

Successful Practices for Faculty Searches in the College of Visual and Performing Arts

The CVPA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee has assembled these guidelines using recent research on demonstrated effective practices to help CVPA search committees fulfill the expectations outlined in the “College of Visual and Performing Arts Search Procedures” document. For your convenience, the steps outlined below appear in the same order as that document.

Purpose and General Comments

The purpose of these practices is to minimize bias in the search process. We may not be able to eliminate bias, but with intention and commitment we can reduce it.

All CVPA faculty should recognize that they communicate the values and practices of the department, school, and college to potential future faculty members during the regular course of their professional and community activities. Stories of perceived or real bias are shared beyond the university and could affect future recruiting efforts.

Once they are constituted, search committees should be as transparent and open as possible about the search process to build support throughout our academic units and inform the process of future searches. Although it is inappropriate to share information about candidates, sharing information about actionable steps that can be taken in the search process has many short- and long-term benefits for making the goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) central to our departments and schools.

The CVPA DEI committee welcomes requests to serve as a resource beyond the participation of any individual DEI committee member on the search committee. We are available for consultation or to attend meetings in support of the search process.

Unconscious bias thrives where committees do not take the time to reflect on their perceptions and where the urgency to complete a task makes committee members feel unable to speak up. Expect each step to take more time than in past searches; allowing time for the process to unfold is crucial for reducing bias in your search.

1. Prior to the Search

- a. In preparation for a search, the School/Program Director should familiarize themselves and their faculty with the diversity data within the department, school, CVPA, and UNCG. Discuss the information in setting such as faculty meetings to reinforce the importance of increasing faculty diversity amongst all faculty in an academic unit.
- b. Make diversity central to discussions of the department’s specific needs for the position.
- c. Discuss the connections between a diverse and inclusive environment and student learning; build support by showing how the search will contribute to achieving the department’s DEI goals.

2. Authorization of the Search

- a. It is expected that all members of the committee will uphold the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in an ethical, intentional search process. Commitment to the values of DEI is important at the individual and collective level. This responsibility does not rest only with the Chair, a committee member of an underrepresented group, or a current/former member of the CVPA DEI committee sitting on the search committee. Faculty invited to serve on

search committees should be committed to the advancement of DEI and creating a faculty as diverse as our student body.

- b. The Search Committee chair should be prepared to guard against reproducing sameness and to moderate effectively, even if committee members are resistant to prioritizing diversity.
- c. Don't wait for the job posting to be public. Once you know you're going to be recruiting, start spreading the word informally.
 - i. Gather a list of potential contacts who could share the job listing when it is ready.
 - ii. Committee members should aim to build and enlarge their social media networks in advance of the search announcement to maximize announcement dissemination.
 - iii. Encourage all faculty to let their contacts know there is an upcoming opportunity. State up front that you are taking all possible steps to develop a diverse and qualified applicant pool. Provide all of your faculty with contact information for a prospective applicant to ask about the search (a head, or director, if the chair has not yet been named).

3. Appointment of Search Committee

- a. The Dean should write a formal charge in the form of a memo to the committee outlining the purpose and goals of the search, including a commitment to an ethical and intentional process with respect to diversity and inclusion, in alignment with successful practices. This document is important because:
 - i. it is a formal notification that diversity and inclusion are to be proactive, intentional parts of the search process; and
 - ii. the committee can reference this document if it encounters resistance or defensiveness about DEI issues during the search process.
 - iii. if necessary, it could be referenced when needing to extend or to cancel a search.

4. Prior to Placing the Ad

- a. A Chair should open conversations proactively to set the expectation of being committed to best practices, even when those are in contrast to past practice.
- b. The CVPA EEO Officer (currently Amy Moore) is required to attend the first meeting of the committee to share EEO information. The first meeting should not be scheduled at a time when the EEO officer cannot attend.
- c. The ad should be written in a process that involves the whole committee. The final version should be supported by all members.
- d. Invest in detailed discussion of what "excellence" means for the position. Take the time needed (probably one full meeting) to build consensus about the qualities and qualifications needed, and the relative weight of each criterion. Use the consensus to develop the job description, announcements, and advertisements; to formulate interview questions; and to structure your evaluation of applicants (Fine and Handelsman [F&H], 11).¹ Do this so that you can communicate clearly to potential applicants what you are looking for, and as a means to keep the committee's evaluations focused on agreed-upon values.
 - i. Consider current trends in the field, the identity and needs of current and future students, the needs of the school, and the needs of the university. Because a candidate's potential contribution to promoting diversity at CVPA will be a hiring

¹ Fine and Handelsman deliberately link "excellence" and "diversity" to disrupt notions that to embrace diversity is to compromise on excellence.

consideration, those who have already integrated the advancement of DEI into their teaching, research, and service philosophy and work record will be desirable candidates.

