excellent faculty members can help attract and retain students from underrepresented groups. Diverse faculty members can enhance the educational experience of all students—minority and majority. Interacting with diverse faculty offers all students valuable lessons about the increasingly diverse world in which we live, and lessons about society, cultural differences, value systems, etc.

**“Campuses are so focused on diversifying their faculties that heterosexual white males have no chance,” or “Recruiting women and minority faculty diminishes opportunities for white male faculty.”** A study examining the experiences of scholars who have recently earned doctorates and won prestigious fellowships (Ford, Mellon, and Spencer) found no evidence of discrimination against white men. Indeed, white men who had some expertise related to diversity had a significant advantage in the job market.<sup>4</sup> Another study examining nationwide faculty hires in Sociology in 1991–92 also found no evidence of disadvantages for white men. Indeed, this study found that, despite some improvement, disadvantages still existed for “[white] women, minority men, and most especially minority women.”<sup>5</sup>

**“There are no women/minorities in our field, or no qualified women/minorities.”** Though women and minorities may be scarce in some fields, it is rarely the case that there are none. The search committee, as part of its efforts to build its pool, must actively seek out qualified women and minority candidates.

**“The scarcity of faculty of color in the sciences means that few are available, those who are available are in high demand, and we can’t compete.”** In a recent study of the recipients of prestigious Ford Fellowships, all of whom are minorities, the majority, 54%, were not aggressively pursued for faculty positions despite holding postdoctoral research appointments for up to six years after finishing their degrees.<sup>6</sup> Only 11% of scholars of color were simultaneously recruited by several institutions, thus, the remaining 89% were not involved in “competitive bidding wars.”<sup>7</sup>

**“Minority candidates would not want to come to our campus.”** The search committee should not make such decisions for the candidates, but should let the candidates decide if the campus and/or community are a good match for them. The search committee should show potential candidates how they might fit into our campus, provide them with resources for finding out more about our campus and community, and help them make connections to individuals and groups who may share their interests, race, ethnicity, etc.

### *C. TIPS AND GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING A DIVERSE POOL OF CANDIDATES (pp. 19-24)*

#### 1. How to build a diverse pool of candidates (pp. 19-23):

- **Develop a broad definition** of the position and the desired scholarship, experience, and disciplinary background. Narrowly defined searches may tend to exclude women or minorities because of pipeline issues. Narrowly defined searches may limit your ability to consider candidates with a different profile who, nonetheless, qualify for your position. Be clear about what is really “required” and what is “preferred.” If appropriate, use “preferred” instead of “required,” “should” instead of “must,” etc. when describing qualifications and developing criteria.
- **Use the resources** listed at <http://www.bu.edu/apfd/recruitment/> to advertise the position as widely as possible.
- **Consider including “experience working with/teaching diverse groups/diverse students”** as one of your preferred criteria.
- **Make calls and send e-mails or letters** to a wide range of contacts asking for potential candidates. Ask specifically if they have diverse candidates to recommend.
- **Make an effort to identify contacts who have diverse backgrounds or experiences.** Such contacts may help you reach highly qualified minority/women candidates.
- **Make lists of professional meetings, professional societies,** members of these societies, etc. and use them to recruit candidates.
- **Call potential candidates directly** to encourage them to apply.
- **Remember to actively involve your search committee members** and delegate specific tasks to them. For example, ask each member of your search committee to call ten colleagues and ask them to recommend potential candidates.
- **Above all, remember that at this point your goal is to EXPAND your pool** of potential candidates. Sifting and winnowing will occur later in the process.
- **Finally, don’t lose sight of the “Equal Opportunity” half of the EOE/AA assurance.** All candidates deserve an equal opportunity to be considered, and may emerge as the candidate of choice in a search process.

#### **BU resources that may be of interest:**

- Faculty Development Website: <http://www.bu.edu/apfd/>
- Diversity Links and Resources at the Development website: <http://www.bu.edu/apfd/diversity/>

## 2. Dispense with assumptions that may limit your pool (pp. 23-24)

Previous search committee chairs report that the following assumptions may hamper efforts to recruit a diverse and excellent pool of candidates. Some potential responses include:

**“We shouldn’t have to convince a person to be a candidate.”** In fact, many of the finalists in searches across campus—for positions as diverse as assistant professor, provost, and chancellor—had to be convinced to apply. Some candidates may think their credentials don’t fit, that they are too junior, or that they don’t want to live in Boston. Talk to prospective candidates and ask them to let the committee evaluate their credentials. Remind them that without knowing who will be in the pool, you can’t predict how any given candidate will compare and ask them to postpone making judgments themselves until a later time in the process. Once they are in the pool, either side can always decide that the fit isn’t a good one, but if candidates don’t enter the pool, the committee loses the opportunity to consider them. Another argument to use with junior candidates is that the application process will provide valuable experience even if their application is unsuccessful in this search. Remind them that going through the process will make them more comfortable and knowledgeable when the job of their dreams comes along. Individual attention and persistence pay off—there are many examples from other searches of “reluctant” candidates who needed to be coaxed into the pool and turned out to be stellar finalists.

**“Excellent candidates need the same credentials as the person leaving the position.”** There are many examples of highly successful people who have taken nontraditional career routes. Some of our best faculty were recruited when they had less than the typical amount of postdoctoral experience, were employed at teaching colleges, had taken a break from their careers, or were working in the private sector or in government positions. At the national level, it is interesting to note that none of the five female deans of colleges of engineering in the U.S. were department chairs before becoming deans, and they are all highly successful deans. Think outside the box and recruit from unusual sources. You can always eliminate candidates from the pool later.

**“People from Group X don’t make good teachers/administrators/faculty members, etc.”** We all make assumptions about people based on the university granting their degree, the part of the country or world they come from, and their ethnicity or gender. Encourage your committee members to recognize this and avoid making assumptions. Your pool will only be hurt by comments such as, “People from the South never adjust to Boston’s weather,” “We never recruit well from the coasts,” or “There are no women [in a given field].”

