

## HERC Search Committee Toolkit

# Before the Search: The Committee

Academic institutions have long recognized the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion. A diverse faculty means a more robust curricula, a richer landscape of research, and broader viewpoints for faculty and students to experience.

A commitment to diversity in hiring ensures that the best candidates are not overlooked because of unconscious or structural biases. The hiring committee is an ideal place to lay the foundation for an equitable and inclusive hiring process.



## Forming the Search Committee

A Search Committee should receive a formal written charge setting forth the expectations for the position and the search committee's role in helping to fill it.

A Search Committee charge should cover the following essentials:

- The position to be filled with a rank(s)/title(s) noted;
- The tasks and role of the committee in the search;
- The scope of the search (e.g., internal, local, national, international);
- A deadline for receiving recommendations from the committee;
- Affirmative Action considerations (applicable institutional hiring goals, federal laws regulating acceptable and unacceptable inquiries);
- Confidentiality.

Each search should begin with an organizational meeting of the Search Committee and the hiring authority who will charge the committee, review the Affirmative Action procedures, emphasize the need for confidentiality, and, if available, review the institutional Search Committee Guidelines, and/or process and procedures.

If not already established, the Search Committee chair should be selected. The committee should discuss the responsibilities of the individual members and expectations for attendance, record keeping, decision-making, confidentiality, and decorum.

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## Committee Considerations for an Equitable Search

A Search Committee can lay the groundwork to conduct an equitable and broad search by evaluating the current diversity of your department/unit and noting any opportunities for expansion (e.g. race/ethnicity, gender, age, or discipline). It is important to form a committee that includes gender, racial, and ethnic diversity. A committee that lacks diversity is less likely to recognize unconscious bias, limiting the committee's ability to recruit and evaluate the best candidates. Below are questions that will aid your process.



### Committee Composition

- Have we assembled a committee inclusive of gender, racial, and ethnic diversity?
  - If no, could a faculty member from a complementary department serve on the committee?
  - Alternately, is there a trained diversity advocate that might serve on the committee?

### Diversity and Equity

- Does the committee understand what constitutes diversity and support the need for a diverse candidate pool?
- Does the committee understand how unconscious biases (positive and negative) impact assumptions individuals make about candidates based on race, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, family/marital status, etc.?
- What are our conscious biases (positive and negative) about academic pedigree, publication, funding, research focus, and “fit” in our department/discipline/institution?

### Outreach and Recruitment

- What resources and individuals can we engage at our institution to assist with the stages of the search and hiring process? For example: diversity and inclusion offices, academic affairs, human resources, women's center, LGBTQ center, and dual career/partner hiring offices.
- What resources can we engage in our community/discipline regionally, locally and nationally?

## Process Questions

Articulate and document the committee's process to confirm the steps and to reduce potential errors later in the search.

- Will the committee make decisions by vote or consensus?
- Will absentee votes be allowed?
- Will decisions be open or confidential ballot? Confidential voting protects untenured faculty from feeling uncomfortable if dissenting.

## Additional Resources

- [“Advancing Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education: Key Data Highlights Focusing on Race and Ethnicity and Promising Practices”](#). November 2016. Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development. Office of the Under Secretary. U.S. Department of Education.
- Banaji, Mahzarin R., and Anthony G. Greenwald. *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*. Bantam, 2016.
- [Handbook for Faculty Searches and Hiring](#). August 2016. University of Michigan.
- [Project Implicit](#). Harvard University.
- [Searching for Excellence and Diversity: Recruiting Resources for Search Committees](#). Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- [Series on Implicit Bias](#). *New York Times*.
- [STRIDE Faculty Recruitment Workshop](#). Fall 2017. Articles by Topic. University of Michigan.

