Inclusive Faculty Hiring: Promising Practices for Increasing Higher Education Faculty Diversity

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This paper reviews and synthesizes the extant work on promising practices in recruiting and hiring diverse college faculty in an equitable, inclusive process. First, I discuss the substantial demographic mismatch between faculty, the general working-age population, and undergraduate students. I then discuss the evidence that representational faculty diversity benefits students. I then integrate the literature on promising practices in inclusive faculty recruitment to recommend four strategies: better position advertisements, ongoing, proactive recruitment, thoughtful committee assignment and training, and a more deliberate, deliberative process. I offer multiple tactics within each strategy and urge institutions to adopt and prioritize whatever mix of these and other strategies/tactics makes the most sense for them.

Keywords: diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), faculty hiring, recruitment, human resources (HR), faculty diversity

INTRODUCTION

Most institutions of higher education (IHEs) have invested substantial financial and human capital into efforts seeking to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). They have done so with good reason. As Stewart and Valian (2018) explain, "Diversity and inclusion yield benefits that extend in many directions: embracing innovation and creativity, welcoming challenges to received wisdom or traditional knowledge, increasing the visibility of our dedication to the free pursuit of truth, inspiring students to have high aspirations and to explore new ideas, and so on" (p. 41).

Many IHEs have deployed specific efforts to diversify the faculty and create an inclusive culture in which faculty from various backgrounds can succeed and feel included, though many such efforts have been ill-conceived, incomplete, or deployed without sufficient buy-in from leadership. Many others have done little or no deliberate work toward this end. It should not be surprising that even as student bodies have become much more diverse, faculty diversity has lagged at most IHEs.

This article is offered to help faculty and higher education leaders make more and better progress on this issue. There is a very wide variety of research and data in this space. Rather than requiring leaders and would-be reformers to gather this independently, I have collected and synthesized some of the best and most useful content, and I offer a manageable set of specific recommendations. These are targeted primarily at the US higher education segment, but much of what I recommend would also work well in other countries. Any size academic unit, from department through university, should consider these recommendations as they develop their plan to create a more inclusive faculty hiring process that best positions any IHE to diversify its faculty over the long term.

I first discuss faculty demographics in the context of baselines including the broader working-age population and student demographics. I then briefly review the evidence on why faculty representation matters to students. Then, I offer specific, actionable recommendations in four key areas: position advertisements, recruiting, search committee composition, and search process.

FACULTY AND STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

In the US, at least, higher education (HE) faculty have become more demographically diverse in recent decades, but the professoriate is still not nearly diverse enough to best support the current and future student population. There are some encouraging data points, though even these areas still suggest the need for further progress. For instance, the HE faculty population is now 48.4% female (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023c). This is substantial growth relative to decades past. Yet females still have far less than their fair share of full professor titles (36.7%).

(Sex and gender are of course not the same, but research and data don't always differentiate this well. Also, some data sources and authors discuss females/males, while others discuss women/men. I try to stick to cited authors' language, even when paraphrasing. Since most women are female, and most men are male, proportions of sex and gender are surely close in any given context. Still, I regret that what follows has the effect of conflating sex and gender—not least because of the dangerous anti-trans sentiment in our current political climate. Equity and inclusion along the lines of gender identity are still areas of substantial needed growth in all areas of campus life and society more broadly.)

Further, there are still disappointingly low shares of women faculty in many science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields (Beasley & Fischer, 2012; Stockard et al., 2021), plus other fields such as economics (Buckles, 2019; Lundberg & Stearns, 2019) and finance (Adams & Lowry, 2022; Sherman & Tookes, 2022).

On some counts where we do not have good data, such as LGBTQ representation among college faculty, our profession may seem to be doing relatively better than many industries. Yet we still have far to go in creating inclusive environments generally (Eliason, 2023), in achieving diversity and inclusion in specific disciplines (Reggiani et al., 2024), and in "'queering' and 'browning' a pipeline for LGBTQ people of color in academia" (Nadal, 2019, p. 1). We still need a great deal more research on the experiences of trans faculty specifically (Reggiani et al., 2024). There is also little research in areas like the experiences of disabled faculty (Friedensen et al., 2021). However, limited research and informal experience suggest we have many years of hard work ahead in improving campus climates here.

Regarding race/ethnicity specifically, we have good data, and the data illustrate continued room for growth in faculty diversity. Among US resident faculty where race/ethnicity is known (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023c), Fall 2022 data show that nearly three-quarters of full-time faculty are non-Hispanic White. See Table 1. (All percentages refer to share of US residents where race/ethnicity is known.)

The professoriate generally, and even the population of assistant professors specifically, has proportionately fewer Hispanic/Latinx people than those earning PhDs (National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, 2022). The population of PhD earners itself has less Black representation and substantially less Hispanic representation than the working-age population, aged 25 to 64 (National Equity Atlas, 2024). This contrasts sharply with our student bodies, including undergraduate **and graduate** students, which are almost evenly split between non-Hispanic White students and students of color (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023b).

TABLE 1
RACE/ETHNICITY OF HIGHER ED. FACULTY VS. EARNED DOCTORATES, US WORKING-AGE POPULATION, AND STUDENTS

Race/Ethnicity	FT Faculty Fall 2022	Asst. Prof. 2022	2021 Earned Research Doc's	2020 US Pop'n, 25-64	2022 Higher Ed. Students
White	72.4%	67.7%	69.2%	60.7%	52.3%
Asian	12.8%	14.8%	9.8%*	6.2%	7.8%
Black	6.5%	8.3%	7.9%	12.5%	13.2%
Hispanic/Latinx	6.4%	6.7%	9.3%	17.4%	21.5%
American Indian/ Alaska Native	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.6%	0.7%
Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.2%	* (incl. w/ Asian)	0.2%	0.3%
Two/more races	1.5%	1.9%	3.5%	2.4%	4.3%

These figures show a faculty body that is not proportionate to the US working-age population. The skeptic might dismiss this as something that will naturally improve over time—and over time, some further improvement may happen without schools engaging in any interventions. But even the rank of assistant professor specifically has a race/ethnicity mix more like faculty overall than the broader working-age population. Make no mistake: individual faculty from groups with disproportionately high representation have worked hard to get where they are, but there are increasing representational gaps at each step of the pipeline from undergraduate through full professor. Suppose the academy wants to look more like the general population. In that case, each step in this process needs attention to the leaks in the pipeline that are happening at that step—and that very much includes the faculty hiring process.

