

3 Ground Rules for Diversity-Competent Searches

These ground rules should be discussed and agreed-upon before a search begins.

Ground Rule #1

Counter Diversity Resistance

The first ground rule is to consider the possibility that you or other committee members feel resistant to diversity initiatives and, accordingly, resistant to one of the committee's primary purposes.

Ground Rule #2

Speak Up About Bias

The second ground rule is to speak up about observed bias during the search process.

Ground Rule #3

Take Sufficient Time

The third ground rule is to devote sufficient time to recognize, voice, and respond to bias and stereotyping.

10 Guidelines for Diversity-Competent Searches

Diversity-competent searches require following guidelines in ten key areas.

1 Diversify the Search Committee

Studies suggest that candidates from underrepresented groups are more likely to be hired if the search committee is diverse and all its members have a demonstrable understanding of issues surrounding underrepresented and marginalized groups. A diverse and informed committee will be more equipped to conduct thorough and less biased reviews, ultimately leading to the hire of the best candidate for the job.

2 Reach a Collective Understanding

Reach a collective understanding of the term “diversity,” and the specific diversity goals of the search. To ensure the committee’s practices align with diversity-related considerations, members should familiarize themselves with their institution's strategic diversity plan and any other parameters and goals for the search—and be able to articulate their understanding of the goals.

3 Connect Diversity to the Educational Mission

Everyone on a faculty search committee must be able to speak confidently and comfortably about the connection between diversity and the goals of higher education. They must be able to answer the question: “Why do we need to grow diversity?”

4 Articulate and Rank Search Criteria

Research shows that failure to establish and rank criteria in advance tends to shift or weight the criteria to the disadvantage of minority-group candidates and in favor of majority-group candidates with familiar backgrounds. Examine criteria for any tendency to exclude women, candidates of color, or other components of diversity. In those cases, the committee should determine whether such criteria should be less rigid, ranked lower, or waived.

5 Address the Solo Issue

Research tells us that a solo or near-solo candidate is at a disadvantage. Because they’re one of the only individuals within an institution who represent a particular identity group, they face increased visibility, pressure, and expectations due to stereotypes related to their identity.

6 Consider Cluster Hires

Cluster hiring helps resolve the solo issue and may increase the motivation and retention of faculty from underrepresented groups. Successful cluster hiring initiatives

- complement—rather than clash with—existing departmental hiring procedures,
- communicate the goals of cluster hiring with all involved parties,
- include long-term mechanisms of support for cluster hires, and
- do not rely on new hires to pick up the task of growing diversity for the department or institution.

7 Search in the Right Places

To attract and fully consider diverse candidates, recruiters and search committee members will not permit elitism to limit their search. Diversity-competent search committees tap into a wide array of networks and diversity job boards and publications to locate candidates. They reject the false notion that there are “just no good minority candidates out there.”

8 Fill the Pipeline

Fill the pipeline by constantly keeping an eye out for promising scholars and building relationships with them. Bring interesting scholars to campus and ensure there are adequate opportunities for meetings between committee members and candidates under consideration.

9 Hone 3 Key Interview Skills

Practice three specific skills for diversity-competent candidate interviews:

- establish rapport by searching for similarities;
- elicit details about a candidate’s experiences to reveal strengths that may not be apparent to the evaluator; and
- include tasks in the interview process that will give the search committee a more accurate, less biased picture of each candidate’s skills and strengths.

10 Address Candidate’s Concerns

Search committee members should be prepared to address the following areas of frequent concern: the institution’s and department’s commitment to diversity, childcare programs and facilities, family leave policies; same-sex health benefits, and retention and mentoring initiatives. It should be a confidential conversation initiated by a committee member and take place in a low-stakes, comfortable setting.