## HERC Search Committee Toolkit

# Before the Search: The Recruitment Plan

Equity, diversity, and inclusion in higher education don't just happen on their own. Placing an ad and passively waiting for people to apply is not sufficient for attracting a broad, inclusive pool of candidates. Search Committee members need to make concerted efforts to seek out candidates who might otherwise get overlooked. Every new search involves a choice about whether to stick with the status quo, or to take intentional steps to increase equity, diversity, and inclusion. This process takes planning and commitment.



### Inclusive and Accurate Position Description

Once you have formed a committee, the first task is to write the position announcement and decide where to advertise. Consider the language of your position description as the first opportunity to diversify the search. Instead of recycling a prior description, write the new position with intention, all the while keeping some important considerations at the forefront of the committee's work.

### Writing the Position Description

- What competencies are we including and why are they important to this search? (E.g., interdisciplinary, extensive publishing, broad or specific teaching experience, etc.)
- Have we made the position description both clear and broad enough to attract the greatest number of candidates?
- Could the description's language be off-putting to some job seekers (e.g., "aggressive," "digital native")?
- Do we explicitly promote inclusivity beyond our standard EEO/AA statements?
- Do we highlight our HERC membership as part of our commitment to diversity and dual career support?
- Do we request evidence of working with diverse communities in service, teaching, or research?

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## Outreach and Advertising

- What are our plans for active recruitment to attract a broad and diverse applicant pool?
- Have we contacted our women and underrepresented colleagues to solicit applicants?
- Have we reached out to women and underrepresented candidates at conferences, poster sessions, and during our invited visits to other departments/institutions?
- Have we utilized the HERC Resume/CV database to solicit applications?
- What websites or journals have we selected for advertising outreach to women and underrepresented populations?



## Additional Resources

- [Best Practices: Recruiting and Retaining Faculty and Staff of Color](#). Western Washington University.
- Smith, Daryl G., et al. "Interrupting the usual: Successful strategies for hiring diverse faculty." *The Journal of Higher Education* 75.2 (2004): 133-160.
- [This is the House Innovation Built: Powerhouse Faculty Recruitment Toolkit](#). Office of the Provost, University of Houston.
- [University of Maryland. Evidence-based Practices for Inclusive Faculty Hiring: Creating an Inclusive Job Description](#). University of Maryland.

## HERC Search Committee Toolkit

# During the Search: Reviewing the Candidates

Research shows that women and underrepresented candidates often face a range of obstacles in hiring, from unconscious bias to overt discrimination, and often have to work twice as hard to be considered on an equal footing. Careful attention to the screening process is important to ensure a fair and equitable search.



### Initial Review of Applicants

Starting with the criteria in the position description, the committee should discuss and agree on how it will define and weigh competencies and qualifications. Creating an evaluation matrix or rubric will streamline the initial review of candidates. Please see [HERC's Applicant Evaluation Template](#) as you discuss the following

- What are the stated minimum qualifications? (E.g., degree, years of teaching experience, etc.)
- What are the additional preferred qualifications (e.g., diversity-related service, teaching, or research), and how will the additional qualifications be weighted?
- What do we mean by “a diverse pool of candidates”? What are our goals?
- What does the committee mean by terms like publication record? Which journals does the committee agree are “top” and how will they be weighted? (for research positions)

### Conscious and Unconscious Bias

Everyone is susceptible to common social assumptions and biases that can influence the evaluation of applicants. Screen the candidates to create the phone/video interview list by applying the criteria the committee agreed upon in the recruitment plan. Avoid ranking or labeling candidates until after the interviews. Read the recommendation letters with an eye toward potential “letter-writer bias” that predominantly affects candidates from underrepresented populations.

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- Can we broaden the pool by increasing the number of phone/video interviews we conduct?
- Are we evaluating the candidate's entire application to avoid "pedigree bias" or "fit bias"?
- Are all committee members spending quality time reviewing each candidate to better decrease unconscious bias?
- Have we made any assumptions about the willingness of women or underrepresented candidates' willingness to relocate, potential family responsibilities, or their abilities to secure grant funding or run a research group?
- Are we evaluating letters of recommendation for subtle bias? Do letters share irrelevant gendered information about the candidates rather than discussing their scholarship or science, such as "she is active in her church" or "she is very caring"? If letters use "doubt raiser" language (e.g., "although his publications are not numerous"), have we verified the information using our evaluation criteria?