FACULTY REPRESENTATION MATTERS TO STUDENTS

This issue is important because faculty jobs are prestigious and desirable, but it is even more important because it matters dearly to students. For students with marginalized identities, similarly-identified faculty "can serve as role models, mentors, advocates, or cultural translators" (Egalite et al., 2015, p. 44), and these are all powerful effects that lead to greater student success.

There is no looking past the substantial racial/ethnic mismatch between faculty and student populations. The HE student population has become substantially more racially and ethnically diverse over time for two reasons. First, young people in the US are substantially more diverse than previous generations (National Equity Atlas, n.d.). Second, young people from historically underrepresented/minoritized (URM) populations have gone to college at increasing rates—even as White enrollment has stagnated. In 2000, 38.7% of non-Hispanic White 18- to 24-year-olds were enrolled in college. In 2022, that figure was 40.7%—little net change, and a decline from the 2009 peak (45%) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023a). In contrast, young Black (30.5% to 36%) and Hispanic (21.7% to 32.8%) people have enrolled at higher and much higher rates, respectively. While small in absolute numbers, American Indian/Alaska Native 18- to 24-year-old enrollment jumped from 15.9% to 25.8%. Young Asian people's enrollment went from high to higher (55.9% to 60.8%) (Data on Pacific Islander enrollment is based on too small a sample to be reliable.).

Broader uptake of college education, combined with increasing diversity among young people generally, has dramatically affected student populations. In 2000, including both undergraduate and graduate students, just 29.2% of students were people of color. By 2022, the figure was 47.7%—from less than a third to almost half (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023b).

Representational racial/ethnic diversity among faculty has well-demonstrated benefits to students in URM populations. Multiple studies bear this out. One finds "overall graduation rates for URM students of all races/ethnicities are positively affected by increased diversity of their faculty" (Stout et al., 2018, p.

399). Yet another finds "promising evidence about the importance of the representation of racially minoritized students and faculty for promoting equity in student success" (Bowman & Denson, 2022, p. 416). Others find similar results for community college students specifically (Cross & Carman, 2022; Fairlie et al., 2014). Yet another finds that better faculty representation of minoritized groups is related to higher student GPAs, better campus racial/ethnic climates, and better graduation rates (Llamas et al., 2021). URM representation among faculty in graduate STEM programs also positively pushes URM students toward STEM faculty careers (Stockard et al., 2021).

There is also evidence that female faculty better enable the success and persistence of female students in disciplines historically dominated by males. One study on US Air Force Academy students finds:

> Although professor gender has little impact on male students, it has a powerful effect on female students' performance in math and science classes, and high-performing female students' likelihood of taking future math and science courses, and graduating with a STEM degree. The estimates are largest for students whose SAT math scores are in the top 5% of the national distribution. The gender gap in course grades and STEM majors is eradicated when high-performing female students are assigned to female professors in mandatory introductory math and science coursework. (Carrell et al., 2010, p. 1101)

A later study found these students more likely to enter STEM careers and more likely to earn a STEM master's degree (Mansour et al., 2022).

There is little to no good research on the effects of faculty representation for other kinds of student identities. Yet common sense and informal experience suggest similarly strong benefits to having faculty with matching or similar identities. As with minoritized racial and ethnic identities, students with LGBTQ identities also crave "mentorship and support from 'someone like me' or, at a minimum, someone who [understands] issues facing the LGBTQ community" (Linley et al., 2016, p. 58). There is too little work about student/faculty matching in LGBTQ communities generally, and I could find nothing specifically about the effect of trans faculty on trans student success—a distinct set of problems from those experienced by cisgender gay, lesbian, and bisexual students. The same is true of other kinds of marginalized faculty and student populations, including disabled people and veteran/military populations. On all these counts, informal experience shows that representation also matters here, but there is not good research. For these communities, researchers are hamstrung by the lack of uniform, universal data collection as happens with sex and race/ethnicity.

Despite the variety in depth and quality of research across aspects of identity, there is plenty of evidence to proceed. However, even if this evidence did not exist, we would have several reasons to do this work. First, even if there is no relationship with student experience and outcomes, faculty jobs are desirable and prestigious, so equity is a worthy goal regardless. Second, the practices of inclusive faculty hiring laid out below will help create a better process for virtually all candidates. This will make IHEs more competitive for the best faculty candidates. Finally, by learning about and enacting inclusive hiring practices, we can better train our students to do the same when they become professionals. This effect is strongest for those who teach in programs where hiring practices are explicitly in the curriculum, but at least some students from nearly all disciplines will themselves someday be tasked with hiring new colleagues, and implicit learning from faculty is more pervasive than we realize.

In the following sections, I offer several evidence-backed practices. While each strategy and the tactics should in principle work for nearly all IHEs, institutions should think carefully when deciding which practices to implement and which to prioritize. Griffin et al. (2020) warn about "the danger of reaching for promising practices before identifying the root problems" (p. 2). Actors with institutional memory and those with substantial capacity to enact change (not necessarily the same groups) need to team up to decide how to proceed. For the institutions that have not seriously attempted many of these practices, however—or at least, those that have not implemented them consistently across units—there is real urgency to choose strategies, mobilize resources, and get to work.

STRATEGY #1: BETTER POSITION ADVERTISEMENTS

Hiring diverse faculty requires diverse hiring pools. A unit cannot hire candidates who do not apply, and candidates from underrepresented populations are viewed more favorably if the overall hiring pool is more diverse (Stewart & Valian, 2018, pp. 174-175). For IHEs that have not yet systematically implemented the following suggestions, this is perhaps the quickest change to implement.

