

Suffolk University | Office of the Provost

Equitable and Inclusive Faculty Searches

INTRODUCTION

In a recent survey, one student offered this observation: “Suffolk’s diversity is one of the best things about the institution. However, that diversity is not reflected in the faculty.” Without any data other than the student’s own observation, they identified a reality and a problem. Institutional data confirms this. Reviewing Fall 2021 and Fall 2022 data, 23% of undergraduate students identified as either Black or Hispanic and 7% of our full-time faculty (in CAS and SBS combined) identified as either Black or Hispanic. While there are some limitations with this data analysis, mostly that we are unable to account for multiracial individuals, Suffolk’s data is consistent with colleges and universities nationally ([Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017](#), [White-Lewis 2021](#)).

Research shows students achieve greater outcomes and are better served by practitioners and scholars who are more likely to foster their achievement, use culturally relevant and affirming pedagogy, curb stereotype threat, develop personal relationships with them, enhance their sense of belonging, and advocate on their behalf ([Liera and Ching 2019](#)).

Therefore, in consideration of the above two points, **the goal of this guide is to promote best practices in faculty searches in order to recruit and retain the most qualified faculty whose particular interests in teaching, practice, and/or scholarship help to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at Suffolk University.**

This guide includes best practices and resources related to recruitment and retention of excellent faculty. Topics include the job posting, assembling the search committee, conducting the search, equity-mindedness, and eliminating bias. A number of resources are also included in this guide.

It is important to note that conducting inclusive and equitable searches is not extra or additional work. Rather, it is culturally responsive to the needs of our community and a long-term strategy for the success of the university.

This guide is intended to provide generalized resources and recommendations for search committees. Recognizing the uniqueness of some of our academic disciplines, not all of the information in this guide would apply to every search. Search committees are encouraged to adapt resources to meet the needs of their search while maintaining a goal to run an inclusive and equitable search. Please note this guide is not intended to replace any required training from Human Resources.

EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Eliminating Bias

It may not be a surprise to anyone that research demonstrates how our biases influence hiring. When people refer and hire individuals who are similar to them, they are overlooking important and relevant information. Individuals who are motivated by what is known or familiar then limit the search committee’s idea of who could fill this role. Furthermore, researchers have found that scholarship that was purposefully focused on a certain population or marginalized identity was considered to be too narrow ([White-Lewis 2020](#)). As an example, a candidate’s background may be related to effective learning strategies for black students in rural K-12 education; search committee members may find this to be too narrow a research area, which then influences the search committee’s decision to move these candidates along in the process.

Recommendations

- Complete the required LinkedIn Learning Pathway on Faculty Hiring through Human Resources.
- Ask search committee members to complete the online [Implicit Association Test](#) from Harvard. Facilitate a discussion that prompts committee members to reflect upon their own biases, how bias may enter the search process, and how they may mitigate that.
- Employ a search that has a broad research scope, rather than one that seeks to fill a specific research gap or topic. This may help to mitigate preconceived notions of who a successful hire might be.
- All members of the search committee must review all candidates who meet the minimum position criteria as stated in the job posting. This helps to standardize the process and promote objectivity.
- The search committee may want to consider how to weigh candidate referrals. Referrals may be an effective way to recruit individuals into the candidate pool but may also carry bias with them.
- Ask well-crafted questions in each of the interviews and utilize a rubric, or some other evaluative tool, to evaluate the candidate's responses. Please see sample questions below:
 - [UC Davis Sample Interview Questions](#)
 - [UC Boulder Sample Interview Questions](#)
 - Rubrics are provided later in this document.

Equity-Mindedness

Grounded in the work of Dr. Bensimon at the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California, we may approach faculty searches with an [equity-minded framework](#). In this approach, we are asked to center race in an analysis of how colleges work, recognize that institutional racism is prevalent within higher education, understand that racial inequities originate from practices that historically have centered and favored whiteness, and place the responsibility to change these practices on ourselves.