## Interview Protocols

- Does our phone/video interview list reflect our evaluation criteria?
- Have we discussed and agreed upon the interview format and standard questions? (see [HERC's Example Questions for Phone/Video Interviews](#))
- Have we reviewed the State and Federal regulations on appropriate language for inquiries? (see [HERC's Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Inquiries](#) and consult your institutional policies and procedures)

## Additional Resources

- [Age, Gender and Race Discrimination in Hiring](#). 2016. PBS News Hour.
- Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. "Are Emily and Greg More Employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination." *American Economic Review* 94(1) (2003): 991–1013.
- Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. "Aversive racism and selection decisions: 1989 and 1999." *Psychological Science* 11(4) (2000): 315–319.
- Goldin, C. & Rouse, C. "Orchestrating impartiality: The impact of gender on the review of the curricula vitae of job applicants and tenure candidates: A national empirical study." *American Economic Review* (September 2000).
- Heilman, M. E. "The impact of situational factors on personnel decisions concerning women: varying the sex composition of the applicant pool." *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 26 (1980): 386-395.
- Moss-Racusin, C. A., J. F. Dovidio, et al. 2012. "Science faculty's subtle gender biases favor male students." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.
- [Recruiting resources for search committees: Reviewing applicants](#). Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI). University of Madison – Wisconsin.
- Terrell J, A. Kofink, J. Middleton, C. Rainear, E. Murphy-Hill, C. Parnin, and J. Stallings. "[Gender differences and bias in open source: Pull request acceptance of women versus men.](#)" *PeerJ Computer Science* (2017): 3:e1111
- Trix, Frances, and Carolyn Psenka. "Exploring the color of glass: Letters of recommendation for female and male medical faculty." *Discourse & Society* 14.2 (2003): 191-220.
- [What Works: Gender Equality by Design](#). Harvard University.



# HERC Search Committee Toolkit

## Prior to Candidate Interviews: Evaluation Template for Search Committee

This template offers a method for Search Committees to evaluate applicants during the initial review. It is designed to be modified by each committee for their own uses PRIOR to the start of a search and should reflect minimum requirements/selection criteria from the position posting. (Note: This template reflects an academic search. It can be modified for other types of positions by inserting the appropriate selection criteria in the rating form.)

Committee member name: \_\_\_\_\_ Applicant name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate which of the following are true (check all that apply):

- Read applicant CV
- Read applicant statements (research, teaching, etc.)
- Read applicant letters of recommendation
- Read applicant's scholarship (indicate what): \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate the applicant on each of the following:

	excellent	good	neutral	fair	poor	unable to judge
Evidence of research productivity						
Potential for scholarly impact / "tenurability"						
Evidence of strong background in [relevant fields]						
Evidence of [particular] perspective on [particular area]						
Evidence of teaching experience and interest (including grad mentorship)						
Potential to teach courses in core curriculum						
Potential to teach the core curriculum on [particular area] (including creation of new courses)						
Evidence of diversity in teaching, service, or research						

Recommend for continued consideration? \_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_ UNSURE

Please provide your reasons for your recommendation (use back of form if necessary):

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# Interviewing and Campus Visits

A campus visit is a critical step in the hiring process for both the candidate and the hiring department, so it is important to make the interview process as positive as possible. The logistics of the visits, the structure of the interviews, and the interactions with committee members and others offer an opportunity to showcase your department and provide a favorable impression of your community.



