

ASPIRE IChange
Subcommittee: Recruiting Faculty For Diversity

Sub committee:

Rich Bischoff (co-chair), Gwen Combs (co-chair), Brittany Duncan, Mary Ann Johnson, Rebecca Roston, Dai Shizuka. Not attending: Cynthia Willis-Esqueda, Shannon Bartelt-Hunt, Carlos Urrea Florez

The sub-committee met on October 22, 2021.

The BRIDGE initiative and the IANR Inclusive Excellence in Faculty Searches initiative have been designed to address many aspects related to faculty search and hiring. The IANR initiative has been implemented for over three years with results indicating progress toward intended outcomes. The BRIDGE initiative is set to launch. Colleges (e.g., Engineering) have also implemented initiatives with structured expectations for searching for and interviewing candidates for faculty positions.

The following were identified as gap areas:

- Post doctoral fellowships and graduate programs as pipeline and entry points to the academy, and to jobs at UNL specifically.
- Implicit bias and inclusive excellence training for students, administrative personnel, hiring officials, and members of search advisory committees from outside the university who are not normally required to attend IEC training prior to participating in the search and hiring process.
- The availability and use of relevant data for hiring officials and search advisory committees that can be used to provide information that could inform the search. For example, data summaries reflecting the diversity profiles of candidates from past searches, and/or diversity profiles of the discipline.

The sub-committee made the following recommendations for crafting our pathway forward:

1. Compile a list of exemplars—universities that are doing this well—and determine what it is about what they are doing that would be transferrable to UNL. For example, The University of California’s President’s Postdoctoral Fellowship Program (<https://ppfp.ucop.edu/info/>). While Nebraska may not have the resources to do this alone, it could be something that could be pursued among an alliance with other Big 10 universities. Other university systems have similar programs (see <http://ppfp.umn.edu/>, <https://www.pfp.psu.edu/> and <https://presidentspostdoc.arizona.edu/>). Also suggested as a model is the Texas A&M 2 year fellowship with a guarantee of faculty employment.
2. Think through university-wide initiatives for unintended consequences. For example, without the backing of departments, a well-intentioned hiring program could result in an exacerbation of inequities, albeit of a different kind. (A solution directed toward solving one inequities problem could result in an exacerbation of inequities in other areas).
3. Ensure that those who are doing the hiring are informed, trained and onboard with university-wide initiatives. While the attention is often on search advisory committees, attention also should be given to department heads, deans and others who will be making hiring decisions and negotiating hires. This is already part of the BRIDGE program.
4. Departments/schools need to give proper attention to creating the culture/climate within their units that values diversity and strives for equity and inclusivity. For example, some people who are beneficiaries of hiring initiatives may sense stigmatization because they weren’t hired through traditional hiring mechanisms.

5. Attention must be given at the department/school-level to mentorship and inclusivity.
6. Provide hiring incentives for hiring scholars from underrepresented groups. However, be cautious in providing incentives because they could increase the risk of perpetuating inequities in other areas. For example, a 2-for-1 incentive could result in stigmatization and credibility challenges. This need more explanation. Briefly what would the incentive entail and at what level is the cost housed, college or campus?
7. Help unit leaders recognize that recruitment begins before we advertise. Attention must be given to how we are presenting ourselves to the world (specifically potential job applicants). We need to make visible the diversity that exists. In making existing diversity visible caution is need that individuals are not tokenized. Also, solid intentions and demonstrated effort should be made visible.
8. Build into the interview process opportunities for short-list candidates to see that diversity exists at Nebraska. We can do this by organizing a lunch or dinner or other meeting that allows applicants to talk with those who are most closely associated with the person's science and with groups that they identify with. This is already included in the BRIDGE UNL Faculty and Staff Search Best Practices Guidance for Exclusive Excellence document. There is no policy that prevents departments/schools from taking the step of building opportunities to recognize the whole faculty member; acknowledging that we transparently bring out whole-selves to work.
9. Distinguish between equality and equity/inclusivity. We sometimes interpret the standard as meaning that everyone needs the exact same interview experience. That may not be an appropriate interpretation. Challenge the interpretation of the rules that govern how we plan and conduct interviews. For example, we may need to take everyone to dinner, but does everyone need to go to the same place or have the same people involved in the dinner meeting?
10. Make a handout/web page that contains up-to-date information about our diversity profile.
11. Create a web site that introduces candidates for jobs to the community, perhaps with video of existing faculty/staff talking about schools, hospitals, barber shops/hair salons, etc.; those things that are frequently asked about but for which we are instructed to not discuss with the candidates. This is already a part of the BRIDGE program.
12. Increase communication about best practices and things that are being tried and have been found to work. Colleges and IANR are doing some innovative things in this area, but there is no mechanism for communicating these ideas across units. For example, a department in COE invites a spouse/partner/family member to Lincoln at the same time that the candidate is interviewing. A staff member not otherwise associated with the search is assigned to make flight/travel and schedule arrangements for that person so that it is not connected with the search. They have found this to be welcomed by candidates.
13. De-identify applications for faculty jobs; redacting applicant information so that no identifying information is available to committee members. This, and other suggestions, should only be used if it helps us accomplish the goal of diversifying the professoriate.
14. Prioritize in hiring plans what URG researchers are interested in researching. Go to minority serving institutions and find out what faculty, students, and post docs are researching at those universities.
15. Require candidates to provide statements in application materials of the value they place on diversity and their anticipated contributions to a diverse and inclusive environment. Scaffolding to help candidates write these statements and a rubric to facilitate evaluation of these statements is recommended. The IANR document "Job Search Strategies" includes a description of this kind of scaffolding (see also <https://ianr.unl.edu/tips-writing-about-commitment-to-deib>).