Questions to Promote Equity- Mindedness

- Recognizing that candidates with marginalized identities face many barriers and challenges, how might a review of all applications account for this?
- What experience does the candidate have advancing equity and inclusion?
- How can the candidate advance racial equity at Suffolk?
- How has the candidate reflected on how colleges produce racialized outcomes?
- How has the candidate demonstrated their experience teaching and/or mentoring racially minoritized students?
- How has the candidate expressed their understanding that college students hold multiple and intersecting identities that shape their experience on campus?

Language Matters

How we talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion has evolved, and will continue to evolve. Our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion must be reflected in our language.

Deficit-based language with a negative impact	Suggested inclusive and equity-based language
Minority	Marginalized or minoritized
Underrepresented minority	Race, racial equity, racial equity gap / Opportunity gap
Underprepared	Black and Brown / Latiné
Disadvantaged	Asian, Desi American, Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander
Achievement gap	Culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy
Non-traditional	Equity, Socially just communities
Equality	

Within the LGBTQIA+ community, identity and language are often very fluid. Consider referencing this community as either LGBTQIA+ or the terms “gender and sexuality minoritized groups.” Invite members of the search committee to share their pronouns with each candidate, and vice versa. Learn more about inclusive language [here](#).

BEGINNING THE SEARCH

Position Posting & Recruiting

In addition to providing important information about the specific role, there is a great opportunity in the position advertisement to convey Suffolk’s values and our commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion.

Recommendations

1. Tell the story of Suffolk University as an institution of access and opportunity
 - An example may be: **Founded in 1906 by Gleason Archer, who provided legal education in the evening to individuals who might not otherwise have been afforded that opportunity, Suffolk University consistently seeks to advance its history as a school of access and excellence, highlighted by over 1/3 of our undergraduate students who identify as first-generation. And 35% of our undergraduate and graduate students are from racially minoritized groups. Set in the heart of Boston, our students and faculty thrive among the endless experiential learning and scholarship opportunities and partnerships. We seek to develop faculty whose teaching and scholarship center issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and are particularly interested in candidates who can demonstrate their commitment to inclusive pedagogy.**
 - The posting should also include any school/college or department achievements or accolades related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
2. Be very clear about the minimum qualifications and the preferred qualifications. Research has shown that women are less likely to apply for positions if they don’t meet all of the minimum qualifications.
3. Consider requesting candidates to submit a diversity statement, which provides an overview of their experience with diversity, equity, and inclusion or their vision for how they may promote these concepts in their teaching or scholarship.
4. A search that is designed to be as broad as possible may attract candidates that otherwise would not be interested in the role. One successful search at [Emory University](#) wrote a position advertisement that read “this search is open for any area of biology.”
5. Alternately, the search may intentionally be designed as a narrow one using key words if the role includes some specific DEI content. As an example, the English Department may be seeking a tenure track position to develop and teach courses that encompass the African diaspora and modern Black literature.
6. This same position advertisement at Emory read “this search is part of a multi-year Emory initiative to foster equity and to promote the success of our diverse student population.” Aligning this equity and inclusive search to a larger context within the university conveys meaning and commitment. You may want to include some mention that DEI featured prominently in our Suffolk 25 strategic plan.
 - In this search at Emory, 13% of the candidates held an identity that is historically considered to be underrepresented in STEM. Previous searches would have yielded a much smaller applicant pool who would have been considered underrepresented.
7. Consider where to post the position. Search committee members may be helpful with this. Please see additional resources at the end of this guide for a list of online job boards related to diversity organizations. While affinity-group job boards can be helpful, candidates are also looking at discipline-specific job sites, advertisements, listservs, etc. It is essential that the position posting be well-crafted to achieve a successful search.

Search Committees

Building the search committee is both pragmatic and strategic. Careful consideration should be made to the diversity among the search committee, which may help to mitigate the influence of bias among a homogeneous group. Without search committee members who can speak to the potential of certain scholarship or experiences and challenge traditional norms of good or worthy scholarship, racially minoritized candidates may be overlooked.