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1 A valuable literature review and an extensive annotated bibliography of research on the impact of diversity on college campuses can be found in Daryl G. Smith, et al., *Diversity Works: The Emerging Picture of How Students Benefit* (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1997). See also Congressional Commission on the Advancement of Women and Minorities in Science, Engineering and Technology (CAWMSET), *Land of Plenty: Diversity as America’s Competitive Edge in Science, Engineering and Technology* (Arlington, VA:

National Science Foundation, September 2000), 1, 9–13; and Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner, *Diversifying the Faculty: A Guidebook for Search Committees* (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2002), 1–2.

2 Daryl G. Smith, et al., *Achieving Faculty Diversity: Debunking the Myths* (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1996).

3 For a discussion of the potential negative consequences of “affirmative action” and how these can be eliminated by focusing on the centrality of merit in the decision-making process see: Madeline E. Heilman, Michael C. Simon, and David R. Repper, “Intentionally favored, unintentionally harmed? The impact of sex-based preferential selection on self-perceptions and self-evaluations,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 72 (1987): 62–68 and Madeline E. Heilman, “Type of affirmative action policy: A determinant of reactions to sex-based preferential selection?” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 83 (1998): 190–205. See also Virginia Brown and Florence L. Geis, “Turning lead into gold: Leadership by men and women and the alchemy of social consensus,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 46 (1984): 811–824.

4 Smith, *Achieving Faculty Diversity*, 4, 65–70.

5 Joya Misra, Ivy Kennelly, and Marina Karides, “Employment chances in the academic job market in sociology: Do race and gender matter?” *Sociological Perspectives* 42 (1999): 215–247.

6 Smith, *Achieving Faculty Diversity*, 4, 95.

7 Turner, *Diversifying the Faculty*, 16.

## Raising Awareness of Unconscious Assumptions and Their Influence on Evaluation of Candidates

(Pages 35-42 in WISELI Book)

### *A. INFLUENCE OF UNCONSCIOUS ASSUMPTIONS AND BIASES (pp. 36-41)*

Although we all like to think that we are objective scholars who judge people based entirely on merit and on the quality of their work and the nature of their achievements, copious research shows that every one of us brings with us a lifetime of experience and cultural history that shapes our evaluations of others.

Studies show that people who have strong egalitarian values and believe that they are not biased may nevertheless unconsciously or inadvertently behave in discriminatory ways (Dovidio 2001). A first step toward ensuring fairness in the search and screen process is to recognize that unconscious biases, attitudes, and other influences not related to the qualifications, contributions, behaviors, and personalities of candidates can influence our evaluations, **even if we are committed to egalitarian principles.**

The results from controlled research studies in which people were asked to make judgments about human subjects demonstrate the potentially prejudicial nature of our many implicit or unconscious assumptions. Examples range from physical and social expectations or assumptions to those that have a clear connection to hiring, even for faculty positions.

It is important to note that in most of these studies, **the gender of the evaluator was not significant, indicating that both men and women share and apply the same assumptions about gender.** Recognizing biases and other influences not related to the quality of candidates can help reduce their impact on your search and review of candidates. Spending sufficient time on evaluation (15–20 minutes per application) can also reduce the influence of assumptions.

#### 1. Examples of common social assumptions/expectations

- When shown photographs of people of the same height, evaluators overestimated the heights of male subjects and underestimated the heights of female subjects, even though a reference point, such as a doorway, was provided (Biernat and Manis 1991).
- When shown photographs of men with similar athletic abilities, evaluators rated the athletic ability of African American men higher than that of white men (Biernat and Manis 1991).
- Students asked to choose counselors from among a group of applicants with marginal qualifications more often chose white candidates than African American candidates with identical qualifications (Dovidio and Gaertner 2000).

These studies show how generalizations that may or may not be valid can be applied to the evaluation of individuals (Bielby and Baron 1986). In the study on height, evaluators applied the statistically accurate generalization that men are usually taller than women to their estimates of the height of individuals who did not necessarily conform to the generalization. If we can

inaccurately apply generalizations to characteristics as objective and easily measured as height, what happens when the qualities we are evaluating are not as objective or as easily measured? What happens when, as in the studies of athletic ability and choice of counselor, the generalization is not valid? What happens when such generalizations unconsciously influence the ways we evaluate other people?

## 2. Examples of assumptions that can influence the evaluation of candidates

- When rating the quality of verbal skills as indicated by vocabulary definitions, evaluators rated the skills lower if they were told an African American provided the definitions than if they were told that a white person provided them (Biernat and Manis 1991).
- When asked to assess the contribution of skill and luck to successful performance of a task, evaluators more frequently attributed success to skill for males and to luck for females, even though males and females performed the task equally well (Deaux and Emswiller 1974).
- Evaluators who were busy, distracted by other tasks, and under time pressure gave women lower ratings than men for the same written evaluation of job performance. Sex bias decreased when they gave ample time and attention to their judgments, which rarely occurs in actual work settings. This study indicates that evaluators are more likely to rely upon underlying assumptions and biases when they can/do not give sufficient time and attention to their evaluations (Martell 1991).
- Evidence suggests that perceived incongruities between the female gender role and leadership roles create two types of disadvantage for women: (1) ideas about the female gender role cause women to be perceived as having less leadership ability than men and consequently impede women's rise to leadership positions, and (2) women in leadership positions receive less favorable evaluations because they are perceived to be violating gender norms. These perceived incongruities lead to attitudes that are less positive toward female leaders than male leaders (Eagly and Karau 2002; Ridgeway 2001).
- A study of the nonverbal responses of white interviewers to African American and white interviewees showed that white interviewers maintained (1) higher levels of visual contact, reflecting greater attraction, intimacy, and respect when talking with whites, and (2) higher rates of blinking, indicating greater negative arousal and tension, when talking with African Americans (Dovidio et al. 1997).