- ii. Be careful when allowing the identity of current faculty to enter the conversation. While it may be best to avoid duplicating niche research areas, invoking their attributes can inadvertently narrow the pool toward candidates most similar to current faculty.
 - iii. Note that, although candidates may contribute diversity to the faculty by visually representing the identity of an underrepresented group, not all significant aspects of identity are visible, and a record of achievement in advancing DEI, and a desire to do so at UNCG, can be equally important.
- e. Writing the Ad - What the DEI Committee will be looking for during its review
- i. Develop a job announcement that will attract a wide pool and communicate UNCG's commitment to DEI (*Recruiting Diverse Faculty Search Handbook*, 4–5; F&H 19–20, 25–26) The goals of the job announcement are: (1) to attract a wide variety of applicants; (2) to articulate what “excellence” means for the position by outlining required and preferred qualifications; and (3) use intentional language that goes beyond required federal language, to welcome applicants of varied backgrounds to apply. Avoid cutting and pasting from previous announcements.
 - ii. Make clear in the description that “excellence” for this position includes valuing UNCG’s diverse student body and upholding the university’s values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
 - iii. Use gender-inclusive language: Pay close attention to the language used to describe the position and required and preferred qualifications. See F&H, 19–20 for more information.
 - iv. When describing the position, include the expected disciplinary expertise and expected ability to contribute to DEI efforts in the same sentence or consecutive sentences, using words that give them equal weight.
 - v. Require that applicants address their commitment and track record to the advancement of DEI in their cover letter, so that the committee can make a reasoned assessment in the earliest rounds of evaluation. Asking for this content in the cover letter ensures that the Dean will see it when selecting finalists in step 5. Depending on the needs of the position, you may wish to ask applicants (1) to demonstrate their understanding about the social and historical contexts of the ways knowledge is produced and validated in their discipline; and/or (2) to address their record of realizing the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their teaching, research, creative activity, and service. Ask about DEI as an aspect of essential faculty duties rather than a separable issue.
 - vi. Include contact information for the Chair of the committee in the job description and invite potential applicants to reach out with questions and to get more information. (see more on this in Section 5.e below)

5. Prior to Inviting to Campus

- a. The Chair should raise and discuss DEI issues throughout the process: Allow committee members to voice their history, knowledge and opinions on DEI topics. Rely on the content provided in F&H, 15–42 to respond to resistance.

- b. Discuss and revisit the topic of unconscious bias. The chair can facilitate discussion of unconscious bias, preferably multiple times throughout the search process, perhaps before each round of applicant evaluation.
- c. Take the time needed. Rushing any step of the process will increase the chances for bias to slip unnoticed into the process. Repeat at every juncture in the process.
- d. Recruitment Activities to attract a diverse and qualified applicant pool
 - i. Effective recruiting begins with search committee members' individual social networks, but for institutions with a predominantly white faculty, like UNCG, these networks may not be sufficiently diverse.² To expand the collective network, all committee members should participate in recruiting efforts; increased diversity on the search committee also means more disparate social networks will aggregate into a wider reach. (see also F&H, 21–3)
 - ii. Develop a list of publications targeted to underrepresented groups, relevant professional organizations, and fellowship programs, especially those that aim to reverse underrepresentation, to recommend to the CVPA Business Officer as desired advertising locations for the announcement. UNCG's EEO office can assist with academic advertising outlets, but each discipline will know their professional networks best.
 - iii. Activate the entire faculty of the department/School to recruiting applicants. Encourage faculty to utilize their alumni, personal, and professional networks.
 - iv. Beyond advertising, send the listing to professional networking groups with particular memberships, fellowship programs that work with particular groups of artists or scholars, and well-connected thought leaders in your field who you know are invested in advancing DEI goals.
 - v. Have a long enough recruiting period so that your efforts have enough time to take hold.
 - 1. After you have received a number of applications, but while there is still time to take action, request an anonymized snapshot of your applicant pool from the EEO office. If you are not yet reaching an appropriately diverse applicant pool, review and consider revising your recruitment efforts before it is too late.

Note: The Dean will be reviewing the diversity of the applicant pool and you will need to justify continuing with the search if the pool is not diverse enough. This is how you can get the information you need to take action before that late stage.
- e. Since you have included contact information for the committee Chair in the job description and invite potential applicants to reach out with questions and for more information (see Section 2.e.vi above), be ready to take those inquiries.
 - i. To avoid inadvertent bias, develop talking points about the position ahead of time and be consistent in sharing the same information with everyone. Of course

²According to the 2013 PRRI American Values Survey, the social networks of white people are 91% White and only 1% Black, 1% Latinx, and 1% Asian. Cited in Robert Jones, "Self-Segregation: Why It's So Hard for Whites To Understand Ferguson," *The Atlantic* 21 August 2014. Accessed 5 September 2019: <http://bit.ly/2zbSudD>

applicants will have different questions, but be conscious of giving any one candidate “inside information.”

