

Suggestions for Equitable Hiring Practices 2021

University of Florida Department of Biology Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility Committee

I. Goal of this document:

To assemble guidelines that promote fair and equitable faculty hiring practices that reduce implicit and cognitive biases and lead to hiring of faculty that will promote diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in our department and will be effective at teaching and mentoring students from diverse backgrounds. **The ultimate goal is to promote excellence in our department.**

II. Search committee membership:

Each search committee should contain an Equity Advisor, as recommended by UF Human Resources and the CLAS Diversity Steering Committee (details [here](#)). We recommend that members of hiring committees spend time reading about practices associated with overcoming implicit and explicit bias in faculty hiring, beyond this document and the online training assigned by UF. UF's [Inclusive Hiring Hub](#) has more practices and offers a [course to train hiring committees](#). See the section "Resources" at the bottom of this document.

III. Candidate Recruitment and Assessment:

Writing the recruitment advertisement

The advertisement should clearly state that our department takes inclusion seriously. We suggest including the following sentence in the advertisement:

"The Department of Biology is seeking candidates that would contribute to the department's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Department highly values candidates with professional or lived experiences that enhance competency in teaching, training, and mentoring students from backgrounds that span and intersect all axes of diversity."

We suggest the following outline for preparing the advertisement:

1. Paragraph 1: Describe the position
2. Paragraph 2: Advantages of UF for this particular position
3. Paragraph 3: Qualifications (add the following sentence to the end:)

“The Department of Biology highly values candidates with professional or lived experiences that enhance competency in teaching, training, and mentoring students from backgrounds that span and intersect all axes of diversity.”

4. Paragraph 4: Advantages of UF in general
5. Paragraph 5: Boilerplate paragraph beginning with: "To apply for this position..."
6. Paragraph 6: Boilerplate paragraph beginning with: "The University of Florida..."

(For details and boilerplate, see [Advertising Guidelines – UF Human Resources](#))

Advertising to diverse audiences

Job ads should be shared directly with contacts who can share announcements directly with academics from diverse backgrounds. For example, the announcement can be shared via email to all McKnight Fellows and alumni (contact Charles Jackson: CJackson@fefonline.org).

Many candidates discover job ads on social media, so the search committee should encourage department members to advertise via twitter and find/utilize contemporary hashtags aimed at promoting representation by diverse groups of scientists (e.g., #BlackInGenetics, #BlackInMarineScience, #DiversifyEEB, etc.). When the advertisement is published, the link should be shared with the entire department with the following statement:

“If you use social media platforms, please share this advertisement and take care to use hashtags that will broaden engagement across a diversity of communities.”

For starting points, the Biology IDEA Committee maintains a non-exhaustive list of possible advertising venues [here](#). (You must be logged into your UF account to view.)

Ranking candidates (the first vote)

To help recognize and avoid implicit and explicit biases in all steps of the hiring and recruitment process. Actively recognize and call out phrases like “culture fit”, as these can lead to ranking candidates with expertise/identities/background/etc. that are already well represented in our department. Ranking candidates with expertise/experiences/identities that enhance competency in teaching, training, and mentoring students from backgrounds well-represented in our student body but not well-represented by our current faculty is important for establishing mentors and role models for all students. These qualities in candidates also lead to the introduction of new academic networks as well as new approaches to research and teaching into our department.

Putting inordinate weight on metrics like number of publications, number of citations, impact factor of journals can lead to high rankings for candidates coming from a limited number of high-powered laboratories, which tends to limit the diversity of candidates. Concentrating on research direction, potential for innovation, broader impacts, likelihood of helping to advance our department's racial equity efforts, and their relevance to the job ad can lead to the types of diversity that will strengthen our department.

IV. Candidate Interviews

The on-campus visit and interview

It is important to remember that any contact between a UF employee and the job candidate during the recruitment process is a part of that individual's interview. Therefore, everyone on that candidate's itinerary should be reminded of the university's guidelines regarding appropriate topics for questions and discussion (refer to: [UF HR: Acceptable Interview Questions](#), [UF HR: Behavioral Questions](#), [UF HR: Behavioral Interviewing](#)). The recommendation for reducing bias during interviews is for the interview process to be highly structured (O'Meara et al. 2020).

