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# **Beating Biases: Training Search Committees to Build a Stellar Diverse Faculty**

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September 2010

# Women in Science and Engineering System Transformation (WISEST)

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- The goal of the WISEST Initiative is to increase the number, participation, and leadership status of women- majority and minority- in academic science and engineering through institutional transformation at UIC.

# Efforts at UIC: WISEST

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- Warm the climate & decrease the isolation of women STEM faculty
- Pilot initiatives to attract & recruit minority women faculty
- Transform STEM departments to foster diversity & women's leadership
- Promote STEM women's scholarship & teaching
- Improve the ability to track & report on gender equity in STEM
- Advocate & collaborate across UIC & nationally

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# **The WISEST Faculty Search Toolkit**

**[HTTP://WWW.UICWISEST.ORG/](http://www.uicwise.org/)**

# Necessary Environment

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- Highly visible commitment on the part of top administration to create a diverse faculty
- Benefits of a diverse faculty regularly communicated to Deans, Department Heads, and faculty
- Institutionalized rewards and sanctions attached to the goal of increasing faculty diversity

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# **Training Search Committees**

**Before the Search**

# Climate

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- Department head should ensure that the committee members are sensitive to gender and diversity issues
- Familiarize committee members with research findings on work-life issues, gender schemas, critical mass & evaluation bias
- Discuss what have been some roadblocks to increasing diversity in the department in the past

# **Raise Awareness of Unconscious Assumptions and Their Influence on Evaluation of Candidates**

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- Large body of research on evaluation bias.
  - Gender Schemas
  - Evaluation Bias
  - Lack of Critical Mass
  - Accumulation of Disadvantage



# Overcoming Bias

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- Be familiar with the phenomenon and research.
- Discuss evaluation bias in the committee and commit to working against it
- Look for opportunities to structure initial evaluations to make them gender neutral and avoid triage via pedigree
- Try to have more than one woman or minority on the short list; research shows that gender and ethnicity will then become less of a factor in the decision-making process.

# Overcoming Bias (cont.)

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- Spend sufficient time evaluating each applicant (15-20 min); research suggests that gender schemas play more of a role when consideration time is brief
  - Filling out the *Candidate Profile Template in the Tool kit* keeps the focus on factual information for comparison of applicants across the board
  - Evaluate the entire application rather than immediately culling the pile by relying too heavily on one element—letters of recommendation, prestige of degree-granting institution or post doc program.

# Overcoming Bias (cont.)

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- A critical mass of women have to be recruited into the applicant pool.
- Applicants have to be compared across the board using the same metrics.
- Search committees have to be conscious that gender bias may affect the length and quality of letters of recommendations for women applicants

# Prepare an Effective and Efficient Process

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- Build a diverse committee—if no women or minorities are in your dept, bring in from another dept, make sure members are committed to diversity and can be ambassadors for the institution.
- Dean gives charge to committee.
- Raise and discuss issues of diversity, research on differential evaluation, and accumulation of disadvantage.



# **Training Search Committees**

**During the Search**

# Pay Attention to Bias

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- Word the position description so that it conveys the College's commitment to excellence, equity & diversity.
- Function as a Search Committee, not a Letter-Opening Committee.
- Consider women and minorities who are 'underplaced.' Avoid triage by pedigree.

# Actively Recruit an Excellent and Diverse Pool of Candidates

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- Everyone hired should understand that they were hired because they were the best person for the job not because they are a woman or minority.
- Very narrow searches disadvantage women and minorities and eliminate candidates who would qualify for your position but have a different profile.
- Consider including “experience working with/teaching diverse groups/diverse students as one of the preferred criteria.
- Use multiple channels to recruit—phone calls, emails, letters, postings, curbsides at professional meetings. Also contact potential candidates and encourage them to apply.

# Develop and Implement an Effective Interview Process

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- Develop a core set of questions and guidelines for interviewing; utilize the *Interview Scoring Sheet from the Tool kit*.
- Know which questions are inappropriate or illegal.
- Provide opportunities for candidates to meet with women and minority members of the dept and with a FAAC member.



# Broaden Criteria

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- Make several short lists using multiple criteria for scholarship/quality.
- If possible, have >1 woman (minority) on the short list; schemas will have less power
- Spend sufficient time evaluating each applicant; schemas have less power when more time is spent with a candidate.
- Provide an opportunity for women (minority) candidates to talk to other women (minority) faculty, not on the search committee

# Ensure a Fair and Thorough Review of Candidates

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- Create the long and short list.
  - Are there qualified women and minorities included? If not, consider whether evaluation biases or assumptions may have influenced the rating.
- Evaluate the short list. If no women or minorities are represented consider whether evaluation biases or assumptions may have influenced the rating.

# Know UIC Policies and Programs

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Provide a handout outlining:

New Faculty Orientation

Tenure Roll Back

Family Medical Leave

Campus Childcare

Faculty Mentoring

Underrepresented Faculty Recruitment Program

Dual Career Hiring

Department Heads Workshops

# What Can Search Committees Do?

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- Know about UIC support units:
  - Faculty Academic Advancement Committee (FAAC)
  - Office of Faculty Affairs (OFA)
  - Center for Research on Women and Gender (CRWG)
  - UIC National Center of Excellence in Women's Health
  - Office of Women's Affairs (OWA)
  - Chancellor's Committees on the Status of Women, Blacks, Latinos



# **Training Search Committees**



After the Search

# After the Search

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- Search Committee Chairs debrief with administrators on the search process:
  - What worked well
  - What were the challenges
  - What kind of support would have helped facilitate the committee's work

# Success with WISEST

(<http://www.uicwisest.org/>)

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- NSF Advance Grant
- SUCCEED presents to train search committees
- Where trainings were required, there was considerable success
- WISEST Faculty Search Toolkit