Office for Faculty Advancement
University of Washington
Best Practices for Faculty Searches

Introduction

This document is meant to serve as a concise Handbook of Best Practices for hiring and retaining a diverse and inclusive faculty across the three campuses of the University of Washington, and thus it is meant to assist the university community in meeting its goals of promoting equity and of enhancing excellence through diversity. The Handbook is supported by an online Toolkit of sample materials and additional resources for search committees and unit leaders.

Units should plan to **"localize" the Handbook's suggestions** to their specific needs, and units should develop conventions and tools relevant to their particular disciplines and to their particular missions in relation to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

For the purposes of this document, the concepts of **equity** and **diversity** are understood as the right of all faculty job applicants and all hired faculty to be treated with equal fairness and to have the opportunity to excel without bias due to their race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, or protected veteran status.

In addition to promoting equity and enhancing excellence through diversity, one of the broad goals of the Handbook is to encourage the university community to **reimagine faculty hiring and retention as ongoing activities**—as regular components of academic and professional life, rather than as special occasions or as reactions to particular circumstances. Another broad goal is to encourage units to **work closely with university allies** to coordinate hiring and retention efforts across boundaries of departments, schools, colleges, and campuses.

I.1 Interfolio

The University of Washington uses the Interfolio **applicant tracking system** for managing the search process for all academic personnel. For UW recruitment policy or process questions, please contact Academic Human Resources. For technical questions about Interfolio features and functionality, please contact the unit's Interfolio administrator or help@Interfolio.com.

I.2 Hiring in a Virtual Environment

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, in autumn 2020 the Office for Faculty Advancement (OFA) teamed up with UW ADVANCE to offer a **webinar** on Faculty Hiring in a Virtual Environment. A recording of the webinar is available from the OFA and ADVANCE websites. Moreover, the Handbook has been updated to include references to virtual options throughout.

I.3 Share Your Best Practices

The Office for Faculty Advancement invites units to share their successful strategies and tools with us, so that we can share these with others and so that we can facilitate an ongoing conversation about best practices.

Part 1: Scouting

1.1 Reimagining Hiring as an Ongoing Activity

Rather than view faculty hiring as a rare or special occasion, develop the habit of regularly "scouting" for potential applicants who will advance the unit's research, teaching, and diversity missions in specific ways.

Scouting activities are meant to **identify and build relationships with potential job applicants**, so that the unit is in a good position to attract diverse pools for approved searches. But scouting also can lead to the **identification of "preferred" candidates** the unit would like to hire immediately.

1.2 Important Questions and Cautions

Active scouting thus raises a **potentially controversial but important set of questions:**

- Does the unit believe it is best to run relatively broad and fully open searches for every position?

- Or does the unit believe it is good practice—and/or strategic necessity—to occasionally launch so-called target of opportunity hires that focus on one or more preferred candidates?

Thus, when thinking about scouting, units should consider **several cautions**:

- Scouting activities are meant to help build diverse pools of potential applicants for the future; they cannot guarantee funded positions.

- It is important to openly discuss how the unit and how the relevant college, school, or campus will approach preferred candidates and/or specialized searches in relation to long-range hiring plans.

- Unit leaders and college, school, or campus leaders should be careful not to build unrealistic expectations for either potential applicants or current faculty.

- The term "preferred" should never be considered as referring to, or including, a potential candidate's race, sex, color, religion, or national origin. A natural outcome of the scouting process should be more diverse pools of applicants, but hiring should never be based on these protected categories.

1.3 Effective Habits for Scouting

With the above questions and cautions in mind, the unit is ready to foster effective habits for scouting:

- Develop, discuss, and regularly update **long-range hiring plans**, taking into consideration the unit's current Affirmative Action Plan. (If the unit is unaware of its Affirmative Action Plan, check with the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action). All members of the unit should be aware of current and anticipated needs, including those related to ancitipated retirements, as well as of the unit's "wish list" for future hires. Where does the unit hope to see itself in five or ten years?

- Encourage all members of the unit to view **professional meetings** as opportunities to scout for potential faculty applicants. Colleagues should be encouraged to attend presentations by advanced graduate students and post-docs who will soon be on the job market, and by early career faculty who may be movable from current positions.

- Consider hosting a **targeted reception or event** at your discipline's major conference or meeting. For example, an event might spotlight an established or emerging research area within your discipline that directly engages issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, or it might spotlight opportunities for teaching, service, or outreach that directly engage issues of access and equal opportunity.

- Encourage all members of the unit to use **invitations to present lectures or seminars at other institutions** as opportunities to tell advanced graduate students and post-docs about potential opportunities at UW. Faculty might include a standard slide in their presentations that describes the home unit and invites audience members to talk with them about UW.

- Consider using the unit's own **lecture or seminar series** as an opportunity to invite potential future applicants to campus (whether in person or virtually). This is a "low stakes" way to introduce potential applicants to the unit and to campus allies, and to give potential applicants an opportunity to experience the UW firsthand.

- Keep in mind that you may have **local scouting opportunities** as well: advanced students, post-docs, and non-tenure track faculty in adjacent units or on other campuses at UW.

A link to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EEOA) and additional resources for developing long-range hiring plans and strategies for scouting are available in the Toolkit.

Part 2: Preparation

Preparing to launch an approved competitive search involves multiple steps, and the earlier the hiring unit can begin, the better.

2.1 Multi-year Planning

Ideally, preparation for a specific search should begin one or more years prior to when the job ad will be posted. Long-range hiring plans allow the unit to think strategically about how individual searches fit within short- and long-term goals for maintaining or enhancing excellence in research, teaching, service, and outreach—and to articulate that thinking to deans or chancellors, students, advancement officers, community stakeholders, and potential applicants.

Units should share their long-term “wish lists” of potential hires with their allies across campus and across the UW system. How might units work together to meet similar or mutual goals?

2.2 Potential for Cluster Hires

Multi-year planning may help the unit think about how individual searches might be fruitfully bundled into a “cluster hire,” or how the unit might collaborate with one or more other units to organize a cluster hire across multiple disciplines or across multiple UW campuses.

