

VCU

Strategies for Successfully Recruiting a Diverse Faculty

I

A Prerequisite to Searching for and Hiring Minority Faculty Members

Engage in a needs assessment and the self-study process. The needs and goals of an academic program must be the basis of the program's decision-making. A program must first identify its needs in relation to several aspects of its educational goals. These include its course offerings, curriculum development, research interests, current and future faculty and student demographics, and, in particular, plans for developing a culturally diverse setting.

Purpose: To clarify what abilities a person should possess as a faculty member and if these abilities can best be found in ethnic minority faculty members. (Ex. Is there an interest in incorporating or emphasizing multicultural content in course offerings? Is there a need for specific topic courses such as African-American Psychology? Is there a need for faculty to conduct research on minority issues? Is there a need to provide role models and support for a growing number of minority students?)

Campus Climate Issues: Quality of life factors and campus/community climate needs are also important components to consider when examining and setting goals for diversification. Minorities are not hired simply because they can conduct research and teach courses with a multicultural emphasis. They are hired because they can help diversify and provide balance to the campus community. The minority member's contributions to the department and campus in addressing diversity by his/her mere presence is also of value.

Self-study questions. A decision to diversify the faculty of a program may reside in one or several components and should guide the program's expectations for an ethnic minority faculty member once hired. Some questions to be considered as part of a needs assessment/self-study process are:

- What is the stated mission of the program?
- What are the demographics of the institution and the community in which it resides?
- What are the demographics of prospective students who have applied or who have been admitted to the program?
- How many students of color are majors? How many graduate students?
- Are there strategies for recruiting ethnically diverse students?
- How many faculty/staff of color are in the program?
- How many courses address ethnic diversity issues? Is diversity part of the content of required courses?
- Are students exposed to experimental opportunities/field trips that focus on diversity as part of course requirements?
- Do guest speakers include people from diverse ethnic backgrounds addressing issues both of diversity and other topics within the field?
- How are students of color supported academically?
- Do students of color have ethnically diverse faculty to serve as role models on the campus?
- Do majority faculty have an interest in working with ethnically-diverse students?
- Are there any tensions between white students/faculty and ethnically diverse students/faculty?
- Do students of color have difficulty finding faculty to chair their theses or dissertation committees or gaining acceptance of their topics when they address issues of diversity?
- Are funds set aside specifically for recruiting ethnic minority faculty?

Program expectations. Expectations a program has of minority candidates should be equivalent to those of any faculty candidate. Adding expectations for ethnic minority activities to other academic responsibilities could result in (1) the candidate losing interest in a position or (2) jeopardizing the new faculty member's retention, once hired. It is important, therefore, to prioritize needs based on a prioritized list of ethnic diversity activities and to exercise care in decision-making about responsibilities assigned to a new faculty member of color. Priorities should be grounded in the various aspects of diversity an ethnic minority candidate could bring to a department and its emerging needs in response to the above list of questions and the self-study process.

Note: When you hire a minority faculty candidate for his/her ability to teach courses related to diversity or just for his/her presence as part of a diverse university faculty community, it is important to recognize the value of these contributions in tenure evaluation, whether the contributions are in diversity research, teaching, or service. You must consider and acknowledge contributions to cultural diversity on par with other criteria for tenure and promotion. For minority candidates, it is important to recognize that contributions to cultural diversity at VCU may constitute a form of service to be taken into account.

II

Components to Consider in Developing an Ethnically-Sensitive Position Announcement

- **Position announcements typically contain three pieces of information:**
 - (a) An overview of the department/institution
 - (b) Primary job responsibilities
 - (c) Qualifications for the position
- **An ethnically sensitive position announcement should include the above information as well as content that addresses the following:**
 - (a) The importance of issues of diversity
 - (b) The value placed upon those who can share and teach differing points of view
 - (c) A description of an atmosphere where ethnic minority faculty members can receive support from other ethnic minority faculty members
- **The program/institutional overview portion of the advertisement should provide information on the makeup of the ethnic student population and/or some information on institutional goals that identify commitment to diversity.** A clear message may be written about the campus climate and the value placed on ethnic minority representation and/or faculty diversification.

