Why was the role of the Equity Representative created and why is its inclusion on faculty search committees expected?

This role was created to help ensure that each faculty search committee can count among its members an individual dedicated to supporting a diverse, fair and equitable search. Although it is expected that all faculty search committee members will consider diversity best practices in conducting their work, the Equity Representative serves as an advocate for these best practices as well as a resource to their colleagues on the committee. The inclusion of Equity Representatives on all faculty search committees is in support of the University’s commitment to identifying and implementing ways to create and support a diverse, equitable and inclusive campus community.

The Equity Representative is meant to be a senior faculty member serving on the search committee, but not the committee chair. How is “senior” defined?

In this context, a “senior” faculty member would be any individual who has reached the rank of Associate or Full Professor (or, in the case of Lecturers, the rank of Distinguished Senior Lecturer). For a tenure-eligible search, this individual should be tenured. In the case of searches for Librarian Faculty, this individual should hold a rank no lower than Senior Librarian.

How should the Equity Representative go about “identifying members of underrepresented groups”, as stated in the Faculty Search Guidelines?

The Equity Representative is encouraged to advocate for the use of best practices in Outreach and Advertising as well as the Search and Review Process to help attract qualified candidates from underrepresented groups and to support their candidacy during the committee’s deliberations. If a qualified candidate who is known to be a member of an underrepresented group (including but not limited to women, gender identities, racial and ethnic minorities, veterans, and people with disabilities) is being considered for elimination from consideration during the search process, the Equity Representative should help provide justification for their continued inclusion.

How should the Equity Representative address the role of implicit bias among the search committee members?

The Equity Representative is not expected to serve as the “bias police” on the committee. Rather, the person who fills this role should ensure that committee discussions take place about potential implicit biases and how those may impact the outcome of the search. They
should also share information and suggested strategies for minimizing bias which may be found on the Office of the Provost Resources on Unconscious Bias webpage.

*Is there an expectation that the Equity Representative will contribute to the search committee chair’s report, complete the Faculty Search Guidelines Summary form, or provide documented commentary on how best practices related to diversity were employed within the search?*

No, though Equity Representatives are welcome to do so in consultation and partnership with the Search Committee Chair as deemed appropriate.

*In what cases should Equity Representatives reach out to the Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion?*

Equity Representatives are encouraged to consult with the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (diversity@northwestern.edu), at any time during the search process. Specific scenarios could include, but are not limited to:

- Prior to the first formal meeting of the search committee
- During the formation of the candidate pool, especially if facing a lack of diverse candidates
- When faced with resistance among other committee members to employing the best practices of fair and equitable searches

*Do any of our peers utilize Equity Representatives in faculty search committees?*

Yes, the Equity/Diversity Representative role is currently utilized (or being developed) at elite institutions including Brown University and Johns Hopkins University.

*What guidance is available to Equity Representatives to give them the tools needed to help conduct a fair and equitable search?*

Equity Representatives are encouraged to utilize the resources for Faculty Search Committees available on the Office of the Provost website, as well as the research and materials dealing with the role of Unconscious Bias in the search process.