Cluster hires can be especially useful for attracting **applicants working in relatively small or new fields or subfields** as well as for attracting **applicants from historically underrepresented backgrounds**, since cluster hires signal a significant commitment to—and investment in—a specific area of research, teaching, service, and/or outreach. Cluster hires suggest the building of communities.

More information about cluster hires is available in the Toolkit.

2.3 Forming Search Committees

As the unit prepares for a specific search, its leadership should think carefully about how to form the official search committee:

- There are **multiple models** for effective search committees: what is possible and practical will depend on the size of the unit, how its sub-units typically interact, how many searches the unit will conduct in a given hiring season, and the overall unit culture and climate. Keep in mind that **how you form search committees signals what the unit values and how it distributes power.** Sample search committee models are available in the Toolkit.

- Make sure the search committee is broadly representative of the area of hiring and of the unit, since the committee will likely be the first point of contact for potential applicants. **The committee's composition sends a message to potential applicants about the unit's climate.**

- Include individuals who will provide a range of different perspectives and expertise, and who will provide a demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion. Depending on the nature of the position, you may want to invite **at least one person from outside the unit** to serve on the committee. You may also want to include a **graduate student representative**; many units always include a student representative as a best practice.

- It is helpful, for instance, to **balance established and early career faculty** who are close to the subfield of the search with **at least one colleague who is outside the subfield**. It can also be helpful to have a member of your unit's **leadership** team (e.g., an associate or vice chair or an associate dean) serve *ex officio* on all search committees to make sure the unit's broader interests—including its commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion—are represented at meetings.

- Be mindful not to overburden individual colleagues with a disproportionate number of **committee assignments**. If particular faculty members are needed on the search committee, where might they be relieved of other duties?

Additional information about forming search committees is available in the Spring 2021 webinar on Planning for Faculty Hiring posted to the OFA and ADVANCE websites.

2.4 Informing Search Committees

Unit leadership should meet with search committees before they begin their work to:

1. **Officially charge** the committee. It is important that leadership explain the full scope of the committee's work on behalf of the unit. For instance, although they should seek input from others during the course of the search process (e.g., after finalists visit campus), only individuals charged with serving on the search committee are authorized to make formal recommendations about candidates or finalists.

2. Discuss the unit's specific **goals** for the search and provide any relevant **data** about the unit, the field, or the subfield. National databases can help leadership access **availability data for the broad discipline or field**; some academic associations also compile data on numbers of graduates in their fields or subfields. (Links to several of the better-known national databases are available in the Toolkit. The EOAA manager can also be a useful resource.)

3. If the unit does not require committees to create a specific **plan for outreach**, including a list of venues for posting the job advertisement, encourage them to do so before beginning their work. Availability data can be useful in developing an effective outreach plan.

4. Discuss the unit's expectations for running the search process, including the expectation of **compliance with university policies and all relevant federal and state laws**.

    - For example, Section 5.C. of the university's **Executive Order 31: Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action**, states:

      “The University will recruit, hire, train, and promote individuals without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status and based upon their qualifications and ability to do the job.”

    - Many faculty will have heard of **Initiative 200** (I-200), a Washington State law enacted in 1998. The full text of I-200 appears in the Toolkit. The key provision states:

      “The state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting.”

    - EO 31, I-200, and other relevant policies and laws **prohibit both discrimination and preferential treatment** based on identity. Search committees cannot use identity markers such as “race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin” as a criterion or factor for selecting or not selecting particular applicants, candidates, or finalists.

    - Moreover, search committees should not attempt to gather data about applicants’ identities that is not part of their submitted application materials (e.g., by searching for applicants’ profiles or photographs on the internet) and search committees should not attempt to assemble their lists of candidates for preliminary or final interviews based on identity markers (e.g., by using some form of racial or gender distribution quota).

5. Discuss the unit’s **expectation of confidentiality**. Maintaining confidentiality of committee deliberations can be especially challenging if there are internal applicants or other applicants who are well known to committee members, such as alumni.

6. Outline the ideal outreach, assessment, and recruitment **timeline**.

7. Emphasize the importance of each committee member’s regular **attendance** at meetings and full **participation** in the search process. Be sure to specify the role any **graduate student representatives** are expected to play on the committee.

8. Introduce the **Interfolio** applicant tracking system. It may be useful to have your Interfolio administrator join you.

9. Detail the unit's and the university's expectations for **records management and retention** related to the search process. Contact Records Management Services or the Attorney

General's Office if you have questions about document retention schedules or the possible implications of the Public Records Act.

10. Detail available fiscal **resources** and administrative **support**.

In addition, **unit leadership** should:

- Ask the appropriate dean or vice chancellor to meet with the committee early in the process to reiterate the importance of equity and inclusion, the advisory role of the committee, and the need for confidentiality. **The Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement is also available to meet with search committees at any stage of the process.**

- Schedule one or more training sessions on interrupting bias, both for the committee and for the voting faculty. **The Office for Faculty Advancement can tailor workshops to the unit's specific needs. Arrange by email by contacting facadv@uw.edu.**

- Create a clear plan for how committee members will communicate with each other, the unit, campus allies, and candidates.

- Make sure all committee members understand they will be expected to participate in recruitment efforts, including personal outreach to potential applicants and to candidates.

Note: Preparation also includes creating an **assessment rubric** and creating an **assessment plan**, both of which are described in Part 4: Assessment.

2.5 Enlisting the Support of the Whole Unit

Finally, as you prepare for an approved competitive search it is important to devise strategies for enlisting the whole unit in the search process. How will the unit **build consensus** around its needs, priorities, and selections?

- At what point(s) will it be appropriate to inform the unit of the committee's assessment plan, progress, and recommendations?

- At what point(s) will it be appropriate to gather the unit's input, and in what form(s)? For instance, will the unit as a whole discuss and/or vote on which candidates from the preliminary interviews are invited for final interviews, or will the search committee make such decisions on its own?