## 3. Examples of assumptions or biases in academic contexts

Several research studies have shown that biases and assumptions can affect the evaluation and hiring of candidates for academic positions. These studies show that the assessment of résumés and postdoctoral applications, evaluation of journal articles, and the language and structure of letters of recommendation are significantly influenced by the sex of the person being evaluated.

- A study of over 300 recommendation letters for medical faculty hired at a large U.S. medical school in the 1990s found that letters for female applicants differed systematically from those for males. Letters written for women were shorter, seemed to provide "minimal assurance" rather than solid recommendation, raised more doubts, and portrayed women as students and teachers while portraying men as researchers and professionals. While such differences were readily apparent, it is important to note that all letters studied were for successful candidates only (Trix and Psenka 2002).

- In a national study, 238 academic psychologists (118 male, 120 female) evaluated a résumé randomly assigned a male or a female name. Both male and female participants gave the male applicant better evaluations for teaching, research, and service and were more likely to hire the male than the female applicant (Steinpreis et al. 1999). Another study showed that the preference for males was greater when women represented a small proportion of the pool of candidates, as is typical in many academic fields (Heilman 1980).
- A study of postdoctoral fellowships awarded by the Medical Research Council in Sweden found that women candidates needed substantially more publications to achieve the same rating as men, unless they personally knew someone on the panel (Wenneras and Wold 1997).
- In a replication of a 1968 study, researchers manipulated the name of the author of an academic article, assigning a name that was male, female, or neutral (initials). The 360 college students who evaluated this article were influenced by the name of the author, evaluating the article more favorably when it was written by a male than when written by a female. Questions asked after the evaluation was complete showed that bias against women was stronger when evaluators believed that the author identified only by initials was female (Paludi and Bauer 1983).

These sorts of built-in assumptions can impede your efforts to recruit and review an excellent and diverse pool of candidates. It is best to talk to your committee about being conscious of assumptions and biases in order to build a broad pool from diverse sources and evaluate the candidates fairly.

It is also essential to remind your search committee that considerable time and attention, 15–20 minutes per application, are required to evaluate candidates fairly and adequately. Underlying assumptions and biases are more likely to play a role in evaluation when the evaluator cannot or does not give sufficient time and attention to the task.

In addition, it is useful to note that many of our colleagues have followed nontraditional career paths and been exceedingly successful. If your committee rejects candidates who have not held a postdoctoral position, come from a less prestigious research institution, or are teaching at a small college, be sure that you apply the same criteria uniformly across the pool and are certain that you don't want to know more about the candidates before rejecting their applications.

## ***B. POTENTIAL INFLUENCE OF UNCONSCIOUS ASSUMPTIONS AND BIASES ON YOUR SEARCH (p. 41)***

- Women and minorities may be subject to higher expectations in areas such as number and quality of publications, name recognition, or personal acquaintance with a committee member. *(Recall the example of the Swedish Medical Research Council.)*
- Candidates from institutions other than the major research universities that have trained most of our faculty may be undervalued. *(Qualified candidates from institutions such as historically black universities, four-year colleges, government, or the private sector might offer innovative, diverse, and valuable perspectives on research and teaching.)*
- The work, ideas, and findings of women or minorities may be undervalued or unfairly attributed to a research director or collaborators despite contrary evidence in publications or letters of reference. *(Recall the biases seen in evaluations of written descriptions of job performance and the attribution of success to luck rather than skill.)*



- The ability of women or minorities to run a research group, raise funds, and supervise students and staff may be underestimated. *(Recall assumptions about leadership abilities.)*
- Assumptions about possible family responsibilities and their effect on the candidate's career path may negatively influence evaluation of merit, despite evidence of productivity. *(Recall studies of the influence of population generalizations on evaluation of an individual.)*
- Negative assumptions about whether female or minority candidates will “fit in” to the existing environment can influence evaluation. *(Recall students' choice of counselor.)*
- The professional experience candidates may have acquired through an alternative career path may be undervalued. *(As examples, latecomers to a field may be more determined and committed; industrial or other nonacademic experience may be more valuable for a particular position than postdoctoral experience.)*
- Other possible biases, assumptions, or unwritten criteria may influence your evaluation. *(Some examples include holding a degree from a prestigious research university, recognizing the names of the candidates, and/or recognizing the name of or knowing the references provided by the candidates. Such candidates are not necessarily the most qualified. Be sure that such factors don't serve to disadvantage highly qualified candidates, especially candidates from diverse backgrounds.)*

**Please discuss the potential influence of unconscious assumptions and biases with your search committee.**

### ***C. OVERCOMING THE INFLUENCE OF UNCONSCIOUS BIASES AND ASSUMPTIONS (pp. 43-54)***

- Learn about research on biases and assumptions.
- Discuss research on biases and assumptions and consciously strive to minimize their influence on your evaluation of candidates.
- Develop criteria for evaluating candidates and apply them consistently to all applicants.
- Spend sufficient time (15–20 minutes) evaluating each applicant.
- Evaluate each candidate's entire application; don't depend too heavily on only one element such as the letters of recommendation, or the prestige of the degree-granting institution or postdoctoral program.
- Be able to defend every decision for rejecting or retaining a candidate.
- Periodically evaluate your decisions and consider whether qualified women and underrepresented minorities are included. If not, consider whether evaluation biases and assumptions are influencing your decisions.

### ***D. RESOURCES***

Bielby, William T. and James N. Baron. 1986. Sex segregation and statistical discrimination. *American Journal of Sociology* 91:759–799.

Biernat, Monica and Melvin Manis. 1991. Shifting standards and stereotype-based judgements. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 66:5–20.

Deaux, Kay and Tim Emswiller. 1974. Explanations of successful performance on sex-linked tasks: What is skill for the male is luck for the female. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 29:80–85.

Dovidio, John F. and S. L. Gaertner. 2000. Aversive racism and selection decisions: 1989 and 1999. *Psychological Science* 11:315–319.

Dovidio, John F. 2001. On the nature of contemporary prejudice: The third wave. *Journal of Social Issues* 57(4):829–849.