Signals of Prioritizing DEI

Hiring departments can typically do more to consistently signal DEI as an institutional value mirrored at the department level. Many IHEs already signal it as a priority across one or more institutional levels (such as the college/university overall, the school/college, and in individual departments) in various documents such as mission/vision statements, values statements, etc. Yet such values are often not stated or clearly in job ads. Many institutions' ads have only the most compliance-focused, boilerplate affirmative action statement, similar to the one offered by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM):

> It is the policy of [Company Name] to provide equal employment opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, genetic information or any other protected characteristic under applicable law. (Society for Human Resource Management, n.d.)

If this is all an ad says about this topic, the message is loud and clear: we don't discriminate because the law forces us not to. For candidates worried about whether those with identities like their own can truly find a professional home at a given institution, such a message is far from inviting.

If a school's ads still only signal the bare minimum of legal compliance, the human resources (HR) department and appropriate leadership should get together and write a much stronger statement of institutional commitment to DEI. This newly revised statement should appeal to any appropriate sources of authority that apply to the whole institution, but core documents such as mission/vision statements are best. It should also mention any related awards and markers. Consider the following, which was adopted in 2023-24 by our entire university for each of its faculty search ads:

> Metropolitan State University of Denver is a unique, access-oriented campus community that serves one of the most diverse student bodies in the state of Colorado. We are a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), an INSIGHT into Diversity Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award winner for ten years running, and the only Seal of Excelencia certified institution in Colorado. The university seeks to promote an inclusive community of students, faculty, and staff; and an awareness and appreciation of diverse perspectives and identities via an integrated set of policies, practices, programs and resources that are integral to the university's realization of its Strategic Plan.

The ads included links to websites documenting or explaining each of the following: HSI, HEED Award, Seal of Excelencia, and our strategic plan. These awards and designations reflect years of dedicated effort toward these goals, but even at our institution, we were not doing nearly enough to brag about them in our ads.

Obviously, schools should highlight successes here, and if all a school has is small victories, I recommend claiming even these in ads. At a minimum, most schools have similar components in their core documents and can appeal to these.

With help from the institutional offices and/or faculty that focus on DEI, smaller units such as departments, schools, and colleges (within universities) could also create equity statements. I recommend placing these on those units' websites, and such documents can then be referenced in all that unit's job ads. Units should also highlight any other markers of DEI bona fides. As in the example above, the language can be brief but supported with appropriate hyperlinks.

Ads should also show interest in discipline-relevant expertise in DEI. Across disciplines where DEI is a substantial object of study, some ads solicit this expertise, and some are silent. Leaders such as deans and provosts should encourage such departments to consider including this, and this should be part of the earliest discussions of making a hire. Even in disciplines where DEI-related expertise is not obviously relevant to the work, solicit it anyway. For instance, there is substantial work on how to teach STEM disciplines inclusively, and there is further research on DEI among STEM faculty. As a matter of course, all ads should include these areas of study as also being of potential interest for teaching and research. The faculty with these interests also represent the full diversity of human experience, but they are disproportionately from historically under-represented backgrounds. Adding such interests therefore further diversifies the applicant pool.

The current political climate makes this trickier; many states have done everything possible to effectively ban the words "diversity," "equity," and "inclusion" in higher education. Further, after the Supreme Court ruled against affirmative action in higher education admissions, many have been scared of whether this curtails efforts at inclusive hiring in search of a diverse workforce. Thankfully, already-legal efforts to diversify the workforce remain legal in light of the ruling, and employers should continue these efforts (Gonzales, 2023). In some states, however, state schools will have to tiptoe into such waters—signaling institutional commitments to welcome everyone while remaining cognizant of any new state laws and regulations, and working to avoid undue attention (including bad-faith media coverage).

Require Capacity to Contribute to DEI as Articulated in Application Materials

One of the strongest and simplest ways to make progress here is to ask all faculty candidates to demonstrate their capacity to contribute to campus DEI by treating DEI contribution as a required qualification. This can be demonstrated by requiring candidates to submit a separate document that speaks to these issues. In recent years, this has commonly been called a diversity statement. Committees could instead ask for something more like a statement of alignment with institutional mission and values. The ad could then direct candidates to the institution's core documents that most directly speak to this. At teaching schools, where inclusive teaching is especially important, this request could be folded into the request for a teaching philosophy. Committees must balance the ability to recruit for and measure these skills, with not making the application process too burdensome.

Regardless of the medium, further instructions are important here, and the focus should be on demonstrated skills and behaviors. Instruct candidates to speak to specific actions they have taken and how they plan to help their would-be new institution to achieve its DEI goals. A candidate saying "I support DEI, and I love my current institution's student diversity" is not helpful. Instead, solicit examples in specific areas such as professional development activities, roles played in institutional efforts, strategies for inclusive and accessible classroom/online instruction, and so on. Rather than asking candidates to agree with the institution's values, ask them to show how their behaviors line up with them.

Ads that filter for candidates with demonstrable skills and work in this area are related to hiring more diverse faculty (Smith et al., 2004). Schools have substantially increased the diversity of faculty hires in part by treating DEI contribution as a required qualification and requiring diversity statements. This signals to candidates that DEI is a core institutional priority, drawing a more diverse applicant pool. It also reshapes candidate evaluation, foregrounding skills that tend to be stronger among historically marginalized groups. Combined with strategies like cluster hiring and "additional training and support for faculty search committees" (Flaherty, 2017) (more on each of these below), schools like Emory (Freeman, 2019) and UC Riverside (Flaherty, 2017) have found great success here.

Whether preferred or required, seeking such qualifications "is inclusionary and legal. After all, a [cisgender White] male could certainly demonstrate a track record and… garner [high marks on] the diversity criterion" (Moody, 2012, p. 111).

Further, some PhD graduates are already coached to prepare these (University of Pennsylvania Career Services, 2019), and 91% of academic DEI experts "somewhat or strongly agree that diversity statements should be required for applicants to faculty positions" (Bombaci & Pejchar, 2022, p. 366). As discussed

later, the university should also support committees with training on evaluating diversity statements; see Bombaci and Pejchar's (2022) rubric (p. 368) for an example.