- How can the unit—including not only faculty but also graduate students, post-docs, and alumni—assist in attracting a broad pool of applicants?

- Once an offer is made, how can the unit assist in recruitment efforts?

2.6 Enlisting the Support of Key Allies

Similarly, it is important to think about which **other units** within your college or school and/or across the university's three campuses may be able to offer assistance during the search process, as well as which **community groups or organizations** may be able to provide valuable support.

- Which other units might help you attract a diverse applicant pool?

- Which other units, community groups, or individuals should attend job talks, or meet with finalists?

- Which other units, community groups, or individuals will be especially useful during recruitment efforts?

2.7 Providing Oversight for Search Committees

Unit leadership should also think carefully about how to monitor and support search committees across the entire hiring process.

- **At which points in the process will it be useful to check in with the committee chair, request relevant data, or require a written report?** It may be useful, for instance, to check in 1) before the job ad is posted; 2) before the committee begins to assess applications; 3) when the committee creates a "long" short list for preliminary interviews; 4) when the committee creates a short list of candidates for final interviews; and 5) before the committee makes its recommendations to the unit.

- Given the unit's prior history with faculty hiring, are there any points in the process where problems are more likely to occur? If so, **how might unit leadership effectively coach the committee or the unit as a whole toward better outcomes?**

- Keep track of issues that arise during the search process to discuss at the debriefing.

2.8 Debriefing Search Committees

At the conclusion of the hiring season, **unit leadership** should plan to debrief search committee chairs and, when possible, full search committees. This is **an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the unit's hiring process**, as well as an opportunity to learn from both successes and any difficulties that arise.

During the coronavirus pandemic, for instance, search committees learned a great deal about **how to successfully navigate faculty hiring in a virtual environment**, including how to streamline their processes and better focus on those activities that are essential for evaluation and selection. Search committees also learned a great deal about **how to work with candidates** to ensure they are able to present their best selves during interviews and to participate fully in all hiring activities. Many of these lessons are transferrable to in-person processes as well.

The unit's Interfolio administrator will be able to help leadership access **de-identified, aggregate (i.e., anonymous) demographic data about the large applicant pool** for specific positions. Leadership should plan to run this report only once during a search, typically at the advertised priority deadline. In compliance with federal and state laws, **demographic data should not be made available to the search committee and should not be part of the committee's assessment process**. It can be used, however, after the completion of a search to help assess the effectiveness of current outreach practices and to help determine whether a more proactive approach to outreach may be appropriate for future searches.

Part 3: Outreach

How can the search committee attract a highly qualified and diverse pool of applicants? Which outreach practices are allowable under current federal and state laws and university policies?

As already noted, the committee should discuss and plan each step of the search process. In terms of outreach to potential applicants, the committee should consider:

- What kind of **language** in the job ad will encourage applications from individuals who are committed to diversity-related work and whose records of research, teaching, service, and/or outreach reflect a commitment to inclusion and equity?

- Which **venues** will be most productive for advertising to a broad range of potential applicants?

- How might members of the committee and the unit as a whole engage their **professional networks** to encourage applications from qualified individuals from historically underrepresented, marginalized, or disadvantaged backgrounds?

3.1 Legal and Policy Aspects of Outreach

Committees sometimes worry about the legal and policy aspects of recruiting applicants from underrepresented backgrounds, perhaps especially applicants who identify as U.S. racial or ethnic minorities. Understanding the laws and policies that govern outreach is essential to formulating an appropriate and effective plan.

Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action

Laws and practices related to affirmative action continue to evolve through initiatives and court decisions, and these changes have direct implications for faculty hiring. As noted in section 2.4, the University of Washington adheres to policies and practices of nondiscrimination that promote equal employment opportunity and are consistent with state and federal laws.

The UW **Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA)** offers this succinct definition for affirmative action:

"Affirmative action is a program required of federal contractors to ensure equal employment opportunity. It requires a good faith effort to achieve and maintain a workforce in which minorities and women are represented at a level proportionate with their availability in the labor pool from which the employer can reasonably be expected to recruit. Affirmative action also includes good faith efforts towards covered veterans and individuals with disabilities."

Section 5.D. of **Executive Order 31** affirms this commitment as well:

"The University seeks affirmatively to recruit qualified minority group members, women, protected veterans, and individuals with disabilities in all levels of employment as part of its commitment as a federal contractor."

A link to the EOAA website, which includes Frequently Asked Questions, is available in the Toolkit.

It is important to note that **affirmative action is distinct from nondiscrimination**. Affirmative action refers to policies and practices specific to the **outreach phase** of the appointment process. The specific goal of affirmative action is to **enrich applicant pools** so that they are inclusive of all groups, including those that have been historically underrepresented, marginalized, or disadvantaged in specific academic disciplines or in higher education as a whole.

A range of **outreach efforts to broaden pools of qualified applicants** are allowed under EO 31, I-200, and other state and federal laws and are encouraged by the University of Washington.

Diverse Applicant Pool Data

As a federal contractor, the university must request information about the race/ethnicity, sex, age, disability, and veteran's status of all applicants to UW recruitments. Therefore, UW has configured Interfolio to automatically include an **Affirmative Action Information Request (AAIR)** as part of the application process. On most questions, however, applicants have the option to decline to provide specific data.

Changes to the UW Faculty Code

Over the past decade, the UW Faculty Code has been updated to better reflect the university's commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion. **Faculty work that enriches diversity and equity in research, teaching, and service is now explicitly acknowledged as criteria to be recognized in faculty appointment and promotion decisions.**

For the hiring process, these changes mean that units should include **explicit language** about diversity- and equity-related research, teaching, and service in job ads. **And units are now required to ask applicants for explicit statements** about their prior involvement in or planned contributions to various kinds of diversity and equity work.