Dovidio, John F., Kerry Kawakami, Craig Johnson, Brenda Johnson, and Adaiah Howard. 1997. On the nature of prejudice: Automatic and controlled processes. *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 33:510-540.

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Heilman, Madeline E. 1980. The impact of situational factors on personnel decisions concerning women: Varying the sex composition of the applicant pool. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 26:386–395.

Martell, Richard F. 1991. Sex bias at work: The effects of attentional and memory demands on performance ratings for men and women. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 21:1939–60.

Ridgeway, Cecilia L. 2001. Gender, status, and leadership. *Journal of Social Issues* 57:637–655.

Paludi, Michele A. and William D. Bauer. 1983. Goldberg revisited: What's in an author's name. *Sex Roles* 9(3):387-390.

Steinpreis, Rhea, Katie A. Anders, and Dawn Ritzke. 1999. The impact of gender on the review of the curricula vitae of job applicants and tenure candidates: A national empirical study. *Sex Roles* 41:509–528.

Trix, Frances and Carolyn Psenka. 2003. Exploring the color of glass: Letters of recommendation for female and male medical faculty. *Discourse & Society* 14:191–220.

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*This document is based on Searching for Excellence & Diversity: A Guide for Search Committee Chairs, a guide developed by the Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI) at the University of Wisconsin Madison.*

## Ensuring a Fair and Thorough Review of Candidates

(Pages 43-71 in WISELI Book)

### **A. DISCUSS AND DEVELOP CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION (pp. 44-54)**

Meet with your search committee to discuss and agree in advance on the criteria to be used in evaluating candidates. Note that:

- Relatively broad criteria not tied to specific experience or narrow specialty will generally lead to a more interesting “long short list” and leave room for “targets of opportunity.”
- A candidate might bring interesting strengths or attributes to the department other than those originally sought. If such cases appear, it is advisable to reevaluate and possibly modify the review criteria.
- It is also advisable to periodically evaluate your criteria and their implementation. Are you consistently relying on the criteria developed for the position? Are you inadvertently relying on unwritten or unrecognized criteria? Are you inadvertently, but systematically, screening out women or underrepresented minorities?

### **B. CONDUCT THE REVIEW IN STAGES (pp. 54-59)**

Conduct the review in stages, with the first stage confined to the construction of a “long short list.” This should retain **all potentially interesting candidates**, and not just those regarded initially as the top candidates.

#### STAGE 1: Creating the “long short list”

If you have a large pool of candidates, it may be difficult for all members of the search committee to thoroughly review all the candidates. In such a situation, consider assigning specific review responsibilities to members of the committee, consistent with the sizes of the committee and the pool of candidates. To generate the “long short list”:

- Ask all the members of the committee to review, even if briefly, all applications as they come in to get a sense of the possibilities. *(Some search committee chairs recommend including a sign-in sheet in each candidate’s file on which search committee members can indicate that they have briefly reviewed the file. Others also keep a checklist in each file to track receipt of required application materials. Some prefer to keep a master checklist for all candidates. See sample forms on pp. 21-23.)*
- Divide the task of thoroughly evaluating the qualifications of each candidate amongst the search committee. Try to make sure that each candidate receives a thorough and in-depth review from at least two, and preferably more, members of the committee, and that each committee member is responsible for thoroughly evaluating the qualifications of a manageable group of candidates.
- Warn your committee about how much time reading and evaluating the candidates’ files will take. Inexperienced or busy committee members may otherwise put off reading the files until it is too late to do a thorough evaluation. **Most search committee chairs recommend devoting at least 15–20 minutes per applicant.** *(Some search committee chairs find it helpful to provide a form that committee members can use to keep track of their evaluations; others prefer to let committee members devise their own methods for*

*evaluating and comparing candidates. See sample forms on pp. 21-23.)*

- Advise your reviewers to concentrate on selecting **all potentially strong candidates** in their review group regardless of their personal preferences. In cases of doubt, advise the reviewer to retain a candidate for review by the entire committee.
- At subsequent meetings decide how long the “long short list” should be and construct the “long short list” by having the reviewers present their conclusions.
- Evaluate your “long short list” before finalizing it. Are qualified women and underrepresented minorities included? If not, consider whether evaluation biases or assumptions have influenced your ratings.
- The selection of the “short list” of candidates for interviews should be conducted at a later meeting, scheduled to allow committee members sufficient time to thoroughly review the strengths of the candidates on the longer list.

## STAGE 2: Selecting a “short list” of candidates to interview

This is likely to be the most difficult part of the review process, since committee members will inevitably have different perspectives or preferences with respect to the open position. Search committee chairs should think of ways to handle the delicate issues that can arise. Many successful search committee chairs recommend the following:

### **a. To get the review off to a good start, with the entire committee willing to consider all candidates objectively:**

- Review your objectives, criteria, and procedures.
- Emphasize that the committee represents the interests of the department as a whole and, in a broader context, the interests of the entire university.
- Remind the committee that the deans will expect the search committee chair to make a convincing case that the review was thorough and handled fairly. Some committee members may otherwise want to start with only their favorite candidates, and to argue against others without considering them objectively.
- Remind the committee that increasing the diversity of the faculty is an important criterion to consider in choosing among otherwise comparable candidates.

### **b. To make sure that diversity is considered seriously:**

Remind the committee of possible inadvertent biases or assumptions before starting. If necessary, review the brochure *Reviewing Applicants: Research on Bias and Assumptions*. Require uniform application of standards in retaining or dropping candidates on the original list.