Ensure equitable treatment of all candidates with consistency in scheduling logistics, information, meals, transportation, lodging, and campus tours. Ask candidates who, if anyone, they would like to meet outside your department/unit (let them take the lead in identifying if they would like to speak with, perhaps other women faculty or faculty from underrepresented populations, potential collaborators, etc.). Ask yourselves:

- Do we have a consistent plan for all our candidate itineraries?
- Have we prepared comprehensive, uniform information packets about campus resources and policies, e.g., HERC membership, dual career supports, applicable faculty policies or campus services that may be of interest (such as child care, professional development), and affinity groups like an LGBTQ or women's center?

## Equitable Interviewing

Maintain consistency by providing a matrix or rubric for all colleagues to record their impressions of each candidate they interview or meet at a talk or meal. Please see the customizable [HERC Candidate Evaluation Template](#) as you discuss the following:

- Have we reviewed and/or provided the State and Federal Regulations on Appropriate Language for Inquiries to everyone who will interview the candidates?
- Do we have a matrix or rubric for interviewers to record their impressions of each candidates, so we can have specific feedback for group discussions and voting?
- Have we decided if the committee will present ranked or unranked candidates to the faculty/chair/dean for final consideration?
- Does our voting process (in committee and in the department) protect untenured or vulnerable faculty from pressure to vote a certain way?

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## Considerations After the Search

A successful search includes planning for the candidate's acceptance. Consider how you will manage and communicate about the following items that will impact retention and satisfaction.



- Offer letters and candidate communication
- Negotiating start-up packages
- Dual career opportunities
- New faculty welcome and integration
- Retention best practices
- Professional / career development

## Additional Resources

- [“Advancing diversity and inclusion in higher education: Key data highlights focusing on race and ethnicity and promising practices”](#). November 2016. Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development. Office of the Under Secretary. U.S. Department of Education.
- [“Gender equality: The smart thing to do”](#). Video: Women and Public Policy Program of Harvard Kennedy School.
- Smith, D. “How to diversify the faculty.” *Academe* (2000), 86( 5). Washington, D.C.: AAUP.

## HERC Search Committee Toolkit

# Candidate Evaluation Template for Interviews

This template offers a method for department faculty to provide evaluations of interviewed applicants. It is designed to be modified by each committee for their own uses PRIOR to the start of a search. The form should reflect the minimum requirements/selection criteria as well as any preferred qualities. While the text and templates focus on faculty searches in a research setting, the content can be adapted for any higher education position.

Interviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Applicant name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate which of the following are true for you (check all that apply):

- Read candidate's CV
- Read candidate's statements (re: research, teaching, etc.)
- Read candidate's letters of recommendation
- Read candidate's scholarship (indicate what): \_\_\_\_\_
- Met with candidate (or participated in video interview)
- Attended candidate's job talk
- Attended a meal with candidate

Please rate the applicant on each of the following:

	excellent	good	neutral	fair	poor	unable to evaluate
Evidence of, or potential for, research productivity						
Evidence of, or potential for research funding						
Evidence of, or potential for, scholarly impact						
Evidence of strong background in [relevant fields]						
Evidence of [particular] perspective on [particular area]						
Potential for, or evidence of, collaboration or interdisciplinary research						
Potential to make a positive contribution to the department's climate						
Evidence of, or ability to attract, work with, and supervise graduate students						
Evidence of commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion						
Potential or demonstrated ability to teach in the core curriculum and supervise undergraduates						
Potential or demonstrated ability to attract, work with, and teach diverse students						
Potential or demonstrated ability to be a conscientious department/school member						
Evidence of [preferred qualification #1]						
Evidence of [preferred qualification #2]						

Comments regarding scholarship, teaching, or research focus and the basis for your assessment.

Recommend for continued consideration:  YES  NO  UNSURE

## HERC Search Committee Toolkit

# Example Questions for Phone/Video Interviews

The goal of any candidate interview is to draw out more information about the qualifications that appear on the CV. When conducting first round phone/video interviews, Search Committee members should ask consistent types of questions so that their assessment is based on the same criteria for all the candidates interviewed. Working within a pre-arranged format ensures the committee will be able to compare similar qualifications when ranking the candidates.