Chapter 24, Section 24-32 of the Faculty Code, "Scholarly and Professional Qualifications of Faculty Members," states:

"All candidates for initial faculty appointment to the ranks and/or titles listed in Chapter 21, Section 21-32.A shall submit a statement of past and planned contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Academic units and search committees shall consider a candidate's statement as part of a comprehensive evaluation of scholarship and research, teaching, and service. In accord with the University's expressed commitment to excellence and equity, any contributions in scholarship and research, teaching, and service that address diversity and equal opportunity shall be included and

considered among the professional and scholarly qualifications for appointment and promotion outlined below."

Sample prompts for requesting DEI statements and tips for evaluating DEI statements are available in the Toolkit.

3.2 Writing and Posting the Job Advertisement

With the above information in mind, the committee is now ready to write the job ad. **Ideally, the committee should draft its evaluation criteria before or at the same time as it drafts the ad** to ensure close alignment. (See Part 4: Assessment.)

Interfolio divides posted job ads into **three major sections**: Position Description, Qualifications, and Instructions. It is thus useful to conceive the ad as **the sum of several discrete but related parts**.

Position Description:

- Describe the **specific position**. Use inclusive language that will appeal to a broad range of potential applicants. Map the position onto the unit's commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- It is useful to describe the **unit**. This can be done in expansive terms that include how the unit values diversity and diversity-related work on multiple levels—e.g., in the curriculum, in pedagogy, in outreach to students and/or communities, in research.

- It can be useful to also describe the **university**. Here is an opportunity to introduce potential applicants to UW's broader commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- Depending on the position, it can be especially helpful to describe potential **allies across the university**. This might include interdisciplinary research centers, outreach programs, and so forth. It might also include **related searches in other units**—i.e., how this position is part of an unofficial cluster hire.

Qualifications:

- State the **minimum qualifications** for the position (e.g., required years of relevant experience, demonstrated expertise in particular kinds of research or pedagogy, demonstrated commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion, etc.). A bulleted list, rather than a sentence or paragraph, can work well.

- Depending on the nature of the position, the ad may need to include an explicit statement of the **minimum degree required** (e.g., "Ph.D. or foreign equivalent").

- The ad may also need to include an explicit statement indicating that "All University of Washington faculty engage in teaching, research, and service." If in doubt, **check with the unit's Academic HR specialist.**

- **Note that it is best not to include lists of "preferred" experiences, qualities, or areas of expertise that are not actual minimum requirements for the position.** Such preferences or options should be outlined in the Position Description rather than in the Qualifications.

Instructions:

- Describe the **materials** you want applicants to submit for review—and make sure these align with your assessment criteria. Depending on the specific field or subfield, as well as the academic rank of the position, typical materials include: a letter of interest; a full cv; a dissertation or thesis abstract; a sample of scholarship or creative activity; a statement of teaching philosophy and/or evidence of teaching effectiveness (e.g., a specified number of student or peer evaluations); a specified number of letters of recommendation or a specified number of names and contact information for potential references.

- As noted, committees are now required to request **an explicit statement that describes the applicant's experiences with and commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion**, often called a "diversity statement" or "DEI statement." The DEI statement is a relatively new genre—both for the applicants who need to write them and for the hiring committees who need to assess them. Since conventions for the genre are still evolving, it is helpful to **provide a concise prompt** that asks for the kinds of information the committee wants and that offers **clear parameters** for the writer (e.g., a word or page limit).

- For positions that are primarily **administrative**, such as a unit leader or college dean, it may be appropriate for committees to request a statement of administrative experience and/or a vision statement for the specific role.

- List a **priority deadline**—the date when you will begin to read and assess applications. This date should be at least 30 days after initial posting.

A range of sample job advertisements and prompts for DEI statements are available in the Toolkit. A link to the *Academic Personnel Advertisement Guide* on the Office of Academic Personnel website it also available in the Toolkit.

Required Language

In addition to the above components, two University of Washington statements will be appended to all job advertisements posted through Interfolio. First, an **Equal Employment Opportunity** statement:

"University of Washington is an affirmative action and equal opportunity employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion,

national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, genetic information, gender identity or expression, age, disability, or protected veteran status."

And second, a statement of the University's **Commitment to Diversity**:

"The University of Washington is committed to building diversity among its faculty, librarian, staff, and student communities, and articulates that commitment in the UW Diversity Blueprint. Additionally, the University's Faculty Code recognizes faculty efforts in research, teaching, and/or service that address diversity and equal opportunity as important contributions to a faculty member's academic profile and responsibilities."

Posting the Job Advertisement

Circulating ads in traditional scholarly publications remains useful but can result in a relatively homogenous pool of applicants. To enlarge the applicant pool, post ads in a variety of publications and on the listservs, websites, or social media accounts of relevant professional organizations. This should not only help enlarge the potential pool of applicants, but also help convey the unit's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. **It is useful to maintain a comprehensive record of where ads have been posted.**

Note: Depending on the nature of the faculty or administrative position, the unit may be required to post its ad in a print publication with an international audience, such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. **A review by the unit's Academic HR specialist is required before any posting.**

3.3 Active Recruitment and Networking

Once the ad is posted, preliminary "scouting" should become active recruitment and "networking."

Members of the search committee, along with other members of the unit, should personally contact colleagues at UW and other institutions to seek nominations of potential applicants. Consider using the following means of **active recruitment**:

- Send announcements and request nominations from departments at institutions that serve large numbers of Latine, African American, Native American, and other historically underrepresented populations. Your **campus allies** will be able to help you locate such institutions.
- Send announcements to diversity-related sections of **regional, national, or international organizations** within the discipline.
- Take advantage of **social media** (e.g., posting ads on Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) to attract a broader pool of applicants.
- Consider **inviting applications** from early career colleagues who may be currently under-placed at other institutions.

- Ask current faculty, graduate students, post-docs, and alumni to help market open positions by **taking copies of job ads to academic conferences and meetings** they attend, as well as to the **other institutions** they visit to give lectures or seminars.

- Ask all members of the unit to **contact their colleagues** at other institutions to inquire about promising graduate students, post-docs, or early career faculty from underrepresented backgrounds.

- Have unit leadership **personally contact qualified potential applicants**. These communications can include the **offer to have the search committee chair speak with potential applicants on the phone or over Zoom**.

