

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION FACULTY HIRING

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: We always hire the most qualified person. What more can we do if applicants from underrepresented groups haven't applied?

A: We need to look beyond our current practices and consider whether we might be leaning towards hiring people we know or who are from colleges we know. We also need to be objective about ourselves and consider whether we might be influenced by our own implicit biases (e.g., based on race, gender or other diversity characteristics).

Here are some steps we can take to fulfill our commitment to hiring a diverse faculty:

- (1) Read applications thoroughly. We can encourage faculty search committees to carefully read applications and the work submitted. Don't take shortcuts by looking only at the name of the applicant's educational institution or the number of publications.
- (2) Don't prejudge based on the name of the institution that awarded the applicant his/her/their PhD or where the applicant is working or last worked. There is an implicit bias associated with institutional name recognition. If an institution is not well-known to search committee members, this may require research into the reputation and research record of the particular institution, as well as into the content of the applicant's research.
- (3) Recognize the implicit bias in letters of recommendation. Faculty search committees should also keep in mind that it may be worthwhile to follow up on letters of recommendation for additional information or clarification. Studies show that letters of recommendation for women highlight more subjective and personal attributes, and focus less on intellectual contributions and collaboration, compared to letters written for men.
- (4) Numbers alone should not be determinative. The number of publications published by an applicant should not be taken at face value. Many journal editors and review boards are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with issues of equity and inclusion, and if a manuscript addresses such topics, the reviewers may not know how to judge it. In addition, many faculty advisors are also unfamiliar or uncomfortable with issues of equity and inclusion, and if a graduate student is studying an area of race interest that the faculty member is not versed in, then the faculty member may choose to publish with other students who are studying areas that better align with the faculty member's research. As such, students whose research focuses on equity and inclusion may be at a disadvantage in finding the same number and quality of publications as their counterparts in other fields.
- (5) Judge each applicant individually based on what they can contribute to your department and the university, and without regard to gender, race, or other protected class statuses. Look at individuals' qualifications to identify not only things that are familiar or comfortable, but how they can meaningfully advance the department, school, and university. For example: Does the individual have research interests that could create synergy with the department's existing goals that could expand its influence? Does the candidate have unique qualifications that would make them an excellent mentor for underprivileged students? Has the candidate demonstrated great promise for possible administrative appointments?

But remember, even though an applicant may be a part of an underrepresented group, that doesn't mean that all members of the group are the same. Using protected class status as a heuristic for

potential success, or to give an applicant an advantage purely for the sake of “increasing diversity” is unfair to the other applicants, as well as to the selected candidate. If an individual is not qualified or prepared to succeed at USC, we should not extend to them an offer of employment.

- (6) Recognize the implicit bias to choose doctoral applicants that are “ready-made” for tenure. No one wants to select an Assistant Professor applicant who may not make it through to tenure, but we do want faculty members with exciting ideas and research whom we can mentor to prepare them for tenure.
- (7) Rethink the wording of job descriptions. Job descriptions can be written with intentionality to encourage applications from more diverse candidates by stating USC’s commitment to developing a diverse faculty. We can ask applicants for a statement as to the contribution they would make to an intellectual community and a student body as diverse as ours at USC. That would require them to reflect on the ways that they could support our diversity commitment. *See example at the end of the FAQ’s.*
- (8) Rethink the wording of email notices to colleagues. We can add explicit language about our commitment to diversity in our email notices to colleagues. *See example at the end of the FAQ’s.*
- (9) Low stakes auditioning. An example of low-stakes, low-cost, auditioning it to hold a speaker series for Scholars of Color. At Rossier, they annually bring in six scholars of color to give research talks. This gives Rossier a chance to see if they might be faculty that Rossier might want to recruit.
- (10) Go beyond passive advertising. We are used to advertising on the USC jobs website and in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Sometimes, we might advertise in the magazine, *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, and *INSIDE Higher Ed*. But we need to go further, and one free option is PRISM, which has been launched by the USC Race and Equity Center.

Q: What is PRISM?

A: PRISM will allow faculty from underrepresented groups, as well as administrators and staff, to create profiles, and these profiles will be available to thousands of colleges and universities. PRISM allows you to directly communicate with individuals who might be a good match and encourage them to apply for open positions. *For more information, go to <https://race.usc.edu/prism/>.*

Q: What about reverse discrimination? If we have a large number of white male professors or Asian male professors, should we not interview candidates from those groups?

A: If a majority-group applicant is the best qualified, you should interview them and hire them if they are the most qualified. But in every search, you should make an effort to ensure that your outreach was wide-reaching. We are creating a tool in the Faculty Applicant Management System so that when you post a position, you will be able to see the diversity composition of your applicant pool, and that may alert you to the need for additional recruitment efforts, such as advertising to affinity groups.