One of the benefits of using phone/video interviews in a first round is that it allows a committee to start with a longer “short list” that is then winnowed to the final list after the interview assessment. This often allows candidates from underrepresented populations to be considered. The following sample questions should be used as a template for designing a consistent set of questions that suit your committee, position requirements, and department. Both junior- and senior-level candidate questions are represented.

### Sample Questions: Pre-Tenure Candidate

1. Search Chair/or designate: Introductions, explain time constraints and format of interview
2. Before we get started, are there any questions we can answer for you? (Friendly opening and potentially provides insight as to the focus of the candidate’s interest in the position.)
3. Teaching-focused questions:
  - a. What is your teaching experience? And how/who do you like to teach?
  - b. What classes would you want to teach? And what topic areas would interest you in developing a new class?
4. Research focused questions:
  - a. What would graduate/undergraduate students learn from you? In your lab?
  - b. Where do you see your research in five years?
  - c. How have you involved undergraduate students in your research?
5. Direct questions to clarify item on CV or research plan:
  - a. Specific questions related to discipline/field/science background

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- b. Status of publications, grants submitted, and research plan
- c. Questions about job-related skills and experience (for example, technical skills needed by a faculty member in a specialty tech program)
- 6. Establish if the candidate did homework on your university/school/department:
  - a. Who do you see as your potential collaborators here?
  - b. If we brought you in to interview, is there anyone outside of our department that you would like to meet with while you are here?
- 7. Describe the area(s) where you can have the greatest immediate success if you were to take this position. (This shifts away from all the mundane necessary activities and delves into what the candidate believes is possible.)
- 8. Diversity and inclusion:
  - a. What do you think are the most important concerns of underrepresented populations [faculty members/graduate students/undergraduates – could be race, gender, ethnicity, etc.] in our field/discipline?
  - b. How have you demonstrated your commitment to ensuring diversity, equity, and inclusion in your classroom and with your graduate students?

## Sample Questions: Senior Candidate

1. Search Chair or Designate: Introductions, explain time constraints and format of interview
2. Before we get started, are there any questions we can answer for you? (Be prepared to answer potential questions about topics such as tuition and stipend for graduate students; cost of living for students; quality and pool of students).
3. How/who do you like to teach?
  - a. Overview of where you see your research in 5 years?
4. Researched-focused questions: Direct question to clarify item on CV or research plan
  - a. How many students have you graduated from your program/lab?
  - b. Status of grants or publications
5. Collaboration plans - establish if candidate did homework on your university:
  - a. Tell us about some of your past collaborations across disciplines.
  - b. How did you find/establish those collaborations?
  - c. How do collaborations influence the future directions of your research?
  - d. Who do you see as a potential collaborator for you here?
  - e. If we brought you in for an interview, is there anyone outside of our department that you would like to meet?
6. If no past collaborations across disciplines:
  - a. How do you plan to initiate collaborations across disciplines?
  - b. Who do you see as a potential collaborators for you here?
7. Is the candidate moveable/serious?
  - a. Can you give the committee an idea of why you are looking to leave your university?
  - b. How intently have you been looking around? Are you on a timeline? (To establish if offers from other universities are pending)
  - c. What are your space requirements?
  - d. What are your equipment requirements?

8. Diversity, equity, and inclusion:

- a. How have you demonstrated your commitment to ensuring diversity, equity and inclusion in recruitment/hiring/retention for all faculty members and/or students?
- b. What do you think are the most important concerns of underrepresented [faculty members/graduate students/undergraduates – could be race, gender, ethnicity etc.] in our field/discipline?
- c. Tell us about a time that you successfully negotiated....? OR Describe a tough negotiation you participated in and what actions you took to resolve it.
- d. Tell us about a time that you successfully managed an interpersonal problem between [students/faculty members/collaborators]? OR Describe a tough interpersonal problem you experienced between [students/faculty members/collaborators] and what steps you took to resolve it.
- e. What are your personal [attitudes, feelings, process, habits] when you are mentoring a junior faculty member? OR If we asked your mentees to describe your mentoring, what would they say?
- f. What is one question we should be sure to ask your references about you?