Ads Phrased Broadly Rather Than Narrowly

Ads should be phrased as broadly as possible while still articulating department needs. As Stewart and Valian (2018) note, "Every narrow qualification [will lead] some potential applicants to select themselves *out* of the pool… [and] this process of self-selection is probably biased" (p. 175). Historically underrepresented groups are more likely to self-select out of applicant pools if they don't have all listed qualifications. Combined with strategies like proactively searching for diverse candidates, the chemistry department at Michigan adopted maximally open searches; they saw sharp increases in the diversity of their candidate pool and the number of women and minorities hired (pp. 180-181). (For a provocative pilot study that suggests the opposite—albeit without achieving statistical significance—see Schmaling et al., 2017).

Even if departments need a specific area covered, ads could include this as one of several options. Chairs, deans, and the provost should ask departments to consider other possibilities—especially (but not exclusively) when this opens the possibility of candidates whose focus speaks to DEI-related issues. For instance, imagine the Department of Marketing needs to replace a retiring professor who has taught courses in digital marketing. If some of the current faculty teaching multicultural marketing could also teach the digital marketing courses, the ad could be phrased to appeal to experts in either or both topics. Considering all potential permutations could open the candidate pool even further. Imagine a game of musical chairs, but where a chair is added. Some faculty are the only ones who can sit in "their" chair, but many could move into the newly vacant one, and each area would ideally also be listed in the ad.

Other specific qualifications should be scrutinized at all stages before the ad is posted. For instance, many schools have adequate infrastructure to support faculty who have not taught online—and even the rare candidates without experience in online learning management systems. For these and many other qualifications, decisionmakers should always consider whether potential or even willingness to perform a task is adequate or if demonstrated experience is necessary. Further, avoiding an unrealistically long wish list of preferred qualifications for any position is best. Focus on the handful of qualifications most closely related to success in the position. More candidates will conclude that it is worth applying, and committees can focus on the most important qualifications.

Strategic Placement on Diversity-Focused Job Boards

Schools should also post ads in locations that are especially likely to attract candidates from underrepresented populations. These include both generalized and disciplinary locations. For example, the higher education-focused online magazine *INSIGHT Into Diversity* has a jobs board listing over 26,000 positions. The expense ($399 per ad, or $7,550 per year for unlimited ads plus additional benefits) is not trivial but very worth considering.

Case Western has assembled a list of dozens of such websites, most discipline-specific (*Diversity Recruitment Websites*, 2018). This list might help chairs and deans to find new, useful places to advertise. For instance, there is The PhD Project in business, which helps "students from historically underrepresented backgrounds earn PhDs" (The PhD Project, n.d.). Membership includes the ability to post unlimited ads.

Schools should also leverage every informal resource available within each discipline that supports the dissemination of ads to diverse faculty. This could particularly include professional organizations—or divisions/interest groups of professional organizations—that focus on scholarship with and/or about minoritized communities. For example, in sociology, the American Sociological Association includes Disability in Society; Latina/o Sociology; Race, Gender, and Class; and Racial and Ethnic Minorities. There is also a separate organization, the Association of Black Sociologists, with its own jobs board at quite reasonable prices. It is best if university-wide offices such as HR or the provost's office provide support for these additional expenses so that departments do not vary in whether they can or will commit the funding for such efforts.

Many and perhaps most academic disciplines at least have relevant divisions—either because they study related issues, or (especially in STEM), there is an explicit effort to further diversify. HR and relevant

dean's offices should work with specific departments to identify such places where ads can be placed—often for little or no cost.

Finally, in most disciplines, Minority-Serving Institutions, such as other HSIs (HACU - Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, n.d.) or Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU-Colleges.com, n.d.), offer terminal degrees. Where a PhD is not required there are even more partners to choose from—even more HSIs and HBCUs, as well as Tribal Colleges and Universities (Tribal College Journal, 2019). Disseminating job ads to these partner institutions can yield diverse applicants. This should be part of a broader strategy of proactive outreach, which is discussed below.

STRATEGY #2: ONGOING, PROACTIVE RECRUITING

Job ads only go so far, and all faculty have a role in outreach to potential colleagues. Instead of "post and pray," think of recruiting as a year-round activity that is everyone's responsibility.

The faculty market is national—even somewhat global—but most schools' brand identities are local or regional. So, deliberately building out social networks can greatly increase the chances that sought-after candidates will consider working for a given institution.

A New Paradigm in Recruiting: Everybody, Everywhere, All the Time

Instead of considering recruiting as the job of the search committee—or, even worse, of HR—all faculty need to take up the charge and own the responsibility to network with an eye toward diverse recruiting. As noted above, Stewart and Valian (2018) document how one chemistry department substantially diversified their hiring with a range of strategies. Of the many reasons for their success, one "is that they proactively sought out diverse applicants at conferences and through colleagues they knew at institutions that have diverse student bodies or who themselves have track records of mentoring students and postdocs from diverse backgrounds" (p. 181). They elaborate on how departments can generalize this strategy:

> [I]t is optimal to treat searching as *an activity that is engaged in year-round by all faculty members*. [At talks or] conferences, they can and should be on the lookout for rising young colleagues in the field, paying particular attention to those from underrepresented groups who are impressive in these settings. Approaching women and minorities who give a stimulating paper in the department or at a conference, and discussing it with them, while at the same time encouraging them to stay in touch, is a great way to develop a much more diverse network not only of potential applicants for positions, but of references to other applicants, such as their students. (p. 184, emphasis added)

With encouragement and perhaps financial support from the provost, deans, and chairs, all faculty could be asked to pitch in on this effort. This could even become part of the institution's expectation for funded travel. The administration could pay for recruiting lunches/coffees at conferences or offer small bonuses for future travel budgets based on successful outreach.

Recruit Existing Faculty for More Active Roles

We could also provide funding and other support for faculty to serve as talent scouts within their disciplines. This could include funding trips to conferences that present good recruiting opportunities (e.g., events focused on diverse constituents or national conferences in departments that typically stick to regional events). These scouts could also reach out to existing contacts, search for public-facing information about current PhD students, etc.

Departments could also reach out to minority-serving institutions—such as other HSIs, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs)—that award PhDs and, where appropriate, other degrees (e.g., MFAs). Departments should also build relationships with PhD programs more generally—even the majority of departments that do not themselves offer a PhD. Much of

this work requires disciplinary expertise, so it will be most effective if a critical mass of faculty in each department take on this role.

