

Guide to Diversifying Faculty Searches

Crafting Job Descriptions

Introduction

The job description is the document that prospective job candidates review to discern whether their background and experiences qualify with what the department is seeking from its applicant pool. In each job announcement, there are at least three components: position description, qualifications, and application materials. Moreover, each job statement must include Brown University's commitment to equal opportunity, which reads:

“Brown University is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive academic global community; as an EEO/AA employer, Brown considers qualified applicants for employment without regard to, and does not discriminate on the basis of, gender, race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, protected veteran status, disability, or any other legally protected status.”

This statement, while necessary, is principally about promoting affirmative action and acknowledging the University's commitment to equal opportunity. It is also necessary to use the job descriptions as an opportunity to ensure there is sufficient language that may communicate the department sees diversity as an integral component of academic excellence and aspires to draw upon the widest possible pool by encouraging historically underrepresented groups to apply. Beyond compliance, search committees will increase the likelihood of attracting a diverse applicant pool by incorporating the following equity-minded components when crafting job descriptions:

Considerations for Job Descriptions

University and Departmental Strategic Priorities

In addition to centering the department's mission and values, include statements about the institution's and department's commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion. Language from the University and Departmental Diversity and Inclusion Action Plans may be useful or provide a link to the Plans.

Broad Criteria

In some instances, scholars who identify as women and/or within groups that are historically underrepresented in higher education may disproportionately be rising and junior scholars or specialize in subfields and approach teaching courses in ways that are consistent with their own specialization. To this end, whenever possible, keep the domains of teaching and research expertise broad. Consider non-traditional experiences and career pathways. The narrower the job description, the more people tend to decline to apply. When drafting the position description, consider the possibility of open ranked positions. Additionally, develop a broad definition of the position and the desired scholarship, experience, and disciplinary background. Be clear about what is required and what is preferred. If appropriate, use “preferred” instead of “required,” “should” instead of “must,” etc., when describing qualifications and developing criteria.

Areas of Expertise

While describing curricular and research content areas, consider ways that diverse perspectives and experiences could inform and broaden teaching and research in your discipline. Explore whether criteria that incorporates epistemic diversity criteria and/or look for applicants who draw on their own experience to take the discipline in new directions or to bring its benefits to diverse constituencies. How does the job description and (preferred)

qualifications attract scholars who can contribute to diverse epistemologies, histories and approaches that compose our national and global landscape? As an example, the following text could appear in the qualifications section of a job description: “Demonstrated ability or evidence of potential to both foster inclusive learning environments and infuse critical perspectives in their research and teaching is preferred.”

Competencies and Qualifications

Articulate specific competencies with diversity, equity and inclusion the applicant should possess in order to successfully prosper in the faculty role as either required or preferred, such as sustained experience mentoring a diverse student body in general and historically underrepresented students in particular, and/or a track record of research, teaching and service in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Avoid using gendered pronouns when describing qualifications or characteristics of the job candidate and instead describe the individual in their professional capacity, which could include referring to the applicant as a candidate or scholar.

Broadening Participation

In addition to the Equal Employment Opportunity language detailed above, concrete examples that could be embedded in job descriptions could read as follows:

- “Diversity, equity and inclusion are integral to the commitment of the Department and University. Accordingly, the Department seeks qualified candidates who can contribute to racial equity, diversity and inclusion through service, mentorship, teaching and scholarship. Further, the Department is keenly interested in diversifying its faculty and encourages applications from diverse candidates. Candidates from historically underrepresented group(s) in higher education are encouraged to apply.”
- “The Department is especially interested in qualified candidates who can contribute, through their research, teaching, and/or service, to the diversity and excellence of the academic community.”
- “The University is responsive to the needs of dual career couples.”
- “Brown University [or school/department] seeks to recruit and retain a diverse workforce to maintain the excellence of the University, and to offer our students richly varied disciplines, perspectives, viewpoints, and ways of knowing and learning.”
- “The school/department is interested in qualified candidates who have demonstrated commitment to excellence by providing leadership in teaching, research or service toward building an equitable and diverse scholarly environment.”

Application Materials

In the “application instructions” section of the job description, consider what materials are required to evaluate applicants prior experience and potential contributions. It is common to request applicants submit a CV, writing sample, teaching dossier, research and/or teaching statement, and letters of recommendation. Increasingly, search committee members desire ways to assess applicants’ prior experiences and potential contributions to fostering a diverse learning environment to discern whether and how candidates might be able to advance inclusive approaches to teaching and mentoring while affirming a multitude of perspectives. To evaluate these attributes, search committees may also request a diversity statement or incorporate instructions that suggests the search committee will be evaluating these attributes through the other required materials. An example could read as follows:

- “We encourage applicants to discuss in their research and teaching statement how their commitment to scholarly excellence is interwoven in their approaches to fostering an inclusive learning environment, inclusive approaches to teaching and mentoring, and affirming diverse perspectives and viewpoints.”



Crafting Job Descriptions References and Resources

Columbia University (2016). *Guide to best practices in faculty search and hiring*. Retrieved June 2020 from: <https://provost.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/BestPracticesFacultySearchHiring.pdf>

Hamilton College (n.d.). *LITS Diversity and inclusion in hiring*. Retrieved June 2020 from: <https://libguides.hamilton.edu/c.php?g=877539&p=6302062>

Harvard University (2016). Best practices for conducting faculty searches. Retrieved June 2020 from: https://faculty.harvard.edu/files/fdd/files/best_practices_for_conducting_faculty_searches_v1.2.pdf

Montana State University. (n.d.). A guide for broadening faculty searches at Montana State University: Transforming the search process to enhance excellence and diversity, 5th edition. Retrieved June 2020 from: http://www.montana.edu/nsfadvance/documents/MSU_searchtoolkit_v5.0web.pdf

Sensoy, Ö., & DiAngelo R. (2017). “We are all for diversity but...”. How faculty hiring committees reproduce whiteness and practical suggestions for how they can change. *Harvard Education Review*. 87(4), 557-580.

University of Michigan (2018). *Handbook for faculty searches and hiring*. Retrieved June 2020 from: <https://advance.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Handbook-for-Faculty-Searches-and-Hiring.pdf>

University of California, Berkeley (n.d.). Demonstrating interest in and ability to advance diversity, equity and inclusion. Retrieved June 2020 from: <https://ofew.berkeley.edu/recruitment/contributions-diversity/support-faculty-candidates>

University of Delaware (2019). *Faculty hiring: Best practices for search committees*. Retrieved June 2020 from <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.udel.edu/dist/4/648/files/2019/09/Faculty-Hiring.-Best-Practices-Search-Committes-ALL.pdf>

University of Washington (n.d.). Handbook of best practices for faculty searches. Retrieved from June 2020 from: <https://www.washington.edu/diversity/faculty-advancement/handbook/>

Note: Links are provided for ease of access to the above information. Because websites are updated regularly, a link may turn inactive. If that occurs, we encourage you to try and retrieve the information through a general search