9. Teaching-focused questions:

- a. What classes/topic areas do you prefer to teach? What new classes have you developed?



# HERC Search Committee Toolkit

## Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Interview Inquiries

Please consult your institutional policies and procedures.

SUBJECT	ACCEPTABLE INQUIRIES	UNACCEPTABLE INQUIRIES
Name	Whether the applicant has worked under another name.	Inquiries about the name that would seek to elicit information about the candidate’s ancestry or descent. Inquiries about name change due to a court order, marriage, gender transition status, or otherwise.
Birthplace	See “Citizenship” below.	Birthplace of applicant, spouse, parents, or other relatives.
Citizenship	Statement that employees must be eligible to work in the U.S.	Any inquiries about citizenship or whether the applicant is, or intends to become, a U.S. citizen.
Residence, Nationality	Place of residence. Length or residence in this city.	Specific inquiry into foreign addresses that would indicate national origin and/or nationality of applicant. Whether applicant owns or rents home.
Age	Can inquire if applicant meets minimum age requirements, or state that proof may be required upon hiring, or that hire is subject to verification of minimum age.	Cannot require that applicant state age or date of birth. Cannot require that applicant submit proof of age before hiring. Any questions that may tend to identify applicants over 40 years of age.
Sex/Gender Identity	Inquiry or restriction of employment is permissible only when a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification (BFOQ) exists.	Any inquiry that would indicate sex of applicant. (Sex is not a BFOQ because a job involves physical labor, such as heavy lifting beyond the capacity of some women.) Applicant’s sex cannot be used as a factor for determining whether an applicant will be “satisfied” in a particular job.

Marital and Family Status, Sexual Identity	Whether applicant can meet specific work schedules.	Marital status or number of dependents. Names, ages, or addresses of spouse, children, or relatives. Questions about sexual identity, orientation, or preference.
Race, Color, Physical Characteristic	Voluntary submission of AA/EEO information is made directly to the institution's Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity or other designated authority.	Inquiry as to applicant's race, color of skin, eyes, or hair, or other questions directly or indirectly indicating race or color. Applicant's height or weight when it is not relevant to the job.
Disability	Can ask an applicant questions about ability to perform job-related functions, as long as the questions are not phrased in terms which would seek to elicit whether the applicant has a disability, and as long as the question is asked of all applicants.	General inquiries ("Are you disabled?") that would tend to reveal disabilities or health conditions that do not relate to fitness to perform the job. Applicant's height or weight when it is not relevant to the job. It is unlawful to ask an applicant whether he or she is disabled or about the nature or severity of his or her disability.
Education	Applicant's academic, vocational attainment.	Date last attended high school (reflects age).
Pregnancy	No acceptable inquiry.	Any question concerning pregnancy or birth control.
Arrests and Convictions	Asking about conviction of a crime related to job qualification (for example, an applicant for a bursar's office position convicted of stealing).	Asking about arrests.
Religion	No acceptable inquiry.	Any question requesting the applicant's religious affiliation, church, parish, pastor, or religious holidays observed.
Military Experience	If needed for employment history, you may ask about applicant's military experience in U.S. Armed Forces. Voluntary submission of veteran status may be made directly to the institution's Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity or other designated authority.	Any question into applicant's general military experience. Any question into type of discharge.

Organizations	Any question into applicant's membership in organizations which the applicant considers relevant to his or her ability to perform the job, for instance, membership in professional societies.	Asking what organizations, clubs, and societies the applicant belongs to that are not relevant to his or her ability to perform the job (political, social, religious etc.).
Tests	Demonstrations of job-related skills and abilities are appropriate. No tests of any kind should be administered without the prior approval of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity and Human Resources.	No tests of any kind should be administered without the prior approval of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity and Human Resources.

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