Connect With Existing Infrastructure

Another strategy is to recruit through organizations that serve historically underrepresented groups. For example, the "Institute on Teaching and Mentoring is the largest gathering of underrepresented minority Ph.D. scholars in the country" (*Institute on Teaching and Mentoring*, n.d.). They hold an annual conference—now in its 30th year—with young scholars from across the academy. As of 2019, they had just over 100 recruiters. This suggests a valuable opportunity but one that is not saturated. In addition to advertising specific openings, participating institutions also get access to their directory.

There are also more discipline-specific opportunities. One is The PhD Project (mentioned previously) which works to diversify business faculty. They run a very active business faculty jobs board. They also host an annual conference for potential PhD students, plus discipline-specific conferences for current PhD students. Pending budget and personnel availability, a department could attend these to further diversify their candidate pools. Especially in fields that struggle with diversity, many such organizations and programs could merit involvement by departments and/or schools and colleges. This is especially true in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, with opportunities such as the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science (SACNAS, n.d.), the McKnight Scholars program (McKnight Foundation, n.d.), and more. Schools should not expect to be able to parachute in and get real results, but instead see these as opportunities for long-term relationship building.

Start at Home

The national student body is much more diverse than the national professoriate, and the same is true at most specific schools. Students from historically underrepresented groups thus provide an opportunity for outreach. Schools can tap faculty, honors programs, and various honor societies to help identify potential future faculty. Instructors, honor society directors, and other relevant personnel should be given talking points. For instance, the norm of fully-funded PhD fellowships is news to most undergraduate students. IHEs should also consider creating a formal program with student cohorts. Even small scholarships could be more than enough to induce students to attend a few meetings to learn more. With an appropriately prestigious title, these scholarships could help build students' identity and help them get into competitive programs. After these former students finish graduate school, each student's alma mater would have a natural leg-up for hiring them back. They can also become brand ambassadors and helpful contacts for identifying other scholars.

The leading university system in this effort is California State University (CSU). Their pre-doctoral program "awards funds to [select] juniors, seniors and graduate students in the CSU system… to enable current students to explore and prepare to succeed in doctoral programs in their chosen field of study" (California State University Dominguez Hills, n.d.-a). They also have the US's largest graduate student pipeline program: the CSU Chancellor's Doctoral Incentive Program. This provides mentorship before and during graduate study, professional development and grants, and loans up to $10,000 per year and up to $30,000 total (California State University, n.d.). Participants can be in **any** accredited US PhD program and **do not** need to have attended any CSU campus, though awareness is surely highest among CSU students and alumni. Recipients can repay the loans over 15 years post-graduation or earn 20% forgiveness for each year of full-time teaching employment at CSU. "Established in 1987, the CSU CDIP has loaned $49 million to 2,081 doctoral students in universities nationwide. More than half [of] CDIP scholars have obtained employment in CSU instructional faculty positions" (California State University Dominguez Hills, n.d.-b).

STRATEGY #3: THOUGHTFUL COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT AND TRAINING

There is much room for improvement in the membership of search committees and how they are trained. This section discusses problems with faculty search committees; committee membership, including the idea of adding equity advisors (EAs); and training for the broader committee.

Problems With Faculty Search Committees

Hiring committees are key to any DEI efforts in faculty hiring. Substantial evidence points to faculty search committees as "a significant barrier to diversifying the professoriate" (Hakkola & Dyer, 2022, p. 583). One review notes the "substantial literature" showing that implicit racial and gender bias affect "faculty members' perceptions of 'hireability' and competence" (O'Meara et al., 2022, p. 296). This contributes to the problem that the racial and ethnic diversity of entry-level faculty hires continues to lag behind the already-low diversity of new doctoral graduates (Smith, 2020, pp. 210–211). Similar evidence shows substantial gender bias, especially in men-dominated fields, such as the physical sciences (Blair-Loy et al., 2022). Bias surely affects other candidates with marginalized identities as well—such bias including ableism, heteronormativity, and more. Despite our self-identity as rational and objective scholars, "academics are not immune to such biases" (Rivera, 2017).

The typical committee formation process is another unintended obstacle to equitable hiring. Committees are often assembled with little intentionality behind membership, inadequate training, insufficient administrative support, tight deadlines, little formalized DEI training, and inequitable processes (K. A. Griffin, 2020; Moody, 2012). These processes all contribute to overreliance on cognitive shortcuts, rushed decisions, and a tendency to reproduce the status quo.

Committee Membership and Equity Advisors

Some leaders try to address equity by appointing members from groups not well-represented in the department (e.g., women, people of color). This contributes to the tokenization and identity taxation of such faculty members (Domingo et al., 2022; Guillaume & Apodaca, 2022), and they often have little power to steer the process and address equity problems (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 565).

A strategy *all* committees can use is adding a member specifically trained to ensure best practices. The literature calls them "equity advisors" or "equity advocates" (EAs). Schools may use other terms, such as Search Process Advisors. Moody (2012) recommends that, at the direction of the dean or provost, "every search committee has within its ranks a designated … Equity Advisor" (p. 112). Cahn et al. (2022) note:

> The [EA] is a voting member of the faculty search committee whose primary function is to call attention to and correct the practices and policies in the hiring process that unfairly disadvantage candidates from minoritized groups… The EA participates in formulating the position description, recruiting candidates, screening materials, interviewing finalists, and making the final recommendations. At each stage, they practice equity-mindedness by raising [identity]-conscious questions about which [kinds of] candidates [will benefit from proposed] committee decisions… and suggesting consistent templates to limit bias. (p. 256)

A range of institutions have implemented similar programs, with each reporting improved faculty search processes (Burroughs, 2017; Cahn et al., 2022; Liera, 2020; McMurtrie, 2016).