Part 4: Assessment

Two key components help ensure the efficient and effective assessment of job applicants:

1. a clear and consistent **assessment rubric** (i.e., the criteria by which committees and other decision makers evaluate applicants' qualifications and potential), and

2. a clear and consistent **assessment plan** (i.e., the process by which committees evaluate applicants, make selections at each stage of evaluation, and ultimately make recommendations to the voting faculty and/or to leadership with hiring authority).

Moreover, in addition to ensuring efficiency and effectiveness, **assessment rubrics and assessment plans assist in mitigating the impact of personal and collective biases**.

4.1 Bias and the Assessment Process

Research confirms that bias can enter the assessment process at multiple points and in multiple forms. Follow best practices to minimize the effects of specific manifestations of bias in the hiring process:

Early Bird Bias and/or Recency Bias. Beware of over-valuing applications that arrive early or late in the process, or simply giving them more attention.

- **Best practice: Avoid reviewing any applications until the priority deadline**, and organize applications by some method other than order of arrival.

Moving Target Syndrome. Beware of changing the requirements for the position as the search proceeds in order to include or exclude particular applicants. And beware of being distracted by interesting or impressive applicants whose qualifications fall outside the advertised position.

- **Best practice: Establish evaluation criteria while writing the job ad and commit to using the assessment rubric at every stage of evaluation.** It may be helpful to designate a point during the process to evaluate the usefulness of the assessment criteria and the consistency of their application. How well are the criteria and the process working?

Known Quantity Bias. Internal applicants—current students, recent graduates, post-docs, visiting scholars, instructors, etc.—can be both disadvantaged and advantaged during the hiring process.

- **Best practice:** It is important to **openly discuss** the challenge of maintaining **fairness, collegiality,** and **confidentiality** when internal applicants or other well-known applicants are part of the pool. It is also important to openly discuss how the committee and the hiring unit will define and manage potential **conflicts of interest**. When should members disclose professional and personal relationships with applicants? And under what conditions should members recuse themselves from making evaluations?

- **Best practice:** Assign a point person—someone with authority who is not on the hiring committee—as a **communication contact** for internal applicants. If internal applicants proceed to the interview stage, schedule them early in the process to avoid the appearance that they have an inside advantage.

Resources for defining and managing **potential conflicts of interest** and **potential bias or perception of bias** based in professional or personal relationships are available in the Toolkit.

Implicit Bias. All of us are affected by unconscious bias, the stereotypes and preconceptions about various social groups stored in our brains that can influence our behavior toward members of those groups, both positively and negatively, without our conscious knowledge.

One well-documented example is our tendency to feel more comfortable with those we perceive as similar to ourselves (so-called **in-group favoritism**). And numerous studies show that in situations of evaluation, members of dominant groups are typically rated more highly than others, even when credentials are identical. This occurs regardless of the evaluator's gender or racial background. **"Positive bias" often manifests as favoritism and giving some applicants both more attention and the benefit of the doubt. "Negative bias" often manifests not as overt hostility but rather as a kind of neglect—as an absence of attention or lack of careful consideration.** Without thinking, we often ignore the less familiar.

It is therefore crucial to consider the potential impact that implicit bias may have on the evaluation process.

In addition to familiar "demographic" factors that can trigger implicit bias—such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, national origin, and so forth—**academia has its own set of factors that can trigger implicit bias**.

"Academic" or "professional" factors that can trigger implicit bias **against** particular applicants, whether or not they meet advertised selection criteria, include:

- Non-traditional career paths.
- Non-traditional research interests or methodologies.
- Degrees from institutions considered less historically prestigious.
- Prior work experience at institutions considered less historically prestigious.
- Do not appear to "fit" the unit's historical or current profile (e.g., in terms of gender, age, background, interests, commitments, and so forth).

"Academic" or "professional" factors that can trigger implicit bias **in favor** of particular applicants, whether or not they meet advertised selection criteria, include:

- Traditional career paths.

- Traditional research interests and methodologies.
- Degrees from institutions considered historically prestigious.
- Prior work experience at institutions considered historically prestigious.
- Appear to "fit" the unit's historical or current profile (e.g., in terms of gender, age, background, interests, commitments, and so forth). This is sometimes referred to as **"cloning"**—replicating the historical or current unit profile in new hires.

Implicit bias is **more likely to affect our decision making when we are tired, in a hurry, feeling overworked or distracted, or uncertain of exactly what we should do**—in other words, under the conditions we often face while serving on search committees. And research shows that **bias can be contagious**; we are more likely to feel, express, or enact bias after witnessing it in others.

Attention to implicit bias can help committees to **acknowledge the value of applicants who are less obviously similar to historical or current colleagues**, and thus to consider their positive contributions to the unit and its future. Attention to implicit bias can also encourage committees to **openly discuss how members define concepts like "merit," "quality," "excellence," and "potential."** Do committee members assume these and related concepts have singular definitions? And do members think definitions for these concepts should be fixed and unchanging?

Resources and case studies about implicit bias are available in the Toolkit.

4.2 Creating and Implementing an Assessment Rubric

One of our best tools for mitigating potential bias in the hiring process is to establish evaluation criteria before the committee begins reviewing applications—ideally, before or while the committee drafts the job advertisement. An assessment rubric ensures that **all applicants are subject to the same evaluation criteria**, and that **members of search committees apply selection criteria consistently**.

If possible, the entire unit should participate in the creation of an assessment rubric to ensure that the unit's values are reflected in the evaluation criteria. **Minimally, the search committee should be assisted by unit leadership.**

An assessment rubric also helps the committee and the unit **clearly weigh its selection criteria against unit priorities**—including the unit's commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion. For a particular search, which areas of assessment are considered "must haves" or "deal breakers"?

Some questions to consider:

- What are the goals for this hire in terms of research, teaching, service, and outreach?

- **How is the unit's DEI mission a potential factor in each goal?**

- How does the unit weight the various goals for the hire in terms of first and second priorities?

