



# ADVANCE

Investing in Cultures of Inclusive Excellence for Faculty

## Writing an Inclusive Job Description

A well-constructed job description contains not only the qualifications and criterion for the role, but also serves as the outline for selection and future job performance evaluation. Research and best practices indicate the following strategies can be used to create job descriptions that will attract a diverse candidate pool in faculty searches.

### **BROADLY DEFINE THE POSITION QUALIFICATIONS.**

- Many female job seekers only apply for positions when they meet 100 percent of the qualifications listed in the job description.<sup>1</sup>
- Indicate the position is open to a broad range of specializations and encourage candidates from non-traditional career paths. For example, instead of “Degree in biology required,” state “Candidates with degrees in biology or related fields encouraged.”
- List qualifications as preferred rather than required unless they are absolutely essential for the position.

### **ENCOURAGE CANDIDATES TO NOTE DIVERSITY RELATED SKILLS OR EXPERIENCES.**

- Women and faculty from underrepresented groups are more likely to be hired if the position description encourages applicants with qualifications and experiences in enhancing diversity and inclusion.<sup>2</sup>
- Ask candidates to demonstrate their ability to work across diverse groups and contribute to inclusivity in the campus community. For example, “Candidates who have demonstrated a commitment to working with women and underrepresented minority students through teaching, mentoring, or administration are especially encouraged to apply” or “Candidates with experience teaching/conducting research on issues applicable to diverse populations are preferred.”

### **DESCRIBE OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH.**

- Women and underrepresented faculty are frequently more involved in interdisciplinary, publicly engaged scholarship.<sup>3</sup>
- Include information about cross-departmental or cross-college collaborations and describe interdisciplinary work currently being conducted within the department.

### **USE GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE THROUGHOUT THE DESCRIPTION.**

- Linguistic analysis shows that word choice in job descriptions impacts the gender of who is interested in applying for a role.<sup>4</sup>
- Carefully evaluate the gendered meaning of adjectives when describing the position. Rather than using words such as strong, competitive, or other descriptors that emphasize an individual’s performance, job descriptions that incorporate gender-neutral phrases such as accomplished, committed, or successful will appeal to more candidates. For example, “Successful applicants will have a demonstrated ability to work collaboratively across departments” rather than “Competitive candidates will have a strong track record of directing graduate students.”



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## DESCRIBE TEACHING RESPONSIBILITIES AND OTHER DUTIES OUTSIDE OF RESEARCH.

- Women faculty are more likely to report using student-centered teaching methods and spend more time advising students, and faculty of color are more likely to report a commitment to students' moral and civic development.<sup>5</sup>
- Note the University's inclusive campus community and commitment to mentorship for diverse groups, for example, "Candidates are expected to have a demonstrated commitment to teaching and mentorship at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, including working with students and groups from underrepresented backgrounds."
- Ask applicants to note experience with using different teaching methods, for example, "Candidates with a demonstrated ability to incorporate diverse perspectives into teaching and scholarship preferred."

## INCLUDE A DEPARTMENTAL COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY.

- Women, underrepresented minorities, and LGBTQ faculty may be particularly attuned to the climate of diversity at the institution or within the department.<sup>6</sup>
- Note the department's efforts in building inclusive excellence, for example, "The Department of \_\_\_\_\_ is committed to increasing the diversity of the campus community. Candidates who have experience working with a diverse range of faculty, staff, and students, and who can contribute to the climate of inclusivity are encouraged to identify their experiences in these areas."

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<sup>1</sup> Desvaux, G., Devillard-Hoellinger, S., & Meaney, M.C. (2008, Sep). A business case for women. *The McKinsey Quarterly*. Retrieved from <https://dca.org.au/app/webroot/files/file/gender%20documents/Business%20Case%20for%20Women%20Mckinsey%20sept08.pdf>  
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Mohr, T.S. (2014, August 25). Why women don't apply for jobs unless they're 100% qualified. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2014/08/why-women-dont-apply-for-jobs-unless-theyre-100-qualified>

<sup>2</sup> Smith, D. G., Richards, S., Osei-Kofi, N., & Turner, C. S. V. (2004). Interrupting the usual: Successful strategies for hiring diverse faculty. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 75(2), 133-160.  
Mayhew, M. J., & Grunwald, H. E. (2006). Factors contributing to faculty incorporation of diversity-related course content. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 77(1), 148-168.

<sup>3</sup> Antonio, A. L. (2002). Faculty of color reconsidered: Reassessing contributions to scholarship. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73(5), 582-602.  
Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006  
Rhoten, D., & Pfirman, S. (2007). Women in interdisciplinary science: Exploring preferences and consequences. *Research Policy*, 36(1), 56-75.

<sup>4</sup> Gaucher, D., Friesen, J., & Kay, A. C. (2011). Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(1), 109.

<sup>5</sup> Antonio, 2002.  
Eagan, K., Stolzenberg, E. B., Lozano, J. B., Aragon, M. C., Suchard, M. R., & Hurtado, S. (2014). *Undergraduate teaching faculty: The 2013–2014 HERI faculty survey*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA. Retrieved from <https://www.heri.ucla.edu/monographs/HERI-FAC2014-monograph.pdf>  
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<sup>6</sup> Bilimoria, D., & Stewart, A. J. (2009). "Don't Ask, Don't Tell": The Academic Climate for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Faculty in Science and Engineering. *NWSA Journal*, 21(2), 85-103.  
Eagan et al., 2014  
Smith et al., 2004