## Unconscious Bias for Search Committees

Unconscious bias is an automatic process that finds patterns based on small bits of information and includes stereotypes about certain groups of people formed outside of one's own consciousness.

Unconscious bias affects selection of candidates at different stages of the search process:

❖ Position description: What is your wording?
  ◆ Research example: When job advertisements contain more masculine wording (vs. feminine wording), participants perceived more men within these occupations and women found these jobs less appealing due to lack perceived belongingness
❖ Candidate pool: Do you have diversity?
  ◆ Research example: Proportion of women in candidate pool influences how female candidates are rated and whether they are recommended for hire for managerial position
❖ Letters of recommendation: Are there subtle differences in references?
  ◆ Research example: Letters of recommendation for female candidates are significantly shorter, less record focused, and contain more doubt raisers.
  ◆ Research example: Female applicants described with more communal terms and less agentic terms than male applicants. Reviewers are more likely to recommend hiring men because communal characteristics are negatively related to hiring decisions in academia
❖ CV evaluation: What are your unconscious biases?
  ◆ Research example: Compared to "Karen Miller," "Brian Miller" is evaluated more positively on research, teaching, and service, despite identical CVs
  ◆ Research example: "Emily" and "Greg" are more likely to get a call-back regarding a position than are "Lakisha" and "Jamal," despite identical resumes

## Strategies to Reduce Bias: Individual Level

◆ Acknowledge that you have biases
◆ Acknowledge that women and minorities face systematic barriers
◆ Take perspective of members of a different group
◆ Take time to conduct evaluations

# References

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# Strategies to Reduce Bias Checklist: Committee Level

1. Search Committee
   - ❑ Recruit a diverse search committee
   - ❑ Schedule training for full search committee on *Unconscious Bias for Search Committees*

2. Position Description
   - ❑ Think critically about the qualities and qualifications of the ideal candidate
   - ❑ Pay attention to gender-coded words
   - ❑ Include specific language about contributions to diversity and inclusion

3. Candidate Pool
   - ❑ Identify target publications to advertise
   - ❑ Utilize active recruiting strategies
   - ❑ Expect a diverse candidate pool

4. Evaluation of Candidates
   - ❑ Acknowledge unconscious biases (yours and others)
   - ❑ Utilize a standardized applicant evaluation rubric that includes contributions to diversity and inclusion. Note that these credentials/qualifications you are using to evaluate applicants should have been made clear in the position description
   - ❑ Allow committee sufficient time to review applicants

5. Interviewing Candidates
   - ❑ Include an interview schedule and list of key campus resources in invitation email
   - ❑ Review guidelines on questions that are not acceptable to ask
   - ❑ Utilize a standardized set of questions, including addressing contributions to diversity and inclusion, for each of the following:
     - o Interview questions
     - o Candidate review forms
     - o Reference questions

6. Making an Offer
   - ❑ Maintain ongoing communication with candidates about the status of the search process
   - ❑ Negotiate an offer

7. Evaluating the Search
   - ❑ Conduct a post-search debrief to evaluate the search process
   - ❑ Consider seeking feedback from candidates who turned down offers to better evaluate search process

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## Expanded Information and Resources

### 1. The Search Committee

- Recruit a diverse search committee
  - Due to small numbers, underrepresented minority faculty members may be called upon more frequently than colleagues; keep this in mind when asking for time-consuming service
  - Consider inviting faculty from other divisions or departments
  - UArizona Guide to Successful Searches - "Committee Size and Composition" https://hr.arizona.edu/supervisors/recruitment-hiring/guide-successful-searches

- Schedule training for the full search committee on *Unconscious Bias for Search Committees*
  - EVERYONE has biases – a diverse search committee is NOT guarantee of a fair, inclusive search
  - Departmental Diversity Champions or a member of the Faculty Diversity Advisory Committee should provide training on unconscious bias to all members of the search committee

### 2. The Position Description and Application

- Think critically about the qualities and qualifications of the ideal candidate
  - What are the "must haves" for this position? Instead of including all of the "nice-to-haves" that a dream candidate might possess, stick to the "must-haves."
  - Focus on what a person needs to be able to do and achieve in this role.