- What types of evidence will demonstrate achievement or future potential in each area?
- Does the job ad request materials appropriate to the assessment criteria?

And a caution about DEI assessment criteria:

- Be careful not to use DEI assessment criteria as a **proxy** for rating applicants' identities, based either on their self-disclosures in application materials or on the committee's assumptions. Assessment criteria should focus on applicants' knowledge, experience, and exertise, as well as on their potential for future contributions, not on demographic markers.
- A specific example is assessment criteria that specifies evaluating an applicant's ability or potential to serve as a "role model" for students from underrepresented backgrounds. What kinds of evidence in applicants' submitted materials or in candidates' responses to interview questions will the committee actually assess?

Committees should consider **how many distinct criteria** will be used in their assessment. Between 5 and 8 is a manageable range. They should also consider **whether a single rubric will be adequate**, or whether it will be useful to devise **multiple rubrics** for the multiple stages of a complex search. Some committees, for instance, find it useful to "scaffold" their rubrics so that they use 2-3 criteria in the first round of assessment then add additional criteria in subsequent rounds.

And committees should consider **what kind of scale** to employ. Interfolio uses a "star" rating system; evaluators can assign between 1 and 5 "stars" for each criterion. Committees can also devise their own rating systems outside Interfolio.

Some typical scales include:

- A simple choice of "Evidence," "No Evidence," and "Unknown" or "High," "Medium," and "Low" rankings (e.g., using only the first three "stars" in Interfolio). A simple choice may ensure greater consistency in how diverse committee members employ the scale.
- A more elaborate choice of "Excellent," "Good," "Fair," "Deficient," and "No Evidence" or similar rankings (e.g., using all five "stars" in Interfolio). Finer distinctions may require "norming" exercises to ensure diverse committee members employ the scale in similar ways.

A range of sample assessment rubrics are available in the Toolkit.

Open Rank Searches

If the unit is running an "open rank" search (i.e., "assistant or associate," "associate or full," or open to all ranks), the committee should consider creating **more than one assessment rubric**, since different kinds and different levels of achievement may be expected from applicants at different stages of their careers (e.g., in terms of research productivity, range of teaching, amount of student advising, leadership in diversity efforts, outreach activities, or national service).

Using the Assessment Rubric as a Tool for Discussion

Committees may be tempted to use the assessment rubric similarly to how they would use a rubric designed for grading coursework or reviewing grant proposals: to rank applications based on total scores. **It is important to stress, however, that the assessment rubric is a tool to help maintain consistency and fairness in the evaluation process**, that is, **to minimize bias** either in favor of or against particular applicants. The rubric is not a substitute for active committee deliberations.

Committee members should come to meetings prepared to discuss the relative merits of specific applicants, and **the review process should allow committee members opportunities to discuss any applicants they find have merit, regardless of assigned scores or combined rankings**.

4.3 Creating and Implementing an Assessment Plan

Before any applications are reviewed, the committee should have agreed upon an explicit plan for how it will conduct its business in a fair and consistent manner. **Some questions to ask:**

- When will the committee begin reading and assessing applications? As applications come in? Or after the priority deadline?

- Given the anticipated size of the applicant pool, how many rounds or stages of assessment are likely to be needed? And will a single assessment rubric be appropriate, or will multiple rubrics be needed?

- Should all committee members read and assess the same materials at the same stage of the search process?

- How will committee members define and then handle **potential conflicts of interest** or **potential bias or perception of bias**, such as a prior relationship with an applicant or with an applicant's adviser? This issue can be especially challenging if the pool includes internal applicants.

- By what process will the committee come to a decision about its interview list? Will members vote, for example, or deliberate until they achieve consensus?

- At what point in the process will the committee review **letters of recommendation** or contact **references**? Research suggests that, although they can provide useful information, letters of recommedation often reflect their authors' indiosyncracies and biases—rather than provide an "objective" assessment.

- Will the committee conduct preliminary interviews? If so, will these be in person, over the phone, by Zoom, or by some other means?

- By what process will the committee create its short list of candidates for final interviews?
- How will the committee organize final interviews—will they be conducted in person and on campus (the conventional “campus visit”) or in a virtual environment?
- By what process will the committee make its final assessments and recommendations?
- How will the committee communicate with candidates and with the larger unit at each stage of the process?

In sum, it is important to consider:

- At which stage(s) of the assessment process will you apply the assessment rubric or rubrics?
- How will you ensure that agreed upon criteria are applied consistently for all applicants at all appropriate stages of the assessment process?
- How will you work to minimize the potential impact of implicit bias?

4.4 Preliminary Interviews

In many fields it is standard practice to conduct preliminary interviews with a “long” short list—perhaps 8 to 10, or as many as 15 candidates—before determining which 2 to 4 to schedule for final interviews. Preliminary interviews are an efficient way for committees to consider a range of interesting candidates. **To help make preliminary interviews consistent, fair, and effective:**

- Avoid offering “courtesy” interviews to applicants who do not meet stated criteria, including internal applicants.
- Conduct all interviews in the **same format** and under **similar conditions**—whether in person, over the phone, or on Zoom—including interviews with internal candidates.
- Have the **same committee members** present for all interviews, and ask the **same set of standard questions**, in the same order.
- **Ask questions about potential contributions to the unit’s diversity, equity, and inclusion mission of every candidate.**
- Make sure all interview questions comply with federal and state hiring laws and university policies. **Some questions are always off limits.** A “Chart for Fair and Unfair Pre-employment Inquiries”—which covers everything from asking questions about age to asking questions about disability, marital status, national origin, race, and sexual orientation—is available under the heading "Guidelines for pre-employment inquiries" on the EOAA website, now part of UW HR (hr.uw.edu/eoaa).

A link to the chart of “fair” and “unfair” inquiries, sample interview questions that highlight issues of diversity and inclusion, and a guide to interviewing candidates with disabilities are available in the Toolkit.

4.5 Final Interviews

The set of final interview activities—whether conducted in person on campus or in a virtual environment—is a component of the **assessment process** but it is also the beginning of the **recruitment process**. These activities should involve not only the search committee but also the unit, the college or school, and campus and community allies.

