Increasing Faculty Diversity through the Search Process: Inclusive Interventions

Adams State University

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Goals

• Increase knowledge about unconscious biases and how they can affect hiring practices

• Improve communication skills to diffuse counter-productive discussions during hiring processes
Guidelines for interacting

- Provide roughly equal time for all participants to speak.
- Avoid speaking twice before everyone has spoken once.
- Respect different “wait time” for speakers to think prior to speaking.
- Listen respectfully and openly.
Unconscious Bias

- Form of rapid cognition (mental shortcut)
- Well documented, pervasive
- Replicates the social hierarchy
- Influences our behavior
- Often incompatible with conscious values
- Significant to diversity efforts
- Can be managed and reduced
Even the most well-intentioned person unwittingly allows unconscious thoughts and feelings to influence apparently objective decisions.

Cognitive Errors/Dysfunctions

- First impressions
- Elitism; academic pedigree
- Premature ranking
- Extraneous myths and assumptions
- Overloading and rushing the process
- Snap judgments
- Rubric not carefully developed
Interviews and Bias

- First impressions
- Similarity to reviewer
- Contrast effect
- Negative information
- Halo effect
- Affect bias
- Confirmation of stereotypes
- Physical characteristics
- Nonverbal bias
How to better manage and avoid UB?
Recommendations

- Remember that we all have biases
- Commit to reducing your UB
- Establish guidelines for interaction
- Agree to air concerns about potential bias
- Clarify criteria and their weight
- Engage in counter stereotype imaging
Recommendations

- Strive for consistency at every turn
- Spend sufficient time on evaluations
- Be accountable for fair decisions
- Evaluate the WHOLE application
- Periodically evaluate criteria
- Debrief and refine process
Discuss Assignments

What did you find particularly striking in any of the assignments?

Which issues covered in these assignments, if any, seem especially germane to Adams State?

How do you anticipate responding to perceptions of bias if they arise during search processes?
“I don’t see a need for a diversity advocate. All we need to do is find the best candidate for the job. Period.”
How would you respond to the following comments during hiring discussions?
“Why spend more money on ads in special interest pubs? Everyone in [discipline’s name] knows that our jobs are posted in [mainstream source(s)].”
“Coming from an urban setting like _____, he wouldn’t stay here long.”
“A graduate of ______ wouldn’t fit in here.”
“We don’t need to belabor the process. It’s obvious that ______ is the best candidate.”
“As a young, single Black female, she won’t be happy here.”
She just didn’t seem as enthusiastic as [another candidate].
“If you read between the lines of the reference letter from ____, you can tell that s/he doesn’t fully support the candidate.”
“His strongest reference letter had two typos.”
“One of the finalist’s references said that she doesn’t think she would last here for long because she prefers big city living.”
Proactive/Responsive Strategies

- Collect examples of comments
- Develop and rehearse scripts
- Empathize with the speaker
- Refer to rubrics and HR policies
- Cite unconscious bias research
- Ask questions to clarify
- Paraphrase (feelings and/or content)
- Illuminate faulty logic
- Refer to the process you’ve agreed to follow
- Other ideas?
Action Plan
North Carolina State Faculty Search Toolbox
http://oied.ncsu.edu/faculty/faculty-search-toolbox/

Washington State University Search Committee Best & Promising Practices
http://advance.wsu.edu/Content/Files/advance/the%20complete%20search%20process%20tips%20and%20tactics.pdf

University of Wisconsin's Reviewing Applicants: Research on Bias and Assumptions brochure
http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/BiasBrochure_2ndEd.pdf

University of Washington Advance Bibliography on Recruitment and Retention
http://advance.washington.edu/apps/resources/docs/ADV%20Biblio%20Faculty%20Recruitment%20and%20Retention.pdf

Iowa State Advance – Resources and Best Practices

University of the Pacific Guide to Faculty Recruitment
http://www.pacific.edu/Documents/provost/acrobat/GuideFacultyRecruitment.pdf

Harvard Implicit Associations Test
https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit