Faculty Search Committees

The excellence of our faculty is critical to Northwestern University’s position as a leading research and teaching university. The University appoints the strongest possible candidates to its faculty, individuals who show outstanding potential or accomplishment in scholarship and meet similarly high standards in their teaching. We are committed to increasing the diversity of our faculty—success in this requires concerted, well-planned action on the part of search committees, department chairs, deans, and the institution at large. Northwestern University is committed to identifying and implementing ways to create and support a diverse and inclusive campus community. The institution strives to create an environment that fosters personal and intellectual growth by attracting to the University exemplary teachers and scholars with a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. Toward this end, it is essential and expected that a thorough search in accordance with the following Faculty Search Guidelines (“Guidelines”) will be conducted when filling any full-time faculty position, as defined below. Such a search includes not only widespread publicizing of the position but also outreach to individuals who have not formally applied for the position. The Guidelines are prepared to assist deans, department chairs, and search committee chairs in carrying out searches for qualified candidates.

Insert Diversity statement from MOS and JH

In addition to providing information on faculty hiring procedures, these resources are designed to assist committees in conducting searches that are both effective and inclusive. Search committees should also contact their school dean’s office for school-specific policies and resources related to faculty hiring.

It is essential and expected that search committees conduct faculty searches in accordance with these Faculty Search Guidelines when filling any full-time faculty position. “Full-time faculty” includes all tenure-line faculty, clinical faculty, instructional faculty, librarian faculty, lecturers, and faculty-in-residence, if the faculty member’s appointment is for two academic years or longer.

PREPARING FOR A SEARCH

PRE-SEARCH APPROVAL

See the Faculty Search Guidelines for further information on how to obtain pre-search approval:

• Submit the search committee’s search plan, the proposed position announcement, and the composition of the search committee (including equity representative) online through the eRecruit module in Northwestern’s MyHR system. Once these items are approved according to the school’s hiring plan, the Faculty Recruiting System (FRS) is available to facilitate the collection and review of applicant materials.
• A comprehensive set of tutorials and guides for the eRecruit module and the Faculty Recruiting System is available at http://www.it.northwestern.edu/about/it-projects/faculty-recruiting/index.html.
• The pre-search documentation requires the approval of the department chair (or the chair’s proxy) and the office of the dean before being approved by the Office of the Provost.

FORMING THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

• Broaden search committee composition in academic perspectives, field expertise, and demographic make-up.
• Bring in members of other departments or schools if necessary to serve as a voting member of the committee, especially if the small number of women or underrepresented minority faculty within a department or school precludes their inclusion on the search committee. Such arrangements also make Northwestern’s interdisciplinary strengths a more consistent factor in recruiting.

• Make an effort to appoint members with demonstrated commitments to diversity.

EQUITY REPRESENTATIVES

• The Equity Representative should be a senior faculty member serving on the search committee, but not as committee chair. The role of the Equity Representative is to ensure that best practices are followed during the search and that an active and equitable search process is carried out, by:
  
  o taking an active role in identifying members of underrepresented groups, including women and racial and ethnic minorities, who qualify for the position.
  o serving as an advocate for candidates in the applicant pool who are from underrepresented groups and may be considered for elimination during the search.
  o assisting the search committee chair in creating a short list of ideal candidates and help provide justification when members of underrepresented groups are not included.
  o helping to ensure objectivity throughout all phases of the search and addressing the role of implicit biases with other search committee members. This person should share information and resources related to unconscious bias, including suggested strategies for minimizing bias and links to relevant studies, which may be found on the Resources on Unconscious Bias webpage.

• Equity Representatives are encouraged to consult with the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion (diversity@northwestern.edu) prior to the first formal meeting of the search committee and at any time during the search process. See also the list of FAQs about the Equity Representative role.

DEFINING THE POSITION

• Define the position in broad terms, listing several alternative topics and approaches and a range of courses to be taught.

• Searches are opportunities to move in scholarly directions that reflect the future of the field rather than simply replace a departing colleague.

Outreach and Advertising

The creation of a broad and diverse pool of prospects is an essential first step in the faculty recruitment process. Effective searches are proactive searches in which the committee energetically seeks out promising prospects. No one should assume that every strong candidate automatically applies to Northwestern. Particularly in fields in which they are in great demand, excellent female and underrepresented minority scholars may not approach a department or school regarding a possible opening. Therefore, search committees should engage in outreach efforts that will attract applications from women, people of color, and others.

Several suggested outreach strategies are outlined in the following sections:

• **Use Personal and Professional Networks**
• **Explore Candidate Databases**
• **Advertise Broadly**
• **Be Creative**

USE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

• At professional conferences, make conscious efforts to establish relationships with women and underrepresented scholars and promising graduate students
• Invite promising graduate students to Northwestern to attend conferences and other events.
• Establish relationships with colleagues at institutions with a good record of graduating women and underrepresented minority PhD students.
• Consult with Northwestern faculty colleagues (especially female and underrepresented minority colleagues) for advice on effective outreach strategies.
• Use your networks of colleagues and scholars at other institutions. In making these contacts, committee chairs should invite suggestions of candidates who are underrepresented in the field (even those who may not be immediately available for a position).
• Use Northwestern colleagues and graduate students to market open positions. Ask them to take along copies of the job announcement when they travel to academic conferences and meetings. Encourage them to seek out candidates other than those who are most like themselves.
• Solicit the assistance of committees, caucuses, or individuals in professional societies who are working to increase the representation of underrepresented groups in your field.
• Approach women and underrepresented minority candidates even if they are believed to be unavailable.

EXPLORE CANDIDATE DATABASES

There are numerous online resources that search committees can utilize to search for PhD students and postdoctoral scholars from groups that are historically underrepresented in higher education. A non-exclusive sample of these resources is described below.

• The Big Ten Academic Alliance (BTAA) Directory of Professorial Advancement Initiative (PAI) Participants. The PAI is an NSF-funded initiative to prepare and train underrepresented minority postdoctoral scholars in STEM disciplines for transition to tenure track faculty positions within BTAA institutions. The PAI website provides a listing of PAI participants in an online, searchable database available only to BTAA faculty and administrators. The database is accessible by logging on to BTAA’s identity system, which is accessible using a Northwestern NetID and password. The BTAA also maintains a publicly-available directory of doctoral degree recipients who are members of underrepresented groups in higher education and are alumni of BTAA member institutions.

• Future Faculty Database. Supported by NSF funding, Rice University and Northeastern University established Future Faculty Workshops designed to encourage women and underrepresented minorities to consider and pursue academic careers. The searchable database contains application entries and curriculum vitae of prospective PhDs and postdoctoral scholars interested in academic careers.

• Faculty for the Future (FFF) Database. FFF is an initiative sponsored by the GE Foundation and the Women in Engineering Programs & Advocates Network (WEPAN). It is designed to increase the number of women and underrepresented minorities in engineering, related sciences, and business. University faculty and administrators can register with the site to access the database and post position openings.

• Directory of Ford Foundation Fellows. This online, searchable directory provides information on Ford Foundation Postdoctoral fellowship and Ford Foundation Predoctoral and Dissertation fellowship recipients. The database only includes recipients of fellowships administered by the National Resource Council.

• American Association of University Women (AAUW) Directory of Fellowship Recipients. AAUW is a national grassroots organization that provides fellowships and grants to support women in their professional and academic careers. The online, searchable directory lists fellowship and grant recipients since 2004.

• National Registry of Diverse & Strategic Faculty. Texas Tech University established this registry in 1985 to connect diverse candidates with tenure-track faculty positions at colleges and
universities across the country. For an annual subscription fee, higher education institutions can post open faculty positions and search a candidate database.

- National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE). NADOHE supports the efforts of diversity officers to lead higher education institutions in initiatives to promote inclusive excellence. Northwestern is an institutional member of NADOHE.

- Additionally, diversity recruiting organizations such as Minority Postdoc, Nemnet, and IMDiversity will, in exchange for a fee, post academic positions on their websites and provide access to underrepresented minority candidate vitae. Information on these and other advertisers is provided in the following section.

Advertise Broadly

- Advertise early and broadly in publications targeted to female and underrepresented minority scholars, in addition to your discipline’s standard journals.

- A list of Advertising Venues for Faculty Recruitment is provided here as a resource. Northwestern’s Office of Human Resources also maintains general and industry-specific lists of diversity recruitment resources.

- Search committees should post the approved position announcement on the department or school website, as well as through the eRecruit module in Northwestern’s MyHR system. Any position announcement submitted through MyHR will also be posted publicly on the Northwestern Careers webpage and the Greater Chicago Midwest Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (GCM-HERC) job board, and preapproved external venues.

- Search committees should ensure that their advertisements comply with federal requirements applicable to the hiring of non-U.S. citizens or permanent residents. To meet these requirements, the advertisement must (i) list the position title, minimum qualifications, and principal duties; and (ii) be published in a website or publication that is national in scope and in the print or electronic version of a professional journal. In addition, Northwestern requires search committees to advertise the position in at least one print publication WHERE IS this required? Not in the guidelines.

Be Creative

- Identify promising graduate students during their graduate study, as opposed to waiting until they are on the market. Compile a running list of promising prospects even though no position may be immediately open.

- Invite female and underrepresented scholars to deliver departmental seminars related to their work, to participate in department-sponsored symposia or to visiting professorships. A one-year professorship could strengthen the link between Northwestern and a similar department at another institution, and/or could provide an established scholar with the opportunity to consider a more permanent position at Northwestern.

- Take a long-term view of faculty hiring. For example, if a department or school anticipates multiple vacancies over several years, it might raise with the dean the possibility of conducting a “cluster” search in which several persons are recruited simultaneously, potentially enhancing the likelihood that one or more of these persons might accept an offer.

- Although Northwestern does not customarily hire its own PhDs immediately following graduate study, departments should consider inviting back promising graduates who have established themselves at other institutions. Information regarding underrepresented minority graduate alumni is available from The Graduate School’s Office of Diversity & Inclusion.

- Consider a postdoctoral position as a transition to a continuing appointment. The offer of an initial year in a non-tenure-track postdoctoral position with reduced teaching expectations may be very attractive to a junior scholar who has completed graduate study with unusual speed.

- Approach female and underrepresented minority candidates even if you think they are unavailable, perhaps due to family constraints or a partner’s employment.
Consider targeting scholars at institutions that do not offer some of the advantages that Northwestern does, such as location in a major urban area, strong interdisciplinary programs, or access to graduate students. Target prospects who might find that Northwestern offers special opportunities to have impact on their fields. Consider possibilities for joint appointments, within or across schools.

Bring to the attention of the school dean opportunities that may not have been foreseen when the search was initiated—especially when the prospective appointment would address school and institutional priorities such as the building of particular disciplines, interdisciplinary collaboration, or the hiring of women and underrepresented minorities.

**Search and Review Process**

**CAREFULLY USE EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Research shows that letters of recommendation for men are longer, use more standout adjectives and less faint praise than letters for women with similar qualifications.
- Many studies of student course evaluations reveal race, gender, and sexual orientation bias. 
  - In one, a male instructor provided the same guest lecture to eight sections, referring to his partner as Jennifer or Jason. The instructor perceived as straight received 22% more positive comments. The instructor perceived as gay received five times as many critical comments.

**SET CRITERIA, QUESTIONS, AND EVALUATION TEMPLATES**

- Create a unified criteria for evaluating candidates before beginning, how to weigh them, and how to measure quality in a given domain.