Examples:

* The university has a student body of over 25,000 undergraduate, graduate and first professional students, including 36 percent of students of color and 1,544 international students from 125 countries.

- The university aspires to become a leader among its peer institutions in making meaningful and lasting progress in responding to the needs and concerns of minorities and women.
- The university places a high priority on the creation of an environment supportive of the promotion of ethnic minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.
- The university seeks to create a work environment and organizational culture that reflect the society and community in which it is located and a climate for the success of every employee by appreciating the uniqueness that each one brings to the workplace.
- In a continuing effort to enrich its academic environment and provide equal educational and employment opportunities, the university actively encourages applications from members of all ethnic groups underrepresented in higher education.

- **Conveying job responsibilities.** A program should identify job responsibilities in association with its needs, goals, and/or mission. The aim is to inform potential applicants of the program's genuine interest in them and the expertise they bring to the workplace in helping achieve a more culturally-diverse academic environment.

Responsibilities of a position should be clearly stated. In an instance of broad-based curricula needs, an advertisement might identify the need for a person with the skills necessary to develop courses that incorporate issues of ethnic diversity. Another job responsibility might be to work with and advise students representing various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Or, a program may simply want to have diverse viewpoints represented among its membership to promote academic excellence. None of these responsibilities need to be unique, but could be used in combination with developing an advertisement as noted below in the examples.

Examples:

- Develop a program in Asian-American Psychology
- Develop training models and curricula designed to reduce physical and mental health risk in ethnically-diverse populations
- Serve as role models for African-American, Latino, or Native American students

- **Writing job qualifications.** Two main requirements in developing qualifications are: (a) clarity and specificity, and (b) flexibility.

Poorly specified or unclear job qualifications increase the risk that excellent ethnic minority candidates will be eliminated for various undefined reasons, such as that they were "not qualified" as faculty for the program.

A tendency toward the comfort of homogeneity also results in committees not hiring candidates that fit their own model. Moving away from being satisfied with candidates who are most similar to existing faculty to considering candidates that are different involves more expanded and innovative ways of thinking about faculty positions.

This flexibility in thinking about job qualifications is part of understanding and valuing diversity and creates the opportunity for attracting ethnic minority applicants who can make significant contributions, initiate new ways of thinking, and introduce more diverse ideologies.

Career paths for ethnic minorities may vary in comparison to mainstream and/or white candidates. Therefore, when developing job qualifications, search committees need to identify characteristics that allow for more varied backgrounds and experiences. This helps to prevent ethnic minorities and others who may have less traditional career paths from being eliminated from the pool of viable candidates for a position.

- If a candidate has not had extensive experience, a situation that may be the result of past discriminatory practice, should that rule out his/her ability to perform the job successfully if given the opportunity?
- Can a similar, but not parallel, work history provide enough experience for an applicant to assume a position, even though on paper it may not be immediately apparent?
- Does the candidate have potential that, with support and mentoring, could develop the ingredients of a successful faculty member?

Search committees must be sensitive to differences and guided by this awareness when outlining the important and unique qualifications desired in a job applicant. Although this way of thinking may not be new, its use in developing job qualifications that are later used in the selection and screening process can contribute to broadening the committee's perspective, thus promoting and supporting diversification in the pool of candidates to be considered for a given position.

Qualifications described in the position announcement should focus upon opening the pool to a wide range of applicants, in particular to ethnic minority candidates. Use a broader definition of scholarship that encompasses specialities in ethnic minority issues. Abilities to teach in a number of areas should be the aim in developing the list of qualifications. A search committee would find it useful to keep in mind that the experiences of ethnic minority candidates may not mirror those of majority candidates, but that does not mean that ethnic minorities are less able or less qualified.