### c. To handle the mechanics of selecting the short list efficiently and systematically:

- Have all members of the search committee thoroughly review and evaluate the applications of those selected for the “long short list.”
- Remind your committee members to devote at least 15–20 minutes to the evaluation of each applicant.
- Consider evaluating applicants on several different rating scales—one for teaching ability, one for research potential, one for mentoring potential, etc. Discuss the relative importance of different criteria. There is a sample form that can be used in the resources section.
- Schedule subsequent meetings to allow search committee members sufficient time to conduct thorough evaluations.
- After search committee members present initial evaluations, review the ratings a second time.
- Opinions expressed early in the process can change after many candidates are considered and comparisons become clear.
- Consider including the top candidates from various separate rating scales in your “short list.”
- Decide on the “short list” and possible alternates only after the entire committee has had a chance to review the longer list in depth.
- Do not allow individuals to dominate the process or to push for dropping or retaining candidates without defending their reasons.
- Ask quieter members of the committee for their opinions.
- Be sure that standards are being applied uniformly. **Be able to defend every decision for rejecting or retaining a candidate.**
- Do not allow personal preferences or narrow views of the review to dominate the process.
- Evaluate each candidate’s entire application; don’t depend too heavily on only one element such as the letters of recommendation, or the prestige of the degree-granting institution or postdoctoral program.
- Evaluate your short list before finalizing it. Are qualified women and underrepresented minorities included? If not, consider whether evaluation biases or assumptions may be influencing your ratings.
- Keep sufficiently detailed notes so that the reasons for decisions will still be clear later.

## C. RESOURCES (pp. 61-71)

### 1. Sample Forms to Help Keep Track Of and Communicate With Applicants

**Please note that the forms below are intended only as samples. You may choose to use, modify, or ignore these forms according to your needs or preferences.**

These forms were adapted from the following sources:

- Pribbenow, Dean. 2002. *Improving the interview and selection process*. Madison, WI: Office of Quality Improvement, UW–Madison.
- Bensimon, Estela Mara, Kelly Ward, and Karla Sanders. 2000. *The Department Chair’s Role in Developing New Faculty into Teachers and Scholars*. Bolton, MA: Ankar Publishing Co.

**SAMPLE FORM 1.*****Checklist for application materials for individual applicants.*****[Sample Form 1](#)**

Some search committee chairs recommend including a form such as this one in a folder created for each applicant. Most search chairs recommend that a single form to track the application materials for all candidates supplement or replace this form for individual applicants.

**SAMPLE FORM 2.*****Checklist for ALL applicants.*****[Sample Form 2](#)**

Most search committee chairs recommend using a single form to track the application materials for all candidates.

A thank-you letter along with an information packet should be sent promptly to all applicants upon receipt of their materials. This letter should state that unless confidentiality is requested in writing, information regarding the applicants and nominees must be released upon request; finalists cannot be guaranteed confidentiality. It may also contain information about the search committee's time frame, since candidates will undoubtedly be anxious to know when they will be hearing about possible interviews. Additional information, e.g., papers or publications or a statement on his or her philosophy of education, may also be requested at this time. In addition, applicants should be asked to complete the anonymous Affirmative Action Data Questionnaire (provided by the Provosts office) and return it to the Provost's office.

**SAMPLE FORM 3.*****Checklist for communicating with applicants.*****[Sample Form 3](#)****SAMPLE FORM 4.*****Sign-in sheet for evaluation of applicants*****[Sample Form 4](#)**

Search committee chairs who use this type of form recommend keeping one in each applicant's folder.

**At least two search committee members should perform a thorough and complete evaluation of each candidate.**

**SAMPLE FORM 5.*****Sign-in sheet for evaluation of candidates on the long short list*****[Sample Form 5](#)**

Search committee chairs who use such a form recommend keeping it in each applicant's folder.

**All search committee members should perform a thorough evaluation of every candidate on the "long short list."**

**SAMPLE FORM 6.*****Checklist for developing the "long short list"*****[Sample Form 6](#)**

**SAMPLE FORM 7.*****Evaluation of candidates for short list*****[Search Form 7](#)**

Although evaluation procedures vary, the search committee may want to either develop a rating form based on job-related criteria or keep the notes that the search committee generates. A rating form may consist of a series of job-related questions or issues that the committee believes are crucial to the position. Written comments reflecting the judgment of each member of the committee should be made for each candidate. Not only will this allow the search committee to determine which candidates are to be interviewed, it will also save time if it becomes necessary to return to the applicant pool at a later date. The sample form here can be used for the entire faculty evaluation of a candidate after an interview.

*This document is based on Searching for Excellence & Diversity: A Guide for Search Committee Chairs, a guide developed by the Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI) at the University of Wisconsin Madison.*

# Developing and Implementing an Effective Interview Process

(Pages 73-102 in WISELI Book)

## *A. KEY AIMS OF THE INTERVIEW (p. 74)*

- Allow the hiring department to determine whether candidates possess the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other attributes to be successful at BU.
- Allow candidates to determine whether BU offers the opportunities, facilities, colleagues, and other attributes necessary for their successful employment.
- Keep both of these aims in mind as you plan what to do **before, during, and after** the actual interviews to ensure an effective interview process and to enhance the quality of the overall hiring process.

## *B. BEFORE: PLANNING FOR AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW PROCESS (pp. 74-87)*

1. Together with your committee, articulate your interview goals.

Review and reflect on the desired qualifications of candidates; make sure that whatever interview design you develop will provide you with sufficient information to make your decisions.

2. Develop a set of core questions to be asked of each candidate.

Some search committee chairs prefer to rely on unstructured interviews rather than a prepared set of questions. This is acceptable so long as you develop some system of guaranteeing that someone asks every candidate the questions that will be key to your evaluation and comparison of the candidates. Such questions might include those relating to the following areas:

- Educational background
- Research experience
- Teaching experience
- Publication record
- Current and future research interests
- Current funding and potential sources of future funding
- Ideas for future publications
- Experience teaching and/or interacting with diverse populations

If, despite your efforts to ask each candidate all the questions you believe will be relevant to your evaluation, your committee finds itself evaluating one candidate on the basis of a response to an issue not raised with the remaining candidates, consider follow-up telephone conversations with the remaining candidates to solicit their responses and provide your committee with the ability to make comparisons.