| List three essential job requirements for this role ("must haves") |
|---|
| 1. |
| 2. |
| 3. |

- Pay attention to gender-coded words
  - Consider using the [Gender Decoder for Job Ads](#), which highlights gendered wording and identifies if a post is masculine- or feminine-coded

- Include specific language about contributions to diversity and inclusion
  - Include language strongly expressing the University's commitment to diversity, specifically describing requirements to meet the diversity commitments of the department. This may result in a larger, more diverse candidate pool.
  - Equal opportunity language is required, but go beyond the minimal.
  - Sample statement from the University of Arizona:
    - *At the University of Arizona, we value our inclusive climate because we know that diversity in experiences and perspectives is vital to advancing innovation, critical thinking, solving complex problems, and creating an inclusive academic community. As an Hispanic-serving institution, we translate these values into action by seeking individuals who have experience and expertise working with diverse students, colleagues, and constituencies. Because we seek a workforce with a wide range of perspectives and experiences, we provide equal employment opportunities to applicants and employees without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or genetic information. As an Employer of National Service, we also welcome alumni of AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, and other national service programs and others who will help us advance our Inclusive Excellence initiative aimed at creating a university that values student, staff and faculty engagement in addressing issues of diversity and inclusiveness.*

## 3. The Candidate Pool

- Identify target publications to advertise
  - Advertise with professional organizations.
  - Ask professional organizations for names of potential candidates
  - Post advertisements in publications that specifically target underrepresented groups:
    - American Medical Women's Association (AMWA)
    - The Association of American Physicians (AAIP)
    - National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians (NCAPIP)
    - National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA)
    - National Medical Association

- Utilize active recruiting strategies: Often times advertising a position is not enough to get a strong, diverse candidate pool. In addition to advertising, active recruiting strategies should be employed.
  - Have search committee chair and members reach out to colleagues at institutions that have diverse faculty and students to identify high-potential candidates and encourage them to apply to the position.
  - Engage current department faculty and staff to reach out to qualified candidates through their membership of relevant groups or organizations.
  - For Individuals who decline nominations/interview: These individuals may be able to refer other outstanding candidates for the position.

- Expect a diverse candidate pool: If you do not have a diverse candidate pool, consider expanding recruitment efforts until you have a diverse pool.

## 4. Evaluation of Candidates

- Acknowledge unconscious biases (yours and others)
  - Committee members should have training in unconscious bias:
    - *Project Implicit:* https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/
  - Prior to each review, committee should be reminded of effects of unconscious bias

- Utilize a standardized applicant evaluation rubric that includes contributions to diversity and inclusion. Note that these credentials/qualifications you are using to evaluate applicants should have been made clear in the position description
  - Determine, prioritize, and document search criteria based on position duties
  - Identify essential or threshold qualifications without which a candidate will not be selected, no matter how impressive in other areas
  - Rank other skills or competencies in order of importance
  - Refer to *Sample Candidate Evaluation Form* (Appendix A, p. 9)

- Allow committee sufficient time to review applicants
  - Make evidence of job-relevant qualifications central to the candidate deliberations
  - Document reasons for not moving a candidate on to the interview phase

## 5. Interviewing Candidates

- Develop an interview schedule
  - The agenda should reflect department priorities in terms of research, teaching, service, etc.

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- o Ensure that there are different ways in which candidates may interact with faculty/staff/residents/students from the home department.
  - o Allow the candidate input into determining the schedule.

- Include an interview schedule and list of key campus resources in invitation email
  - o Candidates should know the schedule for their on-campus visit
  - o Candidates should receive clear expectations regarding any presentation or lecture that they are invited to give.
  - o Candidates should be given Information about who they will meet

- Prepare Interviewers to Conduct the Interview:
  - o Committees are advised to develop a basic set of interview questions in advance.
  - o Utilize a standardized set of questions, including questions about contributions to diversity and inclusion (UArizona Appendix B - Library of Interview Questions - "Understands Diversity Issues and Creates Supportive Environment...") https://hr.arizona.edu/managers-supervisors/recruitment-hiring/guide-successful-searches/library-interview-questions
  - o Review guidelines on questions that are not acceptable to ask: Avoid questions that could be interpreted by any applicant to be an attempt to discover any protected personal information. (Don't Risk it- "Questions to Avoid" https://hr.arizona.edu/supervisors/recruitment-hiring/guide-successful-searches/questions-avoid)