Examples:

- When reviewing research manuscripts and/or research studies, reviewers may consider that traditional experimental matched control research designs might not be possible in research studies involving certain minority neighborhoods or communities.
- A candidate may have discontinued education for awhile to earn money to support finishing graduate school; hence, such time off is not reflective of poor motivation, but rather heightened motivation.
- Search committees must keep focused on the goals of the identified qualifications, which are to determine a person's ability to perform the job responsibilities and assess the contributions he/she can make to the program. In the case of ethnic minority candidates, the search committee must also assess potential contributions based on the candidate's ethnicity and/or cultural background.

- **Listing identified needs in job advertisements.** The search committee must focus upon identified needs of the program and VCU and take care not to develop requirements that either exclude ethnic minority candidates during the search and screening process or discourage candidates from applying when they read a position announcement.

Examples to expand the pool of potential job applicants:

- Research program that focuses on issues relevant to ethnic minority populations.
- Ability to work effectively with ethnically diverse populations.
- Preference will be given to candidates who are able to teach courses that integrate ethnic minority content and issues.
- Teaching and/or research area is open, but an emphasis in Multicultural Counseling, Community Counseling, or Counseling At-Risk Groups is preferred.
- Proficiency in one of the following areas is desirable: child clinical, community psychology with emphasis on ethnic minority or rural populations.
- Interest, training, and demonstrated expertise in counseling and programming to meet the personal, career, and academic concerns of African-American students.

III

Preparing the Position Announcement

What Attracts Minority Candidates to Academic Positions?

Ethnic minority candidates are attracted to academic positions for many of the same reasons that non-minority candidates are. However, other salient factors also distinguish or enhance a job applicant's interest and a position's attractiveness for ethnic minority candidates. Among these factors are:

- Campus and community demographics;
- Special research opportunities with specific groups or in specific situations, e.g., migrant farmers, inner-city communities, special library collections, state/federal prisons, Native American reservations, industrial plants;
- Availability of ethnic minorities to serve as research subjects;
- Presence of other faculty of color;
- Administrative support for people of color to assume leadership positions;
- Possibility of achieving tenure and being promoted in rank;
- Faculty development opportunities and mentors;
- Success of other faculty of color in the program and/or on campus;
- Infusion of diversity issues into the curriculum;
- Social support network in the community;
- Community resources that include ethnic churches, stores, restaurants, hair stylists, and professionals of color to provide medical, dental, and legal services; and,
- Availability of a large metropolitan area within a short traveling distance when institutions are located in small communities.

Programs should work to hire more than one or two minority faculty to help establish an intra-departmental base of support for ethnic minority faculty members. Candidates do not want to be considered the token minority of a program and, in some instances, may not want to be the only minority faculty member within a program.

Because programs often become complacent after hiring their first ethnic minority, or opportunities for new hires become limited because of the lack of available resources, programs need at the outset to establish search goals for recruiting multiple members of ethnic minorities to their academic units. In turn, preparing the position announcement to convey the goal of filling two or more positions with ethnic minority faculty will serve a useful recruitment purpose. This will let potential minority candidates anticipate the presence of other minority faculty, who would provide support for dealing with the negative forces of tokenism or be available for discussing shared concerns. Keep in mind, however, that ethnic minorities can be attracted to a position and a campus even in the absence of a large ethnic minority community, student body, and faculty if they perceive the program to be a supportive environment committed to their interests and well-being as prospective ethnic minority faculty members.

Another pivotal factor that enhances the attractiveness of a position to ethnic minority applicants is the use of statements that convey an interest in the contributions that ethnic minority candidates can make and the impact their work can have on the overall training and goals of the academic program. Normally, the commonly used phrase "women and minorities are encouraged to apply" is limited in its ability to convey the broader messages associated with more direct statements about the contributions that an ethnic minority member can bring to a position. Moreover, more specific statements help dispel concerns often associated with affirmative action hires.