Recommendations

1. Committee chairs may need to be creative to ensure diversity among the search committee. We want to avoid overburdening faculty of color by asking them to sit on all, or many even, of the search committees. Consider asking faculty from other disciplines, students, alumni, industry partners, or staff/administrators.
2. Invite the search committee to meet before the actual search begins to review the position announcement, discuss the Inclusive Hiring LinkedIn Learning Pathway through Human Resources, select which best practices for inclusive and equitable searches they will employ, and identify what additional resources/assistance they may need or questions they may have. Allowing the search committee to spend time with each other before the search begins helps to establish trust and group norms.
3. Empower members of the search committee to be actively recruiting for this role. The searching part of this process is as important as the selection.
4. Ask the search committee to collaboratively craft the criteria for the position. Analyze the criteria through an equity-minded approach:
 - What does our criteria suggest about the ideal candidate for this role?
 - In what ways do our criteria reflect traditional practice?
 - Based on our criteria, who is most likely to be attracted to this role?
 - Based on our criteria, who is most likely to be seen as a strong candidate?
 - How would this criteria impact candidates from racially minoritized groups?

(Retrieved from [Liera and Ching 2019](#))

Conducting the Search

At each point in the search process, from the initial screening of candidate materials through the interviewing to the final selection, a well-planned search encompasses inclusive and equitable practices.

Recommendations for the Search

1. Ask candidates to submit a diversity statement, which may demonstrate any of the following:
 - Demonstrated and/or potential contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion through teaching, mentoring, and/or scholarship
 - Demonstrated cultural competency: professional development and training, reflecting on one's positionality and privilege, expression of concepts and terms related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).
 - Identifying specific actions, plans, and accountability to advance educational equity

There are alternate ways to evaluate a candidate without a diversity statement, including demonstrated experience on their CV/resume, through specific interview questions, and recommendation letters that address DEI ([Bombaci and Pejchar 2020](#)). However, one of the benefits to the diversity statement is that it conveys institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

2. Determine how application materials will be reviewed. Are teams of committee members reviewing the materials? The search committee may choose to review application materials in a specific order, such as (1) cover letter, (2) diversity statement, (3) teaching statement, (4) research statement, (5) CV/resume, (6) recommendation letters.
 - In the search at Emory University described above, the search committee valued equally the diversity, teaching, and research statement. After the initial first review of application materials, 67% of the narrowed-down candidate pool were considered underrepresented.
3. Be intentional with interview questions. If we don't ask candidates about their experience teaching or mentoring students from marginalized populations, how will they tell us? Suggested questions include:
 - Share with us how you engage diversity within the classroom?
 - In what ways has your classroom, course content, or syllabus been inclusive?
 - What experience do you have with mentoring students of color and/or contributing to the diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at a previous institution?
 - What are the challenges students from marginalized populations experience on a college campus?
 - Explain the influence of diversity, equity, and inclusion within your research interests.
4. Candidates need to not only hear about institutional commitment to DEI, they need to see and feel it.
 - Include visits to the Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion as part of the on-campus interview to meet with staff and students
 - Demonstrate interest in the candidate's teaching, research, scholarship, and professional practice
 - Invite a large presence at the candidate's teaching and/or research presentation
 - Ensure search committee members can cite initiatives, accomplishments, and challenges associated with diversity, equity, and inclusion within the department, school, and/or university

Removing the Criteria of Fit

Understandably, when we search for a new colleague, we want to know that we will be able to work with that person and enjoy some sense of collegiality. We want to hire people who will be a good "fit" for our department. Unfortunately, and unintentionally, the term "fit" has been uncovered through various studies to be loaded with racial preference and discriminatory practice. White-Lewis (2020) found that once candidates had satisfied an initial review of qualification based on minimal job requirements, characteristics such as personal values, political orientation, and personality traits become particularly important to the search committees. This is bias infiltrating an inclusive search. Agreed-upon and clearly understood criteria, the utilization of rubrics, and standardizing the search process help to remove the risk of "fit."