Schools including the University of Wisconsin, University of Southern California, and Oregon State University have programs to train a school's personnel—or, as is more typical, train the trainers—in this practice. These trainings cover topics such as effective search committee practices, recruitment, behavioral interviewing, developing job ads and rubrics, effective interpersonal and group communication, and more (see, e.g., Cahn et al., 2022, p. 257). This involves a substantial time commitment; think 8 to 16 hours of online and/or in-person training. Members of the faculty, provost's office, HR, and/or any DEI-focused office or department should get together, with leadership buy-in, and think about how to bring such a training program, adapt it to their own institutions' needs, and bring it to their own campus.

The EA can be from inside or outside the hiring department, but Cahn et al. (2022) are vocal about the advantages of having advisors from outside the department. Benefits include being more detached, less invested, and more clearly focused on process instead of outcomes. It requires EAs to navigate an unfamiliar social space and earn committee members' trust, but their focus group participants still saw more

advantages to an outsider model overall. To minimize the downsides, outsider EAs should at least be from similar disciplines if possible. This requires getting a critical mass of trained EAs from across areas.

Finally, department chairs and deans should think carefully about whom to appoint to hiring committees. Some faculty are not sufficiently committed to inclusive hiring; a few even explicitly oppose steps that increase inclusion. Members need not start the process as experts in inclusive hiring, but they must be willing to learn and implement best practices—or their service efforts should be redirected to other duties.

Committee Ground Rules

At their first meeting—ideally before the ad is created or any other substantive work is done—committees should collectively establish ground rules. Moody (2012) has a helpful list of suggestions, including: agreeing to "concentrate on rising above cognitive biases and errors," sticking to formal evaluation metrics, agreeing to rely exclusively on concrete evidence, and roughly equal participation in meetings (pp. 116-120). Fine and Handelsman (2012) also lay out good guidance here (pp. 7-13).

More Committee Training With More DEI Focus

Good training for search committee members is key to a good process. But "historically, institutions have not provided training to faculty on how to conduct *effective* searches, especially those likely to yield diverse pools and outcomes" (Bilimoria & Buch, 2010, p. 30, emphasis added). Most faculty are not experts in hiring, nor in the cognitive biases that hinder inclusive hiring (Moody, 2012), let alone both. Faculty also need more DEI training generally (Liera, 2023).

Instead of relying too heavily on EAs to do all this work, schools should also add more and more DEI-focused training for all committee members. A wide variety of institutions—from flagship universities to private schools to teaching schools—have made this investment and seen real results (Bilimoria & Buch, 2010; Cavanaugh & Green, 2020; Flaherty, 2017).

Bilimoria and Buch (2010) identify three areas of focus for such trainings. First is "institutional commitment to diversity, [which] provides the institutional context for the training and its goals, and … is most effectively presented by a senior administrator" such as the provost (p. 31). Such messages help foreground the institutional commitment to inclusive values and culture, and they clarify that such values come to life via institutional decisions—including hiring processes.

The second area is "reducing evaluation errors and biases" (Bilimoria & Buch, 2010, p. 31). JoAnn Moody has an abbreviated list suitable for distribution to all committee members during training (Moody, n.d.) as well as a fuller description of most of those errors (Moody, 2012, pp. 3-15). Illustrative examples of cognitive errors include: positive and negative stereotypes; "Raising the Bar," or holding members of some groups to higher standards; "Extraneous Myths and Assumptions," such as believing candidates won't come due to low salaries; and "Momentum of the Group," or moving too quickly on a seeming consensus.

Another common cognitive error is letting irrelevant factors slip in under "Good Fit/Bad Fit" (White-Lewis, 2020). While the goal is to decide whether a candidate meets the position description and the institution's needs, the idea of "'fit' is often stretched to mean: 'Will I feel comfortable and culturally at ease with this new hire? Or will I have to spend energy to learn some new ways to relate to this person?'" (Moody, 2012, p. 9). Committees should assess fit between position and skills—not "will **they** fit with **us**?" Avoiding the latter helps ensure that the hiring process is open to people from all backgrounds.

Faculty also must be trained on how to handle the problem of bias. This includes teaching them to replace their "self-image as an objective person with recognition and acceptance that [they] are subject to the influence of bias and assumptions" (Fine & Handelsman, 2012, p. 45). Requiring them to affirm something to this effect could be a reasonable part of any training.

It is typically easier to see bias in others; training should also highlight this fact. Committee members must be trained to identify and identify them in other members publicly. The standard should be "200% accountability," meaning "every employee is expected to be 100% accountable for the quality of their own work, AND 100% accountable for the quality of the work of everyone else they see" (Grenny, 2016). If fully adopted, this expectation will lead to at least a few interventions during nearly every search. Trainers

may want to create space for committees to practice these interventions, perhaps by using a realistic scenario.

A third key area of training is "to introduce participants to resources and tools that can aid the search committee in conducting effective and inclusive searches" (Bilimoria & Buch, 2010, p. 31). Trainers should explicitly show committees not merely where to get sample work products—ads, rubrics, interview questions, written guidance on how to proceed—but briefly open them and discuss why they are important and how to use them. Schools should streamline and simplify this as much as possible, handing committees a consolidated set of available resources with a clear default for each.

For this to be effective, schools must have academic leadership buy-in for the additional time and attention required by committees. While leaders must remain sensitive to faculty time, everyone should also treat faculty hiring like its major investment. Each tenure-track hire requires a minimum commitment of several hundred thousand dollars over the course of the faculty member's career. Whatever the average hourly labor cost for faculty, the investment of more committee time to get this right will pale compared to the cost of hiring and paying the wrong colleague. While pay, benefits, and other attendant costs vary, a clarifying motto is: "You are making **a million-dollar decision**." Leaders can pick a lower number if salaries are low enough that this will be offensive. Alternatively, at all but the cheapest schools, any new faculty member given a three-year initial contract will be entrusted with roughly $1m or more in credit hours—as measured by tuition, fees, and the per-student support provided by federal, state, and/or local governments. (Highlighting this aspect instead of direct costs may reduce resentment where pay is low.) Regardless of specific details, leaders and trainers must convey that failure to invest in every aspect of the hiring decision is penny wise and pound foolish.