Take a moment to read the following example of a job announcement. Notice the different ways that the factors discussed have been incorporated to aid in the development of a more ethnically-sensitive position announcement. Note especially the wording in bold face.

The School of Education invites applications for **two openings** for the position of: assistant/associate professor of School Psychology to begin fall 2001. The University seeks to attract an active, **culturally and academically diverse faculty of the highest caliber**, skilled in the scholarship of teaching, discovery, application, and integration of knowledge. The University is a doctoral granting public institution that enrolls about 32,000 students, including **nearly 8,500 ethnic minorities**. Twenty-five doctoral programs are offered. The School has been recognized nationally for its leadership in the preparation of educational professionals and as a principal contributor to professional literature. In addition to the Baccalaureate, Master's, and Ed.D. degrees, a Ph.D. degree is available in five major program areas. The School of Education is **fully committed to a culturally diverse faculty and student body**. The faculty have identified six mission priorities for the School, which are:

- (a) work in "at-risk" settings;
- (b) **development of multicultural educational environments that affirm the value of cultural diversity;**

- (c) establishment of formal collaborative partnerships designed to achieve professional impact;
- (d) development of the School as a learning community;
- (e) engagement in systematic inquiry; and,
- (f) development of improved methods of evaluation and research.

Successful candidates will evidence commitment to those priorities and also contribute to the attainment of extramural funding in support of collaborative projects and increased utilization of technologies to improve professional education.

The idea, as demonstrated by this example, is to develop position announcements that convey the value of ethnic diversity and the importance of attracting candidates who bring that added dimension and can facilitate further growth in creating a more culturally and ethnically diverse setting within a department.

IV

Circulating the Job Announcement

Moving Away from Traditional Recruitment Strategies to Attract Ethnic Minority Candidates

Work centered around developing a position announcement that conveys the value of ethnic diversity within a program is lost if similar attention is not given to where the position is advertised or announced to help increase or expand the pool of ethnic minority candidates applying. Traditional methods of posting job announcements are limited in their ability to attract ethnic minority candidates.

In recruiting ethnic minorities, recruitment strategies must be more aggressive than circulating an advertisement and waiting for candidates to forward their vitae and resumes.

We need to employ other strategies. Let's look at some:

- Search committees must work with the Office of EEO/AA Services in compiling an extensive list of advertisement sources.
- Circulating announcements should include, but extend beyond, the minority academic community to encompass ethnic minority candidates who work in businesses, corporations, governmental agencies, and the military.
- Ethnic minorities who have received grants and/or professional recognition can serve as excellent resource persons for referrals.
- Recruiting via personal contact and referral is more successful than reliance primarily on placement of advertisements in the
- **Chronicle of Higher Education**, if the goal is to attract an increased number of ethnic minority applicants.
- Online databases and Internet servers can be employed for placement of job announcements.

Additional strategies include:

- Writing directly to colleagues to request nominations of ethnic minority candidates.
- Contacting temples, mosques, and churches that might list job announcements in bulletins or announce them to the congregation.
- Contacting the Midwest Consortium of Latino Research for a position listing on the e-mail network – MCLR ListServer.
- Contacting the National and/or State Black or Hispanic Caucus organizations and state and local legislators and representatives.
- Placing advertisements in periodicals and communications such as Black Enterprise, The Black Resource Guide, The Black Collegian, Hispanic, and American Visions.
- Writing to historically Black, predominantly Latino, and tribal colleges and universities to secure lists of doctoral students graduating in a particular field.
- Contacting local and statewide field-specific associations to secure a list of ethnic minority members.
- Writing to ethnic minority caucus groups (e.g., Black Coalitions of Higher Education) that may have a network of professionals within their organization.
- Contacting corporations that publish newsletters and or communications that include job announcements.
- Sending job announcements to social organizations (Black Greek sororities and fraternities, LULAC, and the NAACP). Better yet, asking to speak at one of their meetings to talk about the department and the open position.