3. Circulate the candidates resume to all faculty who will participate in the interview.



4. Be sure all interviewers are aware of what questions are inappropriate (see table on page 29).

5. Consider who will interview the candidates.

Discuss how to raise interviewers' awareness of potential for bias and prejudice. Discuss how to make sure that interviewers will not ask inappropriate questions. Discuss how to obtain and evaluate interviewers' feedback.

6. Determine the interview structure and schedule.

Be sure to provide breaks for the candidate. Be sure to permit sufficient time for the interviews. Build in some flexibility. Make the schedule meaningful to the candidate. Provide more than a list of names of people that a candidate will meet. Include information about the interviewers rank, field of study, relevant activities in the department, college, and university.

7. Personalize the visit for each candidate.

Decide what events other than interviews the candidates will engage in (e.g., job talk, classroom presentation, tour of campus/city, meals, social events). Consider how you will learn about the candidates' needs/interests.

8. Provide opportunities for women and minority members of the department to meet all candidates—not just women and minority candidates.

You may not always know that a candidate belongs to a minority group. Events at which candidates can meet other minority members can help them feel welcome.

9. Provide candidates with the opportunities to seek information about campus and resources from knowledgeable sources not directly involved in the search.

You might ask someone from your Dean's office if they would consider meeting with each of your final candidates to provide them with information, referrals, or resources about diverse communities, university policies, childcare, etc. You can also contact the Associate Provost for Faculty Development for the University, or the Assistant Provost for Faculty Affairs on the Medical Campus, if your candidate's has specific questions. If the candidate has no diversity issues/needs, the person they meet with can serve as a neutral source of information about the department, college, community, etc. It is important that this individual be uninvolved in the evaluation process and that all matters discussed be kept strictly confidential. Scheduling a meeting for all of your final candidates with someone qualified to discuss their diverse needs or refer them to relevant individuals and resources prevents candidates from having to address these needs with members of the search committee.

10. Provide candidates with a detailed schedule that identifies by name and affiliation each person who will interview them and a brief explanation of why this person is interviewing them.

11. Develop an information packet to share with all final candidates. This packet should include information about the campus and the community and should provide candidates with references and resources they can use to meet their needs without having to inform search committee members of these needs. These references and resources can include:
- References to information about Child Care and Family Resources
  - Information about dual career hires
  - Information about the New England Higher Education Recruitment Consortium:  
[http://www.hercjobs.org/new\\_england/](http://www.hercjobs.org/new_england/)
  - Information about Faculty Mentoring Program. Information about WISE if appropriate:  
<http://www.bu.edu/wise>
  - Information concerning Faculty Development and Support Programs such as CEIT, Faculty Action Office, Faculty Council etc, link to the Faculty Handbook, appropriate benefits information – tuition remission programs etc. Much of this information can be accessed from the **Quick Guide to Faculty Life at Boston University**.
  - Appropriate maps
  - BU Facts
  - PROFILE: Boston and surrounding areas
  - BU Real Estate Firms & Services
  - Local school information or websites
  - Information about the department and college
  - Alumni magazine
  - The Provost's Office has compiled a list of helpful links called the **Quick Guide to Faculty Life at Boston University**. Search committee chairs may direct candidates to the site or print the documents to be included with appropriate college and departmental level materials.

### ***C. DURING: GUIDELINES FOR INTERVIEWING (pp. 87-90)***

1. Follow the plan established before the interview process and allow enough time for the interviews.
2. Remind interviewers of what questions are inappropriate. Also remind them that the same questions that are inappropriate for formal interviews are also inappropriate at meals, social events, and other informal gatherings.
3. Consider distributing a list of “inappropriate questions” to all faculty members and interviewers shortly before candidates’ visits.
4. Make candidates feel welcome and comfortable. It is critical to treat all candidates fairly and with respect. If you have reason to believe an interviewer may be hostile to hiring women and/or minorities, don’t leave the candidate alone with this interviewer. If a candidate is confronted with racist or sexist remarks, take positive and assertive steps to defuse the situation.
5. Encourage all faculty members to attend candidates’ talks/lectures. This is an important part of making candidates feel welcome and respected.

6. Remind interviewers and faculty members to treat each candidate as a potential colleague and stress that in addition to determining the candidates' qualifications for the position, you want every candidate to conclude their visit with a good impression of BU and its faculty. Point out that candidates who are not treated with respect and dignity can do lasting damage to a department's reputation by informing others of how they were treated.
7. Allow sufficient time for follow-up questions, candidate questions, and breaks.
8. Remind interviewers to complete evaluations.

#### *D. AFTER: FOLLOW-UP AND SELECTION (pp. 90-91)*

1. Meet with your search committee as soon as possible after the completion of the interviews. Review the faculty evaluations.
2. Follow the agreed-upon process for making recommendations—evaluate candidates for their strengths and weaknesses on specific attributes.
3. Review the materials for Element III—Raise awareness of unconscious assumptions and their influence on evaluation of candidates. Consider whether any such assumptions are influencing your evaluation of final candidates.
4. Check references following an agreed-upon format. If phone calls are made, draw up a common set of questions to ask in all telephone interviews.
5. Selecting a candidate to recommend to the Dean:
  - The BU Faculty Handbook states for the Charles River Campus: After reviewing all applicants and nominees, the search committee shall report its findings and recommendations to the full-time faculty of the department. After faculty discussion and a vote, the chair shall report the outcome of the vote and the substance of the faculty discussion regarding a recommended candidate, or candidates, including any dissenting opinions. Together with the chair's own recommendation, this report will be conveyed to the dean of the School. The chair shall also submit the names of all the finalists considered by the faculty.
  - The BU Faculty Handbook states for the Medical Campus: After reviewing all applicants and nominees appropriate for a given position, the search committee shall report its findings and recommendations to the chair of the department. The chair shall forward his/her recommendation of a candidate to the dean of the School, along with the names of all candidates recommended by the search committee, and a list of the candidates considered for the position(s) being filled. Should the dean concur with the chair's recommendation, the chair will seek faculty approval of the recommended candidate through the appointment and promotion committee process set out in the by-laws of the School.
6. Communicate with both successful and unsuccessful candidates in a timely manner. It leaves a lasting negative impression if you fail to "close the loop" when the search has concluded. **You must correspond with every unsuccessful candidate, to thank them once again for applying, and to let them know that they were not successful.**

7. Decide how to proceed if your recommended candidate is not accepted by the faculty or department chair or if the candidate turns you down. **In many cases, your department will NOT “lose the slot” if you fail to fill it with an outstanding candidate.** Settling for a lesser candidate because the department fears they will not be able to search again next year is a very poor strategy. Please have this discussion with your Dean at the outset of the search process.