## 6. Making an Offer

- Maintain ongoing communication with candidates about the status of the search process
  - o UArizona Guide to Successful Searches - "Applicant Communication" https://hr.arizona.edu/supervisors/recruitment-hiring/guide-successful-searches#hdr-17
  - o UArizona Appendix F - "Sample Letters to Applicants and Candidates" https://hr.arizona.edu/managers-supervisors/recruitment-hiring/guide-successful-searches/sample-letters

- Negotiate an offer
  - o UArizona Best Practices: Candidate Negotiations https://hr.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/Best%20Practices%20-%20Negotiating%20with%20Candidates.pdf

## 7. Evaluating the Search

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- Conduct a post-search debrief to evaluate the search process
  - UArizona Guide to Successful Searches - "Wrapping Things Up"
    https://hr.arizona.edu/supervisors/recruitment-hiring/guide-successful-searches#hdr-17
  - By documenting and sharing lessons learned, future searches can better employ practices that will recruit top faculty to the University.
  - Refer to *Sample Post-Search Debrief Form* (Appendix B, p. 10)

- Consider seeking feedback from candidates who turned down offers to better evaluate search process
  - If there were any women and underrepresented minority candidates who turned down nominations, it may be helpful for the department chair or dean to contact them and ask for their reason(s) for declining.

Adapted from:
University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health Committee on Inclusion and Equity Faculty Hiring Strategies Checklist

# Appendix A

## SAMPLE CANDIDATE EVALUATION FORM

This form offers a method for departments and schools to evaluate faculty candidates. It is meant to be a template and can be modified as appropriate. The proposed criteria are designed for junior faculty candidates; however, alternate language is suggested in parentheses for senior faculty candidates.

Candidate's name: _____

Please indicate which of the following are true for you (check all that apply):

❑ Read candidate's CV                          ❑ Met with candidate
❑ Read candidate's scholarship                 ❑ Attended lunch or dinner with candidate
❑ Read candidate's letters of recommendation   ❑ Other (please explain):
                                                  _____
❑ Attended candidate's job talk

Please comment on the candidate's scholarship as reflected in the job talk:
_____

Please comment on the candidate's teaching ability as reflected in the job talk:
_____

Please rate the candidate on each of the following:

| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor | Unable to judge |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Potential for (evidence of) scholarly impact | | | | | |
| Potential for (evidence of) research productivity | | | | | |
| Potential for (evidence of) research funding | | | | | |
| Potential for (evidence of) collaboration | | | | | |
| Potential (demonstrated ability) to attract and supervise graduate students | | | | | |
| Potential (demonstrated ability) to teach and supervise undergraduates | | | | | |
| Potential (demonstrated ability) to be a conscientious University community member | | | | | |
| Fit with department's priorities | | | | | |
| Ability to make positive contribution to department's climate | | | | | |
| Ability to enhance diversity of unit | | | | | |

Other comments?

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# Appendix B

## SAMPLE POST-SEARCH DEBRIEF FORM

The following questions can help guide the committee's evaluation of the search. This list is not exhaustive; the committee should feel free to include any other questions it feels are pertinent to evaluating the search.

1. Did the committee use the checklist of best practices in faculty recruiting?

2. What parts of the search process worked well?

3. What parts didn't work well? How could they be improved?

4. Was the applicant pool diverse? Did it include women and underrepresented minorities?

   - Could the job description have been constructed in a way that would have brought in a broader pool of candidates?
   - Could the department have recruited more actively?

5. Were any promising candidates discovered during this search? If so, it will be helpful to keep these individuals on file for future searches.

6. How did finalists perceive the recruitment process? Interviews with members of this shortlist can yield valuable feedback.

   - Did candidates, especially those were women and/or underrepresented minority candidates, refuse an offer? If so, why? Consider interviewing these candidates and asking them their reasons for refusal.
   - Are there ways that the department can become more attractive to women and underrepresented minorities?

Once the search committee has considered these questions and documented its analysis, its report can be shared with the department chair and the dean.

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