Because national publications are expensive and have not been the most effective method of increasing the ethnic applicant pool, search committees are encouraged to consider other means that will cost less, but may require more in the investment of time for making personal contacts. The results of this time investment will, however, yield worthwhile outcomes.

V

Selecting the Top Candidates

What to Consider During the Screening Process

Before the search committee reviews and screens applicants, it should do the following:

- Re-examine the position description containing the listing of responsibilities.
- Develop an applicant rating sheet to maintain focus on programmatic needs and the desirable qualifications of applicants. (If a rating sheet is not used, search committee members must in some way clearly identify and agree upon a set of qualifications to use when screening applicants, in keeping with the position announcement.)
- Review any university-wide staffing plans that indicate expectations for programs with underrepresentation of minorities.
- When there are no available ethnic minorities within a program to serve on a search committee, consider appointing an ethnic minority from another department.
- Members of the search committee should write or talk about their reasons for eliminating applicants and to address potential biases during the screening and selection processes.
- Rather than eliminate a candidate because of insufficient information on the resume/vita, contact the candidate to secure additional information or to clarify items in the materials submitted.
- View quality work experience outside of academics as an indication of potential for success in an academic setting. Successful non-academic professionals should be given credit for their experience when vying for associate professor and/or senior level positions.
- Keep in mind that many ethnic minorities have experienced publication barriers in prestigious journals and limited access to publishers. These barriers have necessitated publication via ethnic journals (that have not historically been considered as prestigious) or personally published works. Be sensitive to such barriers and not give less weight to these publications during the screening process.
- Consider using ethnic minority status as a “plus factor”. Screening methods implicitly rely upon plus factors. In the first screening, candidates who meet minimal standards should be retained, e.g., a doctorate, an internship, an ability to teach the needed topics, a potential for a research program. A second screening takes into account “pluses”—e.g., those who come from strong doctoral programs, or who can teach more than one needed course, or who have presented papers at annual conferences. At some point in this or the next screening, a set of applicants may emerge whose academic and professional credentials are equally strong. This is when selection of the “short list” of candidates to be invited for a recruiting visit should take into account cultural diversity and its relationship to these three questions: (a) What are the goals and needs of the program? (B) What are the qualifications required? (C) Do the staffing plans of the institution give ethnic/racial diversity important weight in screening candidates in view of program needs? (NOTE: This is not to say that non-ethnic minority candidates should not be considered. However, selection of candidates should be based on the cultural, ideological, and personal differences that candidates can bring to our research and teaching. Therefore, cultural diversity can be viewed as a plus factor, carrying positive value, rather than being interpreted automatically as a negative factor.)

VI

The Recruiting Visit: A Continuous Process

What to Consider as Recruitment Strategies

- **The need for ongoing activities:** The most successful search committees consider recruitment ongoing and do not engage in one-shot recruiting invitations to a campus. When seeking to hire ethnic minority candidates, an ongoing approach may make the difference between a successful hire and a failed search. Therefore, committees should look for as many opportunities as possible to maintain contact with ethnic minorities/potential applicants. Ongoing contacts help erode a potential candidate's false assumptions of not being valued and wanted as an ethnic minority.
- Another important strategy is the establishment of a network and potential referral source for ethnic minorities considering employment within a particular academic program.
- Also, consider communication from members of the university community, ranging from presidents to faculty and students, who express enthusiasm for the candidate. If a minority has been identified as a potential applicant before the formal search process begins, continued contacts are important to maintain his/her interest in the position, as well as to maintain a strong program and faculty interest in the candidate.
- Successful ongoing recruitment activities include:
 - Sending small teams of faculty, students, and administrators for visits to campuses where potential ethnic minority students/applicants reside;
 - Contacting applicants during the screening process.
 - Meeting with ethnic minority groups during national/regional conferences. Possible meeting times include business meetings, social hours, and informal gatherings of memberships; and,
 - Writing to ethnic minorities one year prior to their completion of a PhD or EdD program to inform them of upcoming job openings. Letters should clearly state needs and interests of the program and be followed up by telephone calls.
- Meeting with the candidate personally during his/her visit to campus is the primary form recruitment takes. However, even after a campus visit, committees must consider recruitment ongoing. Minority faculty candidates are only going to deal with you if you become a voice to them and later a face to them. They have to sense your sincerity.
- Preparing for the recruiting visit: In discussions with a candidate in preparation for a campus visit, it is important to learn the candidate's cultural and language background and the correct pronunciation of his/her name and to prepare faculty and students to be culturally sensitive.

