Best Practices in Faculty Search

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Goals of Faculty Search

- Recruit excellent faculty
- Retain excellent faculty
- Project a positive image of UNM to scientific and scholarly communities in U.S. and abroad
Federal law vs. UNM policy and procedures

- U.S. Civil rights laws and educational amendments prohibit discrimination and require universities to be fair and to offer equal opportunities
- Universities decide what this means and how to put it into practice
- Evolving “best practices” (and “worst practices”) determine what the “law” means in each organization
ADVANCE and Reform of Faculty Search at UNM

- UNM procedures should conform to national best practices
- Retain our excellent faculty by responding to grievances
- Advance our excellent faculty
Four stages of search

- Formulating the position description or ad
- Search committee
- Screening and evaluating applicants
- On-campus interviews
1. Position descriptions or job ads

- Actively recruit candidates
  - All department members should treat this as a year-round activity
  - Don’t assume people aren’t interested or won’t move!

- Describe job in broadest possible terms
  - Narrow qualifications → people self select out of the pool
  - Broad qualifications → more people self select into the pool

- Include “cues of belonging” in ad
  - “this is a family-friendly institution”
  - UNM has dual career policies
  - This school or college is partnering with ADVANCE at UNM to recruit and retain excellent faculty

- Analyze how your department or unit represents itself online
Potential candidates will look at department and university websites. You should therefore examine your unit’s webpage and consider the following:

- Is there enough information available on the website for potential candidates?
- Is it easy for them to acquire this information?
- Does the website portray the department as an open, accessible, friendly place?
- Does the website portray Albuquerque as a fun, diverse, inclusive community, with great weather and abundant natural beauty?
2. Search committee

▸ Include a diverse range of background, experiences, perspectives
▸ Establish a process and timeline for screening and evaluating candidates ahead of time, before the files come in
▸ Adopt procedures so all can have voice and influence
▸ Collect and review data on composition of your pool and how it compares to the national Ph.D. pool

Make the search a satisfying and professional process for everyone!
Minimizing the effects of group dynamics

To include everyone and prevent some folks from dominating the discussion:

- Develop and distribute an agenda before the committee meets.
- Allocate time to each committee member.
- Randomize order of committee members to start speaking.
- Start each meeting by outlining goals.
- End each meeting by summarizing the discussion.
- Designate one or two committee members to present a minority opinion.
- Large committees may consider using clickers to record votes anonymously.
3. Screening applicants

- Monitor adherence to pre-established criteria and processes for evaluating candidates and narrowing the pool
  - Develop strategies to apply the criteria fairly to candidates in different situations
- Work to minimize the effects of evaluation biases
  - Presence of women and minorities on committees does not on its own solve the problem
  - Avoid evaluative language such as “intuition” and “fit”; explain what you mean in terms accessible to everyone
  - Avoid relying on “proxy” indicators of accomplishment, such as prestige of Ph.D. institution, number of publications or grants, reputation of advisors, or citation count
- Consider conducting 12-minute virtual interviews with semi-finalists to help decide whom to invite to campus
4. Campus visits

- Inform candidates ahead of time about what the visit will involve, so they can prepare
- All interview visits should include the same components
  - Ask all candidates if they would like to schedule any personal time during the day
  - Offer information about parental leave, spousal hiring, child care, schools, etc. to all candidates
- Pay attention to research findings on what behavior has been more and less effective in campus visits
- Everyone who meets the candidate should complete an evaluation form immediately after their interaction
Dos and don’ts of campus visits

▶ Do:
  ▶ Warm and frequent attention from the department chair
  ▶ Punctual communication; sticking to a hiring and decision timeline, and explaining deviations
  ▶ Provision of information about work-life balance, dual career opportunities, city environment, etc.
  ▶ Respectful and interested treatment of partners and other family members

▶ Don’t:
  ▶ Contradictory information from chair or other senior faculty
  ▶ Apparent disorganization or lack of unity in the department or unit
  ▶ Comments about race or gender, and not scientific excellence, as influences on recruitment
  ▶ Questions about personal circumstances, such as marital and family status
  ▶ Interactions with candidates’ partners in ways suggesting that the partner is not valued
For more information, see the toolkit on best practices in faculty search, available at: https://advance.unm.edu/resources/

Following these guidelines will make your search a more pleasant experience for everyone, and enhance UNM’s reputation for excellence at home and abroad.