

RECRUITING AND RETAINING MINORITY AND FEMALE FACULTY SOME SUGGESTED BEST PRACTICES

*The Faculty Diversity Committee
Northwestern University
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Since it was established by the Provost in 2000, the Faculty Diversity Committee has worked with the University administration to increase the representation of women and under-represented minorities on the faculty. Reports of the Committee can be found at:
<http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/committees/diversity/reports.html>

As it has reviewed data on the representation of women and under-represented minorities at Northwestern and compared those data with information on the availability of scholars and artists in various academic areas, the Committee was impressed with the success of some academic units in adding to the diversity of our campus. At the same time, the Committee observed that in other areas success in the recruitment and retention of women and minorities has been less robust than might be desired.

To support the efforts of every academic unit to diversify our community, the Faculty Diversity Committee offers this collection of "best practices" for the recruitment and retention of a truly diverse faculty. Of course these are not necessarily best for every unit, nor are they the only good practices. They are offered as guides, applicable in many cases to all faculty hiring. The Faculty Diversity Committee hopes these suggestions will assist schools and departments in recruiting and retaining a genuinely diverse faculty.

RECRUITING

- ***Be proactive:*** Effective searches are proactive searches in which the search committee energetically seeks out promising prospects. Especially in fields in which they are in great demand, excellent female and minority scholars can be confident of good employment and are not likely to be "marketing" themselves energetically. Northwestern needs to identify such scholars and persuade them to allow themselves to be considered here.
- ***Cultivate promising prospective colleagues:*** Effective recruitment is often a multi-year process. Try to identify outstanding graduate students in the midst of their graduate study - not only when they are "on the market." This can be accomplished through contact with colleagues at other institutions, participation in targeted conferences, and visits to sister schools for seminars. In some fields there are organizations and conferences that specifically serve women and minorities, and it can be useful for our faculty to participate in them. Invite such graduate students to visit Northwestern periodically, to attend conferences, etc.

- **Cast a broad net:** Highly qualified scholars can occasionally be found in unexpected places. Do not limit your search to a parochial list of institutions. Advertise or otherwise announce openings in publications or other venues which might attract the special attention of minority or female scholars.
- **Consult directories of minority and/or female recipients of terminal degrees:** Various such directories are published, including those by the CIC (Committee on Institutional Cooperation) and by scholarly organizations in many disciplines.
- **Consider Northwestern graduates who have established themselves elsewhere:** Northwestern does not customarily hire its own PhDs immediately following their graduate study. Departments should consider inviting back to the University female and minority graduates (including undergraduate alumni) who have established themselves at other institutions. A list of minority graduate alumni is available from the Office of Minority Affairs in The Graduate School.
- **Contact colleagues who have departed Northwestern:** Former Northwestern colleagues, now serving other institutions, can be a resource for suggestions of outstanding female and minority graduate students and scholars who should be considered. In some cases, the former colleague may be willing to consider returning to Northwestern.
- **Be flexible and opportunistic:** Define and advertise searches broadly enough so that outstanding female and minority prospects can be fully considered, even though they may not be in the precise sub-discipline envisioned in the search.
- **Consider post-doctoral or visiting positions as a transition to continuing appointment:** The offer of an initial year in a non-tenure-track post-doctoral position with reduced teaching expectations may be very attractive to a junior scholar who has completed graduate study with unusual speed. For established scholars, a period as a visiting faculty member at Northwestern may give him/her an opportunity to discover whether Northwestern offers a congenial environment.
- **Ensure that on visits prospects meet with female/minority faculty in cognate departments:** In accepting a position, a faculty member is making a decision based partly on a judgment as to whether (s)he will feel part of a congenial community of scholars. Especially when a potential colleague is recruited into a department thinly populated by women or under-represented minorities, it is important to introduce the prospect to faculty members beyond the hiring department.

- **Capitalize on Northwestern's comparative advantages:** Among the distinctive characteristics of Northwestern are its tradition of interdisciplinary work, its collaborative culture, and its location in and at the edge of a major metropolitan area that provides a truly diverse context in which to live and work. The latter characteristic may be especially attractive for a prospect coming from an institution located in a remote or rural setting.
- **Enlist the assistance of the administration when necessary:** The hiring of female and minority faculty is a core responsibility of schools and departments; and in most cases such hiring can take place in the context of available slots, etc. Occasionally, however, such hiring requires creative approaches. Insofar as possible, the central administration will assist in school and departmental efforts to enhance the diversity of the faculty.

RETAINING

- **Accept responsibility for welcoming new colleagues:** Faculty members face multiple personal and professional demands on their time. Reaching out to a new colleague may not immediately be seen as a high priority. Through the time-consuming search process and otherwise, many people have made a significant investment in bring the new colleague to Northwestern. That colleague's commitment to Northwestern and the department may well be shaped by the warmth of the greeting and the support provided in the early career period.
- **Mentor the junior colleague:** The importance to a junior faculty member of *effective* mentoring cannot be exaggerated. Effective mentoring includes, on the one hand, an understanding of the colleague's ambitions and, on the other hand, a clear articulation of the University's expectations and suggestions as to how those expectations can be met. An effective mentor is encouraging, while also providing the junior colleague with a realistic assessment of his/her progress.
- **Assist new colleagues in networking:** Networking is important to both professional development and gaining professional recognition. Especially when they are joining departments in which women and/or minorities are poorly represented, new colleagues may feel isolated. Helping those colleagues meet faculty members in other departments (and at other institutions) may contribute significantly to their feeling of comfort and their professional development.
- **Protect junior colleagues from unreasonable impositions on their time:** Especially when they join departments where they are under-represented, women and minorities may be especially sought for service on search or other departmental or school committees. While valuable for the department, such activity can distract the junior colleague from the important work required for tenure. Junior faculty should be insulated from requests to perform extraordinary institutional service. The mentoring process should include guidance on when, and how, to decline invitations to serve.