One member of the recruitment committee should be nominated to introduce the candidates before their seminar and do so consistently across candidates. Prior to the seminar, ask the speaker about the pronunciation of their name. If the speaker does not include pronouns on social media or CV, use gender-neutral pronouns or refer to the candidate by title and name only. Below is a basic introduction template:

"It is my great pleasure to introduce Dr. [FULL NAME] who is calling us today from [LOCATION IF REMOTE]. Dr. [LAST NAME] completed undergraduate and Masters studies at the [UNIVERSITY OF BLANK] on the topic of [TOPIC]. Dr. [LAST NAME] then completed a PhD at the [UNIVERSITY OF BLANK] on the topic of [TOPIC]. Next, Dr. [LAST NAME] did a postdoc at [UNIVERSITY OF BLANK] working on [TOPIC]. Dr. [LAST NAME] is now a postdoc at the [UNIVERSITY OF BLANK]. The title of their seminar is [TITLE]. Please join me in welcoming Dr. [LAST NAME]."

Candidates should be reminded of explicit time allotments before their talk and a clear plan for timekeeping that is applied to all speakers equally should be established (e.g., speakers will be alerted when they have 2 minutes of allotted time remaining, and if they go over time, it will be detracted from their allotted time for questions). The Q&A session after the seminar should be moderated by the introducer.

If a reception is held for visiting candidates, put consideration into who is invited. This presents an opportunity to introduce the candidate to potential mentors and role models on campus, including those outside the department. If a job candidate meets with a realtor on a second visit, provide them with multiple vetted options. A single realtor may introduce biases in which neighborhoods are highlighted and which are overlooked.

V. Candidate ranking and voting

The search committee should send out the rubric to voting members of the department. Optionally, the search committee could add job-specific criteria to the rubric before sending it out.

Ranking candidates (the second vote)

There is a sense in many of our departments that we will know quality when we see it. As a result, our criteria for evaluating faculty candidates can seem vague and absent of concrete examples. Further, when confronted with hundreds of applications, we can fall back on established but flawed proxies, such as where the candidate has trained or published, to evaluate candidates quickly. These proxies are themselves subject to bias (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012; West et al., 2013; Clauset et al., 2015; Milkman et al., 2015; Macaluso et al., 2016) and therefore artificially limit our ability to conduct an equitable faculty search.

At the beginning of the meeting, whoever is chairing the meeting should explicitly outline the criteria that was listed in the advertisement. The subsequent discussion should revolve around these criteria. If the guidelines in this document were adhered to, the criteria should include:

1. Potential to contribute to a culture of inclusivity and equity in our department
2. Potential to effectively teach and mentor diverse students and diverse groups
3. Evidence of excellence/innovation in teaching (as reflected in the seminar and teaching statement)
4. Potential for scholarly impact (given content of packet, seminar, interview, etc)
5. Potential to fulfill the subject matter requirements in the job offer

It is important to keep in mind during the discussion of candidates that the following traditional criteria have implications for inequity in the hiring process:

1. The concept of "fit" favors candidates who are culturally similar in terms of leisure pursuits, experiences, and self-presentation styles (Rivera 2012).
2. Citation counts are biased against marginalized populations
 - a. Women are systematically less cited than men (Caplar et al. 2017; King et al. 2017; Dworkin et al. 2020; Chakravartty et al. 2018;) due to things like higher rates of self-citation in men, women receiving more manuscript rejections, women being less likely to be published in prestigious journals (higher citation rates), and being less likely to be invited to write commentaries (Davies et al, 2021 and citations therein)
 - b. Racially and/or ethnically diverse scientific teams experience more than 5% lower acceptance rates and lower citation counts than less diverse author teams (Lerback et al. 2020).

3. Grant applications to federal agencies by African-American or Black Principal Investigators are less likely to be funded than are less likely to be funded (Ginther et al. 2011; Hoppe et al. 2019; Taffe and Gilpin, 2021).

A representative of the IDEA committee should present on instances of bias/unfair treatment during the interview process prior to discussion, to curb negative effects on candidates.

The job offer

Reaffirm the department's vision for promoting equity, inclusion, and excellence throughout all facets of faculty life—teaching, research, and service. Include in the offer letter the university's position on harassment and discrimination ([link](#)).

VI. Resources

The following resources provide more approaches, guidelines, and perspectives on inclusive hiring. PDFs of papers can be found on the Biology IDEA Committee website. You can also find a multitude of resources via academic departments and universities.

- [Project INCLUDE - Hiring](#) (and resources listed therein)
- [UF Inclusive Hiring Hub](#)
- Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017). We are all for diversity, but.... *Harvard Educational Review* 87(4): 557-580.
- Bhalla (2019). Strategies to improve equity in faculty hiring. *Molecular Biology of the Cell* 30: 2744-2749.
- Franklin 2018 Faculty Recruitment Guide
- [UF Bio IDEA Committee Advertising Locales](#)

VII. Works Cited

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