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8 Guidelines for Cluster Hiring

1. **Make diversity goals explicit and develop supporting strategies to achieve those goals.**

   These may include evidence-based strategies such as expanding recruitment, providing diversity training to committees, hiring more junior faculty than senior faculty, and targeting specific disciplines where diversity is more prevalent.

2. **Work to ensure early buy-in from deans and department heads.**

   Including deans early in the process ensures that new hires will be approved more quickly and will be supported once they come on board. In particular, deans should understand the potential benefits of the program for the whole institution, and the value it adds to their unit, college, or department.

3. **Engage faculty early in the process and follow their lead.**

   To be successful, the institution must have faculty who are enthusiastic about the research topics and disciplines under consideration for the cluster hiring program. If faculty are not consulted, the topics selected for clusters may not fit well with existing areas of concentration and research silos may form.

4. **Establish and articulate expectations for cluster hires from the very beginning.**

   Hires need to know up front how they will collaborate with their peers, how they will be evaluated for promotion and tenure, and what resources are available to them for support. Clearly written agreements that span all units affected are especially important for joint hires in order to protect against undue demands on their time.

5. **Give cluster hires credit for work they perform in the tenure and promotion process.**

   Doing so influences faculty career success and provides an incentive for faculty to engage in interdisciplinary collaboration. Formally rewarding faculty for their efforts related to the cluster improves retention and ensures the long-term sustainability of the cluster hiring program.

6. Establish infrastructure to support interdisciplinary collaboration.

    Promising strategies include hiring faculty in cohorts, holding regular events where informal social networking can occur, dedicating space for the cluster hires to gather and interact, and dedicating staff or a faculty member to coordinate the cluster's activities.

7. Communicate the value of the program to stakeholders across the institution.

    Cluster hiring involves short-term financial sacrifices in exchange for long-term benefits. Shifting focus away from those short-term costs and toward longer-term benefits for everyone at the institution (e.g., eliminating silos, improving the teaching and learning environment, increasing community engagement) will encourage widespread support for the program.

8. Develop a plan for sustaining the program throughout leadership changes.

    Leaders should work within existing policies to ensure the program's sustainability. Promising strategies include embedding the program in a strategic plan, placing it in an office or unit that rarely experiences leadership changes, or obtaining external funding commitments.

Adapted from ["Faculty Cluster Hiring Report for Diversity and Institutional Climate,"](#) April 2015, Urban Universities for HEALTH.