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Investing in Faculty Success and Inclusive Work Environments

Developing a Diverse Candidate Short List

BACKGROUND

A diverse candidate short list is a critical for increasing the recruitment of women and URMs to the professoriate. Of course, having a diverse short list increases the odds of hiring a candidate from an underrepresented group. However, studies suggest that when a short list has two or more candidates from an underrepresented group, it can reduce the stigma or tokenism associated with being the only candidate from an underrepresented background and enhance objectivity in evaluation.¹ This brief explores strategies search committees can use to achieve a diverse short list and increase diversity in hiring.

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING A DIVERSE SHORT LIST

Creating Medium and Short Lists

Many search committees create a medium short list (or a “long” short list) before selecting individuals who make the formal short list. We recommend this practice as a way evaluate the initial pool of candidates, although the strategies listed below are relevant for committees developing both a medium and short list.

- Review all application materials; do not rely too heavily on only one element such as a letter of recommendation or the prestige of the candidate’s doctoral-granting institution.
- Rather than looking for reasons to remove a candidate from the medium or short list, look for reasons why they should be kept in the pool.
- Ideally, all committee members would review briefly candidate applications materials; If this is not possible due to the number of applications, assign each committee member a specific number of applications and review each applicant’s materials for 15-20 minutes.
- Ensure that each candidate is reviewed by two or more members of the search committee.
- Avoid rank-ordering finalists on the medium and short list.
- Evaluate each candidate using an individual criterion (e.g. teaching, research, collaboration, communication) and then advance candidates to the short list who have been rated highly on multiple criteria.
- Consider using a secret vote process to allow for more honest evaluation of candidates and to avoid junior faculty feeling pressured to vote in a certain way.
- Evaluate the medium list before finalizing to assess if there are women and URMs on it; Consider extending the application window for two to three weeks and doing more recruitment if the medium list is not diverse.

If the Short List is not Diverse

- Consider doing phone interviews with candidates from the medium short list to gain more information about each one.
- Ask committee members to review all candidates from the medium list once to more for 15-20 minutes; Ask them to pay particular attention to the top women and URM candidates and consider whether bias may have influenced the committee’s decision not to advance them.
- Ask search members to “defend” the decision to retain or reject candidates who have made the short list based on concrete reasons related to the evaluation criteria.
- Consider expanding the number of candidates who make the short list by increasing the number of candidates who come to campus for an interview.



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Strategies Adapted From:

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¹ Bilimoria, D., & Buch, K. K. (2010). The search is on: Engendering faculty diversity through more effective search and recruitment. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 42(4), 27-32.

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