### ***E. ADDITIONAL TIPS***

Logistics for interviews; consider these elements:

- Clarity as to whether candidate’s expenses will be reimbursed and/or whether direct billing will be used.
- Airline tickets?
- Hotel reservations? (state rates)
- Transportation between airport, hotel and campus?
- Campus parking?
- Individual and group meals and hospitality?
- Asked the candidate if there are specific people or groups they would like to meet
- Who will greet the candidate?
- Clarification to candidate about the type of presentation that is expected.
- How do we ensure that candidates don’t run into each other?
- Tour of the department, office, campus?
- Refreshments for candidates and committees?
- What printed information do we wish to furnish regarding the campus, city, state?
- What do we need to tell the candidate about the interview activities, schedule, settings, types of presentations required?
- Providing all members of the interview team(s) or search committee with pertinent information about the candidates, rating forms, and interview schedule.
- Room reservations for interviews including AV equipment, flip charts, etc. needed for candidate presentations.
- Consulting the Office of Disability Services for advice regarding visits to campus by candidates with disabilities.

*This document is based on Searching for Excellence & Diversity: A Guide for Search Committee Chairs, a guide developed by the Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI) at the University of Wisconsin Madison.*

## Resources

### ***A. APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONS.***

The best overall guideline is that any questions you ask should be job-related. If you are not sure, don't ask it.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Appropriate</b>	<b>Inappropriate</b>
<b>Age</b>	Are you older than 18 (or 21 for certain jobs)?	Questions about age, school attendance dates, military service dates, requests for birth certificates.
<b>Address</b>	What is your address?	Do you own or rent your home? How long have you lived at your current address?
<b>Character and Criminal History</b>	Have you ever been convicted of a felony? If yes, when, where, and what was the nature of the offense? Have you been convicted of a misdemeanor during the last five years, except for a first conviction for simple assault, disturbing the peace, drunkenness, speeding, or other minor traffic violations? Have you been convicted of a misdemeanor which occurred more than five years prior to the date of application where your term of imprisonment was completed less than five years prior to the date of application? You may let applicants know that policy requires a criminal background check prior to hire.	Have you ever been arrested?
<b>Citizenship/ National Origin</b>	Are you authorized to work in the United States?	Are you a United States citizen? Where were you born? Where were your parents born? Are you an American? What kind of name is that?
<b>Disability</b>	Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job-with or without accommodations? Questions about knowledge and skills necessary to perform the job requirements.	Do you have a disability? What is the nature of your disability? Have you ever made a worker's compensation claim?
<b>Education</b>	Inquiries about degrees or experience that are related to the job being applied for.	
<b>Family/Marital Status</b>	Whether an applicant can meet work schedules or job requirements. If asking, should ask of all applicants. Names of applicant's relatives already employed by the University.	Any inquiry about marital status: married, single separated, divorced, and engaged; children; pregnancy or child care plans.

<b>Gender</b>	None	Any pre-employment inquiry of gender.
<b>Health</b>	None	How is your (or your family's) health? Have you (or your family members) ever been treated for...?
<b>Language</b>	What languages do you read, write, or speak fluently?	How or why did you learn to speak...?
<b>Military</b>	Type of education and experience in service as it relates to a particular job.	Type of discharge or registration status.
<b>Name</b>	What is your legal name? For the purpose of checking references, are you or were you ever known by another name?	Questions about national origin, ancestry, or prior marital status.
<b>Organizations</b>	What relevant professional organizations are you a part of?	Questions about organizations that might indicate race, sex, religion or national origin.
<b>Race, Size, or Appearance</b>	None	Comments or questions about complexion, color, strength, height, or weight. Requests for pictures.
<b>References</b>	Requests for names of appropriate professional references.	
<b>Religion</b>	None	Questions about religious preferences, affiliations, or denominations.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	None	Questions about sexual orientation or questions intended to reveal sexual orientation
<b>Work Experience</b>	What is your previous employment experience?	Questions about sick leave use or workers' compensation claims in previous job.

## ***B. REVIEWING APPLICANTS: RESEARCH ON BIAS AND ASSUMPTIONS***

*The following information is borrowed from WISELI at the University of Wisconsin-Madison*

We all like to think that we are objective scholars who judge people solely on their credentials and achievements, but copious research shows that every one of us has a lifetime of experience and cultural history that shapes the review process.

The results from controlled research studies demonstrate that people often hold implicit or unconscious assumptions that influence their judgments. Examples range from expectations or assumptions about physical or social characteristics associated with race, gender, and ethnicity to those associated with certain job descriptions, academic institutions, and fields of study.

It is important to note that in most studies examining evaluation and gender, **the sex of the evaluator was not significant; both men and women share and apply the same assumptions about gender.**

Recognizing biases and other influences not related to the quality of candidates can help reduce their impact on your search and review of candidates.