Finally, while limitations on time and resources are real, it would be ideal for this training to become part of a broader, longer, ongoing structured conversation. Research shows that "brief workshops rarely provide in-depth or effective professional development on any topic, and certainly not on topics as complex as race and equity" (Ngounou & Gutierrez, 2017, p. 39). Despite a substantial recent uptick in interest and attention, virtually every school needs more structured conversations on these topics.

STRATEGY #4: MORE DELIBERATE, DELIBERATIVE PROCESS

Too often, committees are given—and give themselves—too little guidance, structure, and time. Schools should rethink every step of the hiring process and do everything possible to give committees the ability to engage in a thoughtful, deliberative, inclusive process. While schools really should rethink **every** step of the process, this section discusses some of the major areas for potential reform.

Committee Charge: Support and Guidance From Leadership

How leadership sends the committee off to do their work is another under-appreciated means of promoting DEI. While committees can be and often are told simply to go hire a colleague within a rough guideline of subspecialty, leadership should take the time to meet with the entire committee (not just the search chair) and give them a more explicit set of specific instructions about how to proceed.

This practice is common but not universal. "Many institutions, as part of affirmative action requirements, require search committees to receive an 'equity charge,' [reminding them of] the institution's commitment to diversity as well as federal, state, and local guidelines for fair interviewing practices" (O'Meara et al., 2022, p. 298). Yet many do not. Among schools that have charge meetings, many could be stronger.

At many schools, this will be an appropriate task for deans, though people with more specialized knowledge in equitable faculty hiring should create a standardized outline of what to say during such a meeting. This outline can then be disseminated to deans. A recorded or in-person presentation from the provost, focused specifically on the connection to institutional values, could also prove helpful. This is also an excellent opportunity to introduce an equity advocate, if one will be serving; the leader can then help explain and legitimize this role.

This meeting should be held before the committee begins its work. The leader should make it clear to the committee how this new hire will connect to the unit's long-term strategy—and that they are hiring someone to do the teaching and research the institution will need for the **coming** years and ideally decades. This message might sound something like, "We might be hiring to fill the vacancy created by Lynn's departure, but we're not hiring 'the new Lynn.' Instead, I want you to focus on how this new person can best help us achieve our mission in the years to come."

Other charge elements should reiterate or preview the committee training's emphasis on the strategies and tactics covered in this article. Write better, more inclusive job ads. Work to identify good recruitment targets. Pay careful attention to the committee training, especially identifying and avoiding bias. Develop good rubrics, use them, and stick to them (as discussed below). Hold each other accountable.

Instructions from leadership play a crucial role in this process, and knowing that it matters to leadership can help ensure more consistent DEI practices at all hiring stages. One obvious sign of commitment is, "Let's block off time for final interviews on my calendar, right now." As discussed below, this should even include extra time for any necessary accommodations.

Plan—and Over-Plan—the Full Schedule Right Away

One of Stephen R. Covey's famous *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* is to "begin with the end in mind" (Covey, 2020). Thus, committees should start by considering when they will need to make an offer to compete with their peer institutions. Then, they should consider how long they will need to review applicants, conduct preliminary interviews, choose finalists, and interview finalists. Identify target dates for finalist interviews that will work for the hiring authority and any other over-scheduled leaders such as department chairs. Then, work backward, and build in a bit of extra time at each step if possible. Block off time on everyone's calendars. Add additional "hold" meeting blocks on everyone's calendars for each process step—yes, including the chair and dean during final interviews. It is always easier to "give back" unneeded time than to find a mutually agreeable meeting time with little notice.

This is not just about being effective and efficient. Committees need adequate time to discuss and make decisions in order to be equitable. The more rushed, the more likely they are to make errors of bias and take cognitive shortcuts that make the process less fair and inclusive (Moody, 2012).

Rubrics: Develop Early, Use Consistently, Know Their Limitations

The key to fair evaluation of diverse candidates is using valid, reliable measurement systems. Committees must "develop well-defined evaluation criteria prior to reviewing applications" (Fine & Handelsman, 2012, p. 45). Again, ideally a committee will develop their evaluation rubric as they are developing the job ad. But simply having a quantitative system is far from a foolproof way to eliminate bias in the process (p. 45). Rather, faculty must consider how they will measure amorphous concepts like excellence in research (Research volume? Citations? Funding obtained?) and in teaching (Diversity of courses taught? History teaching specific, needed courses—or courses that will come open if existing faculty switch around? Student evaluations—with all their problems and limitations?). Committees must also decide how to weight such criteria, such that the numeric scores reflect actual priorities (teaching over research or vice versa).

Such criteria must remain moderately flexible, and all applications will remain somewhat subjective. But providing structure to the evaluation and discussion of candidates provides a way to see one's own and others' subjectivity, and criteria form the basis for demanding and discussing specific, demonstrable evidence for conclusions reached.

Screening and consideration should proceed in such a way as to emphasize which candidates to **include**, not which ones to eliminate. For instance, initial screening for minimum required qualifications should take the broadest possible interpretation of the minimum standards. If there is any doubt, applicants should remain in the pool and be discussed further—and if that doubt is due to incomplete information, the appropriate person (probably in HR) should reach out and ask for further documentation or explanation. For instance, what counts as a PhD "in" marketing (versus one in, say, hospitality management or education that deals with marketing in those industries) can leave some room for interpretation. (Candidates, knowing

this, may do their best to market their non-marketing degrees as degrees in marketing.) In such a case, the person doing the screening (e.g., the search chair) should bring any gray-area decisions to the full committee for explicit discussion. Rather than seeking to exclude, these candidates would be included for further consideration. Similarly, as the committee considers preliminary interview candidates, members of the committee should speak up on behalf of anybody who is close to the cutoff. At each stage, they should ask of each candidate, "What would the best case **for** this person look like?" When even the barest of credible cases can be made, that person should be considered.

Committees should also periodically reassess how the criteria are being used and if they're the right ones. Questions to ask include: are they being used consistently? Are there unwritten or implicit criteria or elements of the criteria being used? If one were to switch the specific elements of an application among candidates with different identities, would the evaluations come out the same? Even if it means re-assessing the candidate pool at any stage, committees should be prepared to redesign their rubrics to get it right. All constituents must remember that this is a major investment—at least in approximation, a million-dollar decision.