Organizing the Final Interview

Final interview activities—again, whether conducted on campus or virtually—allow candidates to showcase their professional qualities. They are also **opportunities for the unit to make finalists feel welcomed and to help finalists imagine themselves as part of a new community**.

It is important to clearly distinguish which components of the final interview are part of the search committee’s and the unit’s assessment process. **Assessment components** typically include some form of job talk, research seminar or presentation, and/or teaching demonstration; meetings with the chair or director, other unit leaders, and graduate students; meetings with relevant unit committees, such as a curriculum committee or a diversity committee; and a meeting with the appropriate dean or chancellor.

- Provide finalists with a detailed itinerary of all assessment activities, as far in advance as possible. To ensure equitable treatment, **itineraries for all finalists should be identical in terms of assessment activities**, including itineraries for internal candidates. For example, if one finalist is scheduled to meet with a curriculum or diversity committee as part of their assessment, all finalists should be scheduled to meet with the same curriculum or diversity committee.

The unit’s **recruitment activities** can take many forms during a final interview.

- Units may want to introduce finalists to relevant faculty, staff, students, and administrators within and outside the unit with whom they might share research, teaching, service, and/or outreach interests. How can the unit help finalists imagine local **professional networks**?

- Units may want to ask finalists if they would like to visit relevant research centers, facilities, or other campus resources, and/or to meet with specific individuals. It is best to create a list of resources finalists can review before the final interview. A sample list of **campus resources** is available in the Toolkit.

- Time permitting, units may want to ask finalists if they would like to meet with relevant **community partners** and resources.

- Units may want to provide venues for finalists to ask questions they might not feel comfortable asking members of the hiring unit (e.g., about atypical resources for their research, or about partner accommodations, family or medical leave, disability accommodations, resources for childcare or eldercare, unit or campus climate for people from underrepresented backgrounds, and so forth).

- Units may want to introduce finalists to relevant **campus resources for their success**, such as Teaching@UW or The Whole U.

It is important to maintain clear and open **communication** with finalists before, during, and after the final interview, and it is important to be honest about the unit's **expectations** for teaching, research, and service, as well as about issues of funding, space, or other resources.

Taking a "Tiered" Approach to Final Interviews

One advantage of **conducting final interviews virtually**, rather than in person on campus, is that units can **interview a larger number of finalists in an efficient and cost-effective way**.

In **one potential version**: The unit invites a first "tier" of, say, 6 candidates for one hour of interview activities each (an initial commitment of 6 hours) and selects 4 of these to advance to the second "tier." Next, the unit invites the 4 selected candidates for an additional 2 hours of interview activities each (an additional commitment of 8 hours) and selects 2 of these to advance to a third "tier." Finally, the unit invites the 2 selected candidates to an additional 1 – 2 hours of interview activities each (an additional commitment of 2 – 4 hours) and makes its final selections. **In roughly the same amount of time** as hosting a single candidate on campus, the unit has considered 6.

If appropriate funding streams are available (e.g., discretionary gift budgets), the unit may choose to fund **"recruitment visits"** for the selected finalist(s) while they make their decision to accept the unit's offer.

Final Interviews and Internal Candidates

If the list of finalists includes internal candidates, it is important to:

- Insure that the itineraries for their assessment activities—whether on campus or virtual—are identical to those of external candidates.

- Inform internal candidates about all aspects of the final interview process, and be intentional about maintaining fairness, collegiality, and confidentiality.

- Encourage internal candidates not to attend assessment activities, such as job talks, teaching demonstrations, interviews, or hiring meetings, involving the other finalists.

A best practice is to **interview internal candidates first** in order to avoid any potential perception that internal candidates have an advantage from having seen firsthand or gathered information about the other candidates' final interviews.

Part 5: Recruitment

Just as it is important to plan for outreach and assessment, it is important to plan for final selection, negotiation, and recruitment.

5.1 Outlining a Recruitment Strategy

Unlike creating strategies for other stages of a faculty search, units likely will be unable to create a recruitment strategy until near the end of the process. **Some issues to consider:**

- How many viable candidates do you have?
- Do you have a clear rank order for the top candidates?
- If none of your top-ranked candidates accepts an offer, do you have additional candidates you would like to interview?
- If none of your top-ranked candidates accepts an offer, will it be best to fail the search and run it again?
- Given the specific field or subfield of the search, and given what you know about your top candidates, what issues do you anticipate might arise during negotiations?

5.2 Making an Offer

Typically, it is the responsibility of unit leadership to negotiate an offer of employment, after receiving approval from the appropriate dean or chancellor. **Candidates should not be informed they will receive an offer of employment until after this approval has been granted.** The terms of an offer vary considerably by field and by rank, but usually include salary, benefits, and some kind of start-up package. In many fields, assistant professor hires often also include a guaranteed course reduction before the review for tenure. Offers should also spell out in detail the unit's expectations in terms of research, teaching, and service.

Additional issues to consider:

- To ensure equity, the salary and rank of the proposed position should be no less for a candidate who is female and/or from an underrepresented background than they would be for a white male candidate.
- Notify unsuccessful candidates only after an offer has been accepted, but prior to public announcements of the appointment.

- Although one should not directly ask a finalist about the need for partner accommodation or visa sponsorship, it is appropriate to ask if there are additional factors that would influence their decision to accept a position at UW.

- If partner accommodation is a concern, unit leadership should consult with the appropriate dean or chancellor about possibilities for employment within the unit, college or school, or university (e.g., tenure-track, teaching-track, or other instructional positions on a permanent or temporary basis, or various staff positions). The unit should also introduce the candidate to the **Northwest Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (NW HERC)** and its online regional job board. Information about NW HERC is available on the OFA website and in the Toolkit.

- The college/school, campus, or university may be able to offer recruitment incentives beyond the unit's standard compensation package. In addition to partner accommodation, such incentives might include relocation funds, reduced teaching expectations, professional development funds, start-up funds, summer salary, and/or research support.