- ii. Do not ask prospective candidates any questions—answer their questions only. An applicant information call is not an interview, and it should not bear undue weight on the evaluation of the applicant.
- f. Ensure a fair and thorough review of applicants’ qualifications.
 - i. Use your job description, earlier discussions of departmental needs, and definitions of excellence as your guide to evaluate candidates’ qualifications.
 - ii. Review applications independently. So that committee members are not unconsciously influenced by the opinions of their colleagues, each member should review applicants independently and submit their evaluations before discussing them with the group.
 - iii. First Stage: Stay Focused on Basic Qualifications. The challenge at this stage is to stay focused on which applicants meet those minimum requirements and avoid considering criteria or preferences not specified in the job announcement, comparing qualified applicants, or developing preferences.
 - iv. Second Stage: Creating the “long short list” (for details, see F&H, 55–6). Think of this as a list of “those worth further consideration,” and build it through a process of inclusion (who should be included for further review) rather than a process of exclusion (who should be rejected from consideration). Before finalizing the list, assess whether qualified applicants from underrepresented groups are sufficiently represented. If not, consider whether evaluation biases or assumptions have influenced your ratings. By the end of the Second Stage, or the remote interviews, be sure to have evaluated which applicants seem most able and likely to contribute to diversity and inclusion efforts.
 - v. Third Stage: First-Round Remote Interviews. A recommended first round of interviews can take place via video or phone conference. First-round remote interviews add an additional level of consideration where candidates who do not conform to traditional notions of “fit” may demonstrate the knowledge and skill they could bring to the position.
 - 1. Develop questions that respond to the criteria you developed for the position announcement (F&H, 74–5). Ask each candidate the same questions, but also “unscripted follow-up questions based on the responses you receive” (F&H, 74).
 - 2. Pose questions about how DEI is integrated into one’s work. Avoid questions that frame DEI as an add-on or stand-alone concern. (from S&D, 570–72). The DEI committee can provide sample questions upon request.
- g. Interviewers should know what kinds of questions are inappropriate or illegal, and the CVPA EEO Officer will cover this at the committee’s first meeting. The committee chair may remind committee members. For a list, see F&H, 98–99.

6. Approval of Campus Interviews

- a. Develop and implement an effective campus interview process
 - i. Recognize that candidates’ interview experience will affect their perception of campus climate at UNCG. Finalists, especially those with lived experience of marginalization, will draw conclusions as to the truth of UNCG’s claims to be

welcoming of diversity based on the cultural sensitivity practiced by the search committee members: “every interaction occurs within a sociocultural and political context, no matter how benign it may appear” (S&D, 569). Committees should consider carefully hotel/restaurant choices, details of how the campus visit is handled, choices of interview-related spaces, and transportation to and from those spaces.

- ii. Provide time in the interview schedule for a meeting to learn about campus and community resources. “Search committees can schedule a meeting for all final candidates with someone qualified to provide them with information and resources about diverse communities, university policies, childcare, religious services, and more” (F&H, 85–6). Chancellor Fellow Dr. Julia Mendez-Smith (jlmendez@uncg.edu) maintains a list of affinity groups and “diversity ambassadors,” and the CVPA also provides a list for committee and candidate use.
- iii. Develop a wide-ranging information packet about UNCG, CVPA, School, department, Greensboro, the Triad, etc. to share with all candidates (F&H, 85).
- iv. Avoid making assumptions about an applicant’s identities and allow candidates to decide which aspects they wish to share at work.
 1. Allow all candidates to choose from a wide-ranging list of whom to meet.
 2. If someone has self-identified as a member of a certain group, offer to set them up with a meeting with that group.
 3. Search committee members should not attend these meetings, which are meant to be “off the record” to allow for candor.

7. After the Campus Interviews

- a. Writing the finalist summary
 - i. Your awareness of any unconscious biases you may hold is crucial at this time.
 - ii. Each committee member should independently submit their independent evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate.
 - iii. The committee chair should ensure that all committee members empowered to speak freely and identify any bias they perceive in the search process.
 - iv. Committee members who don’t feel their views are well-represented in the final report and/or meeting are encouraged to seek a one-on-one meeting with the Dean.
- b. Be sure that all semi-finalists and finalists who are not selected are contacted to let them know they didn’t get the position BEFORE they get the automatic email from the university system. This step of treating all candidates with respect is part of keeping a good reputation which will help future recruiting.

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