Inclusive Interviewing

Inclusive interviewing is largely about imagining how someone might have different needs than one's own, and how the institution can best meet these needs. Especially for in-person interviews, the host institution is responsible for an environment that meets the needs and even comforts of virtually anybody. Food alone requires serious thought. Discuss dietary needs and limitations, but even without special requests, be prepared to offer meals and snacks that can meet almost any need. Offer snacks and beverages throughout the day.

Give candidates the schedule far in advance and confirm that this will work for them. Try to avoid major religious holidays. Be prepared to arrange alternative schedules, for religious or any reasons. (As noted above, extra slots should be on everyone's calendars—including the chair and dean.) For instance, be prepared to conduct two consecutive half-day meetings in the morning, instead of expecting a full day of high-stakes meetings to work for all candidates. A candidate who asks for an alternative schedule or any other accommodations or changes should be granted these requests, if at all possible, without the need for explanation or the impression that this is an inconvenience. The candidate may have accessibility needs, religious observances, competing obligations, or other reasons. The committee should not be the arbiter of which reasons count as legitimate, and the candidate should not have to invoke policy or legal compliance to get such accommodations.

Inclusive interviewing is also accessible. Send questions to candidates 24-48 hours before the interview—though stress that scripted answers will be viewed negatively by the committee. Turn on automatic captions in video meeting software such as Zoom or Teams, and proactively offer to bring in sign language interpreters and any other accessibility resources. Ask candidates if they would prefer to tour campus on foot or by car and leave plenty of time to travel by foot. Ask if they would prefer the stairs or elevator. For in-person interviews, provide written copies of questions and any other materials that will be discussed. Provide candidates with short breaks throughout the day in a room where they can have some privacy—for prayer, a break from the anxiety of interviewing, or to check in on family or friends.

Nontraditional Hiring Strategies

In addition to working to ensure that the standard hiring process is as inclusive as possible, schools should also consider adding additional hiring strategies to their repertoire. One is cluster hiring or hiring multiple faculty lines simultaneously. This contributed substantially toward increasing diversity among faculty hires at schools like UC Riverside, Boston College (Flaherty, 2017), and Emory (Freeman, 2019). It involves prioritizing and investing "in multiple positions in a broad field, or across a range of related fields, rather than hiring faculty members one by one in specific subfields. This increases the likelihood of a diverse pool of candidates, identifies synergistic connections among candidates and, by recruiting faculty cohorts together, fosters collaboration and a shared experience" (Freeman, 2019). This allows incredibly

broad job ads, which (as noted above) produce more diverse pools. It also allows administrators to prioritize cross-disciplinary area studies such as Latinx Studies that attract more diverse faculty applicants.

Schools should also look to expand special hiring programs (Smith, 2020; Smith et al., 2004). This can include, for instance, postdoctoral positions (postdocs) that are not tied to specific labs or grants. This will be most effective in fields that do not typically hire postdocs, such as the humanities and social sciences. As part of announcing a $15 million Mellon Foundation grant, Mellon Senior Program Officer Dianne Harris said the program "has long served as a model across higher education, demonstrating the requirement of recruiting and retaining outstanding diverse and inclusive faculty to the creation of a healthy academic ecosystem" (UC Office of the President, 2021). In addition to targeted postdoc hiring such as this, IHEs could also consider pre-tenure-track lines for PhD students finishing their dissertations—a compelling option for candidates, and a cost-effective way for less-prestigious schools to jump the line for desirable talent.

The current policy environment probably eliminates the capacity to specifically target these ads at members of underrepresented groups. However, as noted above, ads can be used strategically to better diversify the applicant pool. A school could frontload related interest and expertise if it creates fellowships, cluster hires, and other nontraditional hiring programs. For instance, a cluster hire in the hard sciences could use an ad that prefers or even requires candidates to have documented research interest in DEI in the science education/careers pipeline. At a minimum, every qualified candidate will bring meaningful work that can further create an inclusive environment, and most scholars hired in such a cluster would also likely increase representational diversity.

CONCLUSION

Any school or unit in higher education that has not already redesigned their entire faculty hiring process with inclusion in mind has work to do. Nearly every student body is more diverse than the faculty serving them. While a perfect match is probably unrealistic, the larger this mismatch, the less adequately the institution can serve the student body. Representational diversity among the faculty matters to students, and even schools with diverse faculty overall typically have pockets of concern. Quotas and similar strategies are illegal—and undesirable for most people on both sides of the hiring decision. But few schools are maximizing their chances to diversify their hiring pools and hired faculty. Doing so requires identifying the unintended obstacles at each step.

This article identifies four strategies to help schools create a more inclusive faculty hiring process. They include: write better position advertisements. Recruit strategically to diversify social networks and applicant pools. Build better committees and train them better. Create an entire process that is fair, reliable, consistent, and inclusive.

Schools and units must decide which strategies to emphasize and which tactics within each will work best for their institutions. Leaders and other personnel should also dive into this literature and consider other proposed moves. Instead of a one-size-fits-all algorithm, think of this more as a menu of items from which to choose. But for each item, something like it would probably be a good idea at most institutions, and the question is more about prioritizing among them.

Also, these efforts do not work in isolation. For instance, "increasing the critical mass of faculty from diverse backgrounds on campus through various recruitment strategies may create a critical mass and increase sense of belonging, which can impact retention" (Griffin et al. 2020, p. 5). Similarly, if schools improve their ability to **retain** faculty from underrepresented groups (Flaherty, 2021; K. A. Griffin, 2020; Lin & Kennette, 2022; Moody, 2012), this will make increasing the diversity of incoming faculty easier.

None of this is easy. In this space, even implementing straightforward recommendations is never, in fact, straightforward. I have seen surprisingly strong resistance to even basic efforts at inclusivity, and any would-be reformer can likely say the same. Institutional inertia is typically an even greater obstacle. Still, this effort is worth it. Faculty jobs are too valuable a resource to distribute inequitably. More importantly, for most institutions, our diverse student bodies deserve the most diverse faculty rosters we can create.

We must overcome the inertia and resistance. We must reinvent faculty hiring.

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