Materials sent in advance of the recruitment visit might include information about the ethnic minority community. A resource sheet should be included listing places of worship, ethnic restaurants, ethnic businesses, names of ethnic minorities holding leadership positions in city government, ethnic minority professionals, public school teachers and administrators, and ethnic minority social clubs and/or service organizations. This resource sheet also should include community demographics and historical information relevant to the ethnic minority community. A resource sheet not sent in advance could be shared during the visit. Faculty, students, and staff should be familiar with the contents of the sheet so they can be prepared for questions about the ethnic minority community.

Similar information should be compiled about the campus community and the specific program involved in the search process. Resource information might include:

- Enrollment figures of the campus at large;
- Number of undergraduate and graduate majors in a particular field, designated by ethnicity;
- Number of students graduating according to ethnic background;
- Number of ethnic minority faculty, staff, and administrators;
- Ethnic minority fellowships, scholarships, and postdoctoral opportunities;
- Listing of program courses that address ethnic minority or multicultural issues;
- Names of recognized ethnic minority faculty/administrative/student campus groups and organizations; and,
- Mission statement of the program.

In planning a recruitment visit, planners should arrange for a candidate to meet and be interviewed by minority faculty, staff, and community representatives and other faculty and administrators. Discussions with the program's ethnic minority faculty or with other minority faculty on campus can provide valuable information about how the candidate might fit into a particular setting.

If the candidate has family or friends in the location of the institution, planners may arrange for the candidate to visit with them after the formal visit, as that might increase the attractiveness of the position.

Search committees must be prepared to address both the professional life and personal life of an applicant. When seeking to hire ethnic minorities, this may require additional information gathering on the part of committee members. By placing themselves in the position of an ethnic minority applicant, committee members can gain the applicant's perspective and begin to explore issues, raise questions, and seek out information to better prepare themselves as recruiters for the applicant's campus visit.

Search committees must allow time for candidates to examine aspects of relocation during the recruitment visit. Ethnic minority candidates may want to make multiple visits to campus, and committees must be prepared for the possibility. Committees should seize the opportunity to view it as an aspect to continuous recruitment. How the campus/program is able to communicate a good fit, a supportive environment, openness and acceptance, along with professional and personal opportunities may outweigh its contrast to the environment the ethnic minority knows so well.

- **Spousal/partner placement:** Committees cannot overlook the needs of dual career couples. In preparing for the visit, search committees should find out about available campus resources that can assist in finding employment for a partner. The search committee should develop these job sources and set up job interviews for the partner whenever possible. Candidates typically will take it upon themselves to raise these issues, and the search committee need not broach the subject if the candidates do not initiate it.

Avenues for consideration are:

- The EEO/AA Office, which can circulate vitae and resumes on campus or in the community;
- Chairs informally contacting faculty/chairs at nearby institutions that may have openings;
- Grant-supported positions on campus;
- Split or shared appointments between partners when additional resources for a single position are available to an academic unit; and
- Work/Life Resources through Human Resources.

www.vcu.edu/eoaa

Virginia Commonwealth University • Office of Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Services
901 W. Franklin St. • Richmond, VA 23284-3022 • (804) 828-1347 • Fax (804) 828-7201 • Voice/TTY (804) 828-1420

Virginia Commonwealth University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action university providing access to education and employment without regard to age, race, color, national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, veteran's status, political affiliation or disability.