### *EXAMPLES OF COMMON SOCIAL ASSUMPTIONS OR EXPECTATIONS:*

- When shown photographs of people of the same height, evaluators overestimated the heights of male subjects and underestimated the heights of female subjects, even though a reference point, such as a doorway, was provided (Biernat et al.).
- When shown photographs of men with similar athletic abilities, evaluators rated the athletic ability of African American men higher than that of white men (Biernat and Manis).
- When asked to choose counselors from among a group of equally competent applicants who were neither exceptionally qualified nor unqualified for the position, students more often chose white candidates than African American candidates, indicating their willingness to give members of the majority group the benefit of the doubt (Dovidio and Gaertner).
- These studies show that we often apply generalizations that may or may not be valid to the evaluation of individuals (Bielby and Baron). In the study on height, evaluators applied the statistically accurate generalization that on average men are taller than women to their estimates of the height of individuals who did not necessarily conform to the generalization. If generalizations can lead us to inaccurately evaluate characteristics as objective and easily measured as height, what happens when the qualities we are evaluating are not as objective or as easily measured? What happens when the generalizations are not accurate?

### *EXAMPLES OF ASSUMPTIONS OR BIASES THAT CAN INFLUENCE THE EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS:*

- When rating the quality of verbal skills as indicated by vocabulary definitions, evaluators rated the skills lower if they were told an African American provided the definitions than if they were told that a white person provided them (Biernat and Manis).
- Randomly assigning different names to résumés showed that job applicants with “white-sounding names” were more likely to be interviewed for open positions than were equally qualified applicants with “African American-sounding names” (Bertrand and Sendhil). When symphony orchestras adopted “blind” auditions by using a screen to conceal candidates’ identities, the hiring of women musicians increased. Blind auditions fostered impartiality by preventing assumptions that women musicians have “smaller techniques” and produce “poorer sound” from influencing evaluation (Goldin and Rouse).
- Research shows that incongruities between perceptions of female gender roles and leadership roles cause evaluators to assume that women will be less competent leaders. When women leaders provide clear evidence of their competence, thus violating traditional gender norms, evaluators perceive them to be less likeable and are less likely to recommend them for hiring or promotion (Eagly and Karau; Ridgeway; Heilman et al.).

### *EXAMPLES OF ASSUMPTIONS OR BIASES IN ACADEMIC JOB-RELATED CONTEXTS:*

- A study of over 300 recommendation letters for medical faculty hired by a large U.S. medical school found that letters for female applicants differed systematically from those for males. Letters written for women were shorter, provided “minimal assurance” rather than solid recommendation, raised more doubts, portrayed women as students and teachers while portraying men as researchers and professionals, and more frequently mentioned women’s personal lives (Trix and Psenka).
- In a national study, 238 academic psychologists (118 male, 120 female) evaluated a curriculum vitae randomly assigned a male or a female name. Both male and female

participants gave the male applicant better evaluations for teaching, research, and service experience and were more likely to hire the male than the female applicant (Steinpreis et al.).

- A study of postdoctoral fellowships awarded by the Medical Research Council of Sweden found that women candidates needed substantially more publications to achieve the same rating as men, unless they personally knew someone on the panel (Wennerås and Wold).

**ADVICE FOR MINIMIZING THE INFLUENCE OF BIAS AND ASSUMPTIONS:**

- **Strive to increase the representation of women and minorities in your applicant pool.**  
Research shows that gender assumptions are more likely to negatively influence evaluation of women when they represent a small proportion (less than 25%) of the pool of candidates (Heilman).
- **Learn about and discuss research on biases and assumptions and consciously strive to minimize their influence on your evaluation.**  
Experimental studies show that greater awareness of discrepancies between the ideals of impartiality and actual performance, together with strong internal motivations to respond without prejudice, effectively reduces prejudicial behavior (Devine et al.).
- **Develop evaluation criteria prior to evaluating candidates and apply them consistently to all applicants.**  
Research shows that different standards may be used to evaluate male and female applicants and that when criteria are not clearly articulated before reviewing candidates evaluators may shift or emphasize criteria that favor candidates from well- represented demographic groups (Biernat and Fuegen; Uhlmann and Cohen).
- **Spend sufficient time (at least 20 minutes) evaluating each applicant.**  
Evaluators who were busy, distracted by other tasks, and under time pressure gave women lower ratings than men for the same written evaluation of job performance. Sex bias decreased when they were able to give all their time and attention to their judgments, which rarely occurs in actual work settings (Martell).
- **Evaluate each candidate's entire application; don't depend too heavily on only one element such as the letters of recommendation, or the prestige of the degree-granting institution or postdoctoral program.**  
Recall the study showing significant patterns of difference in letters of recommendation for male and female applicants (Trix and Psenka).
- **Be able to defend every decision for eliminating or advancing a candidate.**  
Research shows that holding evaluators to high standards of accountability for the fairness of their evaluation reduces the influence of bias and assumptions (Foschi).



- **Periodically evaluate your judgments, determine whether qualified women and underrepresented minorities are included in your pool, and consider whether evaluation biases and assumptions are influencing your decisions by asking yourself the following questions:**
  - Are women and minority candidates subject to different expectations in areas such as numbers of publications, name recognition, or personal acquaintance with a committee member? (Recall the example of the Swedish Medical Research Council.)
  - Are candidates from institutions other than the major research universities that have trained most of our faculty being undervalued? (Qualified candidates from institutions such as historically black universities, four-year colleges, government, or industry, might offer innovative, diverse, and valuable perspectives on research and teaching.)
  - Have the accomplishments, ideas, and findings of women or minority candidates been undervalued or unfairly attributed to a research director or collaborators despite contrary evidence in publications or letters of reference? (Recall the biases seen in evaluations of written descriptions of job performance.)
  - Is the ability of women or minorities to run a research group, raise funds, and supervise students and staff of different gender or ethnicity being underestimated? (Recall social assumptions about leadership abilities.)
  - Are assumptions about possible family responsibilities and their effect on a candidate's career path negatively influencing evaluation of a candidate's merit, despite evidence of productivity? (Recall studies of the influence of generalizations on evaluation.)
  - Are negative assumptions about whether women or minority candidates will "fit in" to the existing environment influencing evaluation? (Recall students' choice of counselor.)

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For full references please see the WISELI Search Book [http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/SearchBook\\_US.pdf](http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/SearchBook_US.pdf)

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