**AVOID EVALUATION BIASES**

- If possible, have at least one writing sample read by at least one committee member (or department member) for every candidate, in order to avoid overly relying on proxies for quality such as prestige of degree-granting institution or quantity of publications.
  - Relying on prestige of degree-granting institution may result in fewer African Americans and women, who attend in lower percentages.
  - Men are more likely than women, and whites than underrepresented minorities, to publish with advisors; in turn those who publish with advisors have larger publication records according to research.

**USE INCLUSION STRATEGIES FOR SELECTIONS**

- Use inclusion rather than exclusion strategies in making selections, including for further consideration those applicants the search committee deems to be qualified as opposed to excluding those it deems to be unqualified.
  - Although inclusion and exclusion strategies should theoretically yield the same results, substantial research suggests that they do not. Inclusion strategies have been shown to mitigate bias by directing evaluators' attention toward candidates' individual strengths, rather than stereotypes about underrepresented groups to which they belong; exclusion strategies have been shown to heighten a reliance on such stereotypes.

**INTERVIEWS**

- Uniform questions and review criteria. Search committee members should agree in advance on a set of questions that will be asked of each candidate during interviews, and use structured evaluation templates for evaluating interviews. See the Resources on Unconscious Bias webpage for sample templates.
Legal considerations. All interviewers should be generally familiar with the law relating to employment discrimination as it relates to interviewing. See the Legal Considerations webpage for more information.

The Interview

- Agree in advance on a set of core interview questions to ask each candidate.
- Use structured evaluation templates for reviewing applications, job talk evaluations, and on-on-one interviews.

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Evaluation of FINALISTS

- Request an unranked list of top candidates rather than ranked and discuss all rather than creating scores.
- Be prepared to defend each decision to advance or eliminate a candidate; that is, defend the quality of the applicants they recommend for hire and the fairness and equity of the review.
- Studies have shown that only requiring evaluators to defend the quality of their finalist candidate increases the likelihood that applicants from non-majority groups will be excluded from finalist consideration.  

THE CAMPUS VISIT

- Schedule consistent campus visits with equal time for each candidate to interview and meet with as many of the same faculty as possible.
- Provide work-life information to all candidates regardless of gender and do not ask questions about personal life.
- maximize the likelihood that the top candidate will accept an offer by focusing on Northwestern’s comparative advantages and the attractiveness of the Chicago area and dealing with candidates warmly, efficiently, and professionally.

- Showcase Northwestern and its environment. Capitalize on the University’s distinctive characteristics, including its tradition of interdisciplinary work, its collaborative culture, and its location in a major metropolitan area. Provide candidates with materials about the department, about the University, and about the Chicago area. Ensure that the department’s website is current and robust in content, as prospective faculty members likely will review it early in their consideration of Northwestern.
- Arrange meetings with students. Make efforts to ensure that candidates have significant contact with undergraduate majors and graduate students in the field during the campus visit. The committee and department is likely to find the students’ perspectives helpful.
- Arrange meetings with faculty in related departments. If the candidate is from a demographic group that is not well represented in the department or is in a scholarly field that is related to other disciplines, enlist the participation of faculty members in cognate fields during the campus
visit. Especially when a potential colleague is recruited into a department thinly populated by women or underrepresented minorities, it is important to introduce the candidate to faculty members beyond the hiring department.

- Assist candidates with personal concerns. The department or school should be mindful of possible concerns that candidates may have about working at Northwestern, including family leave policies, child care and school options, prospects for partner employment, the possibility of excessive work burdens, isolation, or social and cultural activities in the local community. Although prospective employers generally cannot ask about such personal matters, they can ask whether any important issues have been overlooked during the campus visit. If the candidate voices interest in child care options or partner employment prospects, the department should be in touch with the administration for assistance. Search committee members may wish to familiarize themselves with available resources for new hires, including the Faculty Work-Life and the Faculty Career Development pages on the Office of the Provost website, the Relocation Resources page on the Office of Human Resources website, and Northwestern’s Diversity & Inclusion website.

- Welcome the spouse, partner, or significant other on post-offer recruiting visits. Treat the candidate’s spouse, partner, or significant other well. Invite him or her on any post-offer recruiting visit and provide information about resources that may be of interest.

**EVALUATION OF FINALISTS**

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The Offer

Obtaining Approval for an Offer

Before an offer can be made,

(i) the school must submit a Faculty Search Guidelines Summary Report with supporting documentation to the Office of the Provost. The report requires the school to provide materials pertaining to the achievements of the proposed candidate (CV, letters of recommendation), the CV and other supporting materials for each short-listed candidate who is not receiving an offer, and specific comparison of the proposed candidate to all other short-listed candidates and the reasons why the other candidates were not chosen. For searches conducted through the Faculty Recruiting System, the first two items will autopopulate within the University’s eOffer module.

(ii) the Office of the Provost must approve the offer based on the candidate materials submitted.

Timely Offers and Notifications

- Another way to maximize the likelihood that the top candidate will accept an offer is by making the offer as soon as possible after the campus visit. A timely offer will demonstrate sincere interest and eagerness for the candidate to join the department or school.

- Any finalist not selected for a faculty position should be informed after an offer is accepted. If possible, the department or school should solicit feedback from finalists about the search process. Similarly, candidates who turn down offers to come to Northwestern should be contacted to share the reasons for their decisions, including feedback about the search process.

Documenting the Search

Northwestern’s Faculty Search Guidelines require departments and schools to assemble and maintain records of faculty searches, including pre-search approval documentation, correspondence between the department and the dean, advertisements and notices, documentation of the committee’s outreach efforts, applications and supporting materials, interview notes, follow-up correspondence and notes relating to the candidates, written evaluations of the candidate’s work, and finalist lists.

Committees should retain all such materials for at least three years, whether or not a formal offer was made. Pre-search approval documentation, the Faculty Search Guidelines Summary Report, and copies of the position announcement will be automatically archived by the MyHR system and retained according to the University’s document retention policies.

If a school hires a non-U.S. citizen or permanent resident, it will need to be able to produce documentation (photocopies or computer print-outs of actual advertisements posted, records of
interviews conducted, application materials submitted, etc.) demonstrating that the search complied
with federal law.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WISELI SEARCHING FOR EXCELLENCE GUIDE
We recommend that search chairs consult the WISELI Searching for Excellence & Diversity Guide, an
excellent guide for faculty search committees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Women in
Science & Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI).

Legal Considerations
This Legal Considerations page includes guidelines for ensuring that faculty searches comply with
applicable law and University policy.
The Office of Equal Opportunity and Access provides resources and training in equal opportunity,
diversity, and other topics relating to workplace equality.

Faculty Recruiting System
The Faculty Recruiting System (FRS) is available to facilitate the collection and review of applicant
materials. More information, and guides to using the system, can be found on the Office of the
Provost Faculty Recruiting System page.
The Faculty Recruiting System can be accessed via the following
URL: https://facultyrecruiting.northwestern.edu.

Resources on Unconscious Bias
This page includes resources on unconscious bias and strategies for addressing it, including a quick tip
sheet, as well as:

- Implicit Association Test (IAT) - A link to the Project Implicit website, with online IATs relating to
different types of unconscious bias, including racial preferences, the link between gender and
science, disability preferences, and others.
- Online videos - Links to Facebook's Managing Unconscious Bias workshop, and to a faculty
search training simulation video prepared by the University of Washington's ADVANCE
program.
- Exceptions
The Provost may approve an exception to the Guidelines in special cases, such as when a
department or school has identified without a search a truly exceptional candidate who would
greatly enhance its faculty, including by bringing additional diversity. In requesting such
approval for the appointment of someone who is not a member of an underrepresented group
(for purposes of these Guidelines, underrepresented groups include women, racial and ethnic
minorities, veterans, and people with disabilities), the department or school must provide
evidence that no underrepresented group member of comparable qualifications is available for
appointment to the position.