Factors to consider when individually ranking candidates: (not in any particular order)

- Evidence and/or potential for contributions to their field of study
- Evidence and/or potential of ability to effectively develop and/or teach courses for undergraduate majors and/or graduate programs
- Evidence and/or potential to teach/mentor students of color
- Demonstrated understanding of inclusive pedagogy and/or concepts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Potential contributions to the department/university

Factors NOT to consider when individually ranking candidates:

- Personal characteristics, demographics, identities, personality traits
- Personal/career factors that impact the candidate's situation (spouse, relocation, children, etc)

Utilizing Rubrics + Templates

Rubrics promote a sense of fairness and objectivity. Search committees may decide to utilize rubrics throughout the search process or just at certain points. Rubrics may be used to evaluate candidate materials, initial screenings, and on-campus interviews. Available rubrics and templates include:

- [Initial Screening Matrix](#)
- [Narrative or Qualitative Screening Tool](#)
- [Final Evaluation Matrix](#)

Additional Resources for Evaluation

- Sample Diversity Statement Rubrics University of California Berkeley (n.d.) [Rubric for Assessing Candidate Contributions to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#).
- University of California Los Angeles (n.d.). [Sample candidate evaluation tool, contributions to EDI](#).
- Cornell University (n.d.). [Rubric assessing candidate on diversity, equity and inclusion](#).
- University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Engineering (n.d.). [Rubric for Candidate Evaluation](#)
- University of Virginia (n.d.). [Evaluating statements on contributions to inclusive excellence](#)
- [Rubric to Assess DEI Statements](#)

RETENTION

The literature reveals that turnover is generally higher for faculty of color because of discrimination, lack of support for research and scholarship, lack of collegiality, and other climate-related factors ([Munoz et al 2017](#)). These factors are also observed by white faculty who prioritize issues related to equity and inclusion in their teaching, scholarship, and service to the university.

Recommendations

- Identify any opportunities for relocation assistance. During the summer months, is there space within the residence halls for faculty to reside while they search for permanent housing?
- If needed, provide information about job search assistance for the new hire's spouse. HERC (see below under resources) has some information about this.
- Assign liaisons to new hires: member of the search committee, senior faculty within the department, faculty/administrator from another department that may share professional interests.
- Actively support new hires professional development and scholarship
- Remember that faculty of color do not own entirely the responsibility to promote equity and inclusion within the department. While they may express interest in this work, we must avoid tokenization.
- Invite (but don't require) all new hires to meet with the Vice President for Diversity, Access, and Inclusion to learn more about engagement opportunities within the campus community.
- Share information about Suffolk's Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) with all new hires.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[New England Higher Education Recruitment Center](#) (HERC) – Suffolk is an institutional member of HERC. You will need to set up an account to access online tools.

- [Diversity Recruitment Readiness Assessment](#): explore six key areas that must be assessed and integrated into an inclusive hiring strategy
- [Outreach & Engagement Strategies for Targeted Populations](#): recruitment and retention resources related to veterans, ability status, gender identity, racial and ethnic diversity, and more

- [Faculty Search Committee Toolkit](#): best practices to further your inclusive, equitable recruitment practices
- [Job Board](#): expand your reach to HERC's applicant pool of candidates; job postings, search CV/resumes, set up a CV/resume alert

Faculty Advancement Network – a consortium of national research universities collaborating to advance diversity and inclusion among faculty

PhD Project: The PhD Project was founded in 1994 with the goal of diversifying corporate America by diversifying the role models in the front of classrooms.

Diversity-Related Organizations for Position Postings

- [American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education](#) – [Job Board](#)
- [Association of Black Psychologists](#) –
- [Blacks in Higher Ed](#) – job board is same link
- [Diverse Issues in Higher Education](#) - [Job Board](#)
- [HigherEdJobs](#) - identify position as a featured diversity and inclusion posting
- [#HIREBLACK](#) - [Job Board](#)
- [Hispanics in Higher Education](#) – job board is same link
- [INSIGHT into Diversity](#) – [Job Board](#)
- [Journal of Blacks in Higher Education](#) – [Job Board](#)
- [National Association of Hispanic Journalists](#) - [Job Board](#)
- [National Black MBA Association](#) – [Job Board](#)
- [National Society of Black Engineers](#) – [Job Board](#)
- [Society for the Advancement of Chicano/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science](#) - [Job Board](#)
- [Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers](#) – [Job Board](#)