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Equity, Inclusion, and Faculty Hiring Committees

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Equity, Inclusion, and Faculty Hiring Committees

Chairpersons are frequently tasked with leading faculty hiring committees. During these processes, they often face challenges related to implicit and explicit biases. Although colleges and universities have often developed processes for the mechanics of hiring committees, they have often not developed strategies for ensuring an equitable and inclusive hiring process. During this session, participants will share some of the challenges that they have faced with faculty hiring and discuss possible tactics for addressing inequity in hiring processes. This session will detail practices that chairpersons can utilize to engage in more inclusive hiring. Practices include establishing committee membership, discussing and examining explicit and implicit bias, developing equitable deliberation and decision-making practices, and adhering to college and university policies when conducting hiring committee work.

Some topics included in presentation materials will include the problem of hiring for “good fit” and what this often means for faculty from marginalized groups. We will also explore color blindness and its effects on committee members’ perceptions of their own biases. For example, faculty members often see themselves as enlightened and rarely question these self-perceptions. Further, we will address the frequent “blaming” of applicant pools for a lack of diversity in departments rather than addressing reasons why applicant pools are homogenous.

Last, we will discuss specific recommendations for practice. For example, examine the minimum qualifications closely and ask whether this is more than is really required. Can fewer years of experience be required? Ensure that the search committee’s composition is significantly diverse—at least 33% diverse committee members. Ensure that travel expenses to the interview are paid, as this is a matter of privilege.

Overall, representation is important. Colleges and universities need diverse faculty, and often departments reproduce themselves rather than thinking outside of the established norms of the department. The chairperson is the primary leader when it comes to faculty hiring and should work to create the most equitable and inclusive hiring processes possible.