



Quick Tips to Reduce Bias on the Job Market

November 2017

The tips in this guide are intended to help everyone perform their best on the job market. They will also help reduce the influence of gender- and race-related biases in the hiring process.

1 For candidates

- Pay attention to how you present yourself and communicate.
 - Speak with a clear and authoritative voice, and not in a monotone.
 - Make eye contact.
 - Stand up or sit up straight.
 - Selling what sets you apart from other candidates is not bragging. Do it.
 - Be aware if you have a tendency to giggle or laugh when you are nervous.
 - If you find it helpful, assume power poses.
- Research on successful presentations and interviews suggests that the following common practices are detrimental to your performance:
 - Frequent apologizing.
 - Frequent giggling.
 - Touching your clothing, face, hair, or jewelry while you are speaking.
 - Littering your speaking with fillers such as “okay,” “hmmm,” and “and.”
 - Ending your verbal remarks, or answers to questions (in Q and A), with a question, such as asking questioners whether your answer “answers their question.”
 - Undermining yourself by saying things like, “I don’t know qualitative methods, but...” “I wasn’t trained in this area, but...” “My colleague XX told me that...”
 - Prefacing your verbal or written remarks with qualifying phrases such as “I think,” “I believe,” “In my opinion,” etc.
- You are not obligated to answer personal questions, or questions about your personal situation. These are illegal.

- People may answer these questions anyway, so the best strategy is to approach these situations with confidence, a sense of humor, and nuance.
- If you choose to answer, be brief.
- Do your best to change the subject. For example, if someone says, “The schools here in X are great. Do you have kids?” you could answer, “That’s wonderful that the schools here are so good. Did you know that when you moved here? When did you move here?”
- If you volunteer information yourself, then the topic is fair game.
- Foreigners on the U.S. job market
 - Do not apologize for your accent, if you have one.
 - Some people think that Americans naturally seem more confident and/or professional. Learn to fake it.
 - Knowledge of foreign countries and languages is an asset, not something to hide.

2 For advisors and mentors

- Help reinforce the practices in sections 1 and 3.
- In your recommendation letters, refer to all candidates initially by their first and last names, and then consistently by their last names only. This avoids the historic practice of referring to men by their last names and women by their first names.
- Use the candidate’s preferred pronoun.
- Be aware of common gender differences in letters, and avoid them. More information is available [here](#).
- Avoid referring to people’s personal circumstances and personal characteristics.

3 For hosts

- Having a diverse search committee, whether via the presence of members of minority or disadvantaged groups or a designated diversity representative, does not on its own solve the problem of evaluation bias.
- The search committee should meet before the search begins to develop the criteria to screen and evaluate candidates, rather than inventing them after the fact to further the preferences of committee members.
- Acknowledge that we tend to judge people based on our experience, and that we favor people who look like us or have similar experiences.

- Avoid language such as “intuition” or “fit” when discussing candidates, and instead explain your views about particular candidates in greater detail, in terms accessible to everyone.
- Steer clear of “proxy” indicators of achievement such as the status of the Ph.D. granting institution, the number of items on the C.V., the fame of the Ph.D. supervisor, and the reputation of the letter writers.
- Discuss how to apply selection criteria fairly across candidates in different situations, and in ways that do not put some candidates unduly at a disadvantage simply due to their career stage, age, opportunities at their Ph.D. institution, and the like.
- Adopt measures to minimize the effects of group dynamics on committee deliberations.
- Avoid simple summary rankings; instead be explicit about how criteria are weighed.
- Tell candidates ahead of time what the interview will entail, and give all candidates information about work-life balance, dual career opportunities, city environment, etc.
- Do not ask questions about personal circumstances, such as marital and family status, and avoid comments implying that race or gender, and not scientific excellence, were influences on recruitment.

For more information, see the toolkit on best practices in faculty search, available at: [ADVANCE at UNM](#).