- The Office for Faculty Advancement administers the Provost's **Faculty Recruitment Initiative (FRI)**, which can provide supplemental funds to be used to leverage unit and dean's resources when hiring faculty whose research, teaching, service, and/or outreach activities will contribute to the unit's diversity mission. Details are available on the OFA website.

- The Office of Research (OR) administers the **DEI STEM Faculty Recruitment Initiative**, which can provide partial start-up funds when hiring faculty in STEM fields with a proven history of supporting and mentoring BIPOC students, post-docs, and/or early-career colleagues; conducting research that benefits underrepresented or underserved communities; and/or significantly participating in programs and activities that are aimed at increasing diversity and inclusion in their field. Details are available on the OFA and OR websites.

February 2016; revised August 2017, August 2018, August 2021, January 2024

Part 6: Retention

Once a finalist has been selected and approved, it becomes the responsibility of the entire unit as well as the relevant college, school, or campus—administrators, faculty, and staff alike—to create a welcoming atmosphere to facilitate the new colleague's transition to professional life at the University of Washington.

It is helpful to develop **a clear plan for bringing new colleagues into the unit, college, school, or campus and the university community** and for making sure they have **access to resources** that will promote success in research, teaching, service, and work-life balance. **What will it take for your new colleagues to thrive at UW?** And who will be most useful as resources, mentors, or allies?

6.1 After the Search

As you develop a plan for welcoming and supporting new colleagues, **some things to keep in mind**:

- Most of us are easily overwhelmed by too much information given all at once. Think about how to **prioritize information** and how to **distribute an orientation** to the unit and to the university across the first quarter or even the first year.

- Be careful not to immediately **overburden** faculty from underrepresented backgrounds, including women, with additional "diversity" demands or expectations (e.g., multiple committee assignments or multiple advisees, multiple peer or student mentees, or a major overhaul of the curriculum).

- At the same time, be careful not to **overprotect** new colleagues from service or outreach opportunities they seek out or that will be essential to their professional and personal success, since overprotection can lead to isolation.

- The key is to help new colleagues find **balance** among research, teaching, and service obligations and opportunities, on the one hand, and, on the other, to maintain **open communication** about the unit's expectations and reward structures. It is also imperative that new colleagues have a high level of control over decision-making about how they will deploy their time.

It is thus important to ask: **How can the search committee, unit leadership, dean or chancellor, and others assist new colleagues in developing strong support networks that are relevant and useful?**

6.2 Mentoring

Although there is considerable agreement that the success of new faculty depends in part on the effectiveness of the mentoring they receive from colleagues, there is a wide range of opinion about which forms of individualized mentoring and/or mentoring communities are most effective. **A few things to consider:**

- Mentoring can be both formal and informal, and it should extend beyond the minimum effort of informing faculty about the requirements for achieving tenure and promotion.

- Many faculty express a desire for help with short- and long-range professional development planning and with time management, as well as for open conversation about work-life balance, rather than for mentoring focused exclusively on their research and teaching.

- Faculty benefit from having access to a “team” of mentors: from within and outside their home units, from multiple faculty ranks (including peer mentors), and from across the faculty/staff divide. Rather than assigning a single mentor and hoping for the best, consider what kind of “team” might be formed to help meet multiple needs and goals.

- Faculty benefit from having access to different kinds of mentors at different stages of their careers.

- Faculty benefit from having access to mentors who can help them articulate their own definitions of success in the academy, rather than (only) mentors who can provide examples of what has worked for others in the past.

In addition to local mentoring resources, the University of Washington has an institutional membership with the **National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD)**. This membership allows all UW faculty, post-docs, and graduate students to access NCFDD resources that are designed to offer online mentoring and to promote professional development and work-life balance through a variety of online resources.

Information about NCFDD and additional mentoring resources are available in the Toolkit.

6.3 Climate

Ultimately, the best retention tool is a vibrant and welcoming university community where all faculty feel they can thrive and make meaningful contributions in research, teaching, service, and outreach. Of course, **climate is also an important issue during outreach and recruitment**, since potential applicants may inquire about the unit’s and the university’s climate before they consider applying, and since finalists will try to gauge climate during interview activities and campus visits.

If your unit has not already done so, consider gathering information from current faculty on issues related to climate through individual conversations, focus groups or surveys, discussion with unit leadership, and exit interviews with faculty who are departing the University of Washington for other opportunities.

Some issues that can **negatively affect climate**:

- Unintentional bias experienced in formal and informal faculty interactions.
- Undervaluing research, teaching, service, or outreach focused on diversity, equity, access, and inclusion.
- Experiences of professional isolation and/or feeling invisible within the unit.
- Experiences of feeling overburdened with “diversity” work.
- Lack of transparency in key unit operations, such as teaching and service assignments, merit review, promotion and tenure guidelines, and salary adjustments.
- Lack of transparency in other unit operations, such as access to travel or research support, fiscal reimbursement processes, and so forth.
- Lack of organized, formal support and sharing of information for faculty preparing for tenure or promotion review.
- Lack of open support for ongoing professional development or for collaboration in research or teaching.
- Lack of open support for faculty experiencing microaggressions in the unit, in the classroom, or on campus.
- Lack of open discussion about support available for faculty experiencing stress, health issues, or difficulties in their work or personal lives.

Some issues that can **positively affect climate**:

- Informal social networks organized for faculty by unit leadership.
- Active appreciation of faculty by unit leadership in both formal and informal settings.
- Positively valuing research, teaching, service, and outreach focused on diversity, equity, access, and inclusion as related to the specific discipline.
- Transparent rotation of committee memberships and other kinds of service.
- Transparent guidelines for merit review, tenure, and promotion.
- Annual reviews constructed as opportunities for mentoring and coaching.
- Regular and open discussion about resources available to faculty.

- Regular and open discussion about important issues within the unit, including those related to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion.

- A clear articulation of commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in every aspect of the department, school, or program.

Resources for conducting a faculty climate survey are available in the Toolkit.