Q: What if we do not get a diverse applicant group to a job posting, and there is an urgent need to fill the position?

A: Consider carefully whether the need is really urgent. If there isn’t an urgent need, see if there are ways to make the job more attractive to diverse applicants – for example by including language about USC’s commitment to developing a diverse faculty representative of its student population. If there isn’t an urgent need, we would also recommend that the faculty search committee go back and review the applications and the job description. Also consider whether additional recruiting efforts could be made to reach a more diverse pool of potential applicants.

Q: Can we email colleagues inside and outside of USC asking for referrals to diverse faculty?

A: Yes, and we encourage you to reach out to your networks to cast a wide net. While you cannot say that you are going to hire a woman for this position, you can absolutely say you want a diverse applicant pool, that you value diversity, and that you highly encourage individuals from underrepresented groups to apply. Note, though, that calling attention to particular groups in job announcements or other communications, such as by indicating “we want women to apply” or “we want to increase the number of women in our department,” could bring scrutiny to the recruitment and hiring process.

Q: How does hiring faculty from other countries play into diversity?

A: We need to search the world for great minds that will strengthen our university and faculty. There are a lot of institutions that will point to the diversity of their faculty based on those that come from other countries. But it is also important to have people from our country too; we need to find out who they are.

Q: How do we retain diverse faculty?

A: It is important for a faculty member not to feel as the token representative of an underrepresented group. Creating a work environment where the faculty member is valued for the totality of their research, teaching, and service contributions is critical. The Center for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion will be another step towards nurturing a supportive environment for faculty. In addition, each school has a Diversity Liaison who can work with new faculty hired from underrepresented populations or when retention of diverse faculty is at issue.

Q: How do we address the loss of faculty from underrepresented groups?

A: We need to do a better job of relaying the information obtained in the exit interview to the dean and to the faculty search committee, especially when there are comments regarding the climate for diversity.

Sample Job Description

The Rossier School of Education invites applications for an open rank tenure-track faculty position with a focus on advanced quantitative methods. The successful candidate’s research will use sophisticated econometric, statistical, or other advanced quantitative methods to answer questions relating to the implementation and causal effects of district, state, and/or federal pre-K-12 education policies. *Candidates with a research focus on policies related to equity and improving opportunity and outcomes for historically under-served groups are especially desired. This position is part of a multi-year strategy to recruit scholars focused on equity in education.*

Candidates should have an independent program of research, characterized by methodological sophistication, and potential for (or track-record of) external support. All applicants will submit a letter of interest, curriculum vitae, a publication or representative writing sample, and contact information for three references. *The letter should include specific examples of applicant’s commitment to equity and improving opportunity and outcomes for historically under-served groups.*

[Refer to <https://equity.usc.edu/affirmative-action-and-vets-100-compliance/> for the necessary legal language to include in your job announcement.]

Sample Email to Colleagues

Dear Professor B,

USC Annenberg is searching for a new assistant professor of Communication. Please see the attached position description. *We obviously want to hire the most qualified person. Given how few women and people of color we have on our faculty; we are especially interested in selecting this person from a diverse applicant pool.* Please share the attached position description with your PhD students and others in your academic networks. *Contact me if you know students who will help us actualize our diversity goals; I will personally reach out to them.*

Many thanks,
Professor A

Faculty Diversity Hiring Initiative

In his November 1, 2018 memo, Provost Quick outlined important new steps in USC's ongoing efforts to foster diversity in our academic community. The first of these new initiatives is an ambitious joint program in which the Provost's Office, working with the schools, will allocate a total of \$50 million in new funds to match funding that schools employ towards the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Q: How will the \$50 million incentive fund be spent?

A: This program aims to proactively contend with the challenges facing us at the different stages of faculty recruitment – hiring and retaining faculty, both tenure-track and RTPC, as well as supporting postdoctoral fellows, our future faculty members.

Q: How is the determination made for the diversity composition of faculty?

A: Each school may have different goals based on the respective demographic compositions of the available labor market and incumbent faculty. A general aspirational guideline for most schools would be to align their faculty demographics with their graduate student populations, with the ultimate goal of having our faculty better reflect the populations they serve in their classrooms and clinics.

Q: What if the most qualified applicant is a white male? Would the funds be available if the white male candidate is an extraordinary hire?

A: The \$50 million fund is used to recruit and retain exceptional world-class faculty from underrepresented groups. It cannot be used to hire the white male candidate, but must not be used as an incentive to hire a lesser-qualified candidate.

Q: How do LGBTQ+ faculty, military veteran faculty, and faculty with disabilities fit in?

A: We do not collect data on sexual orientation, so we are unable to accurately determine representation/underrepresentation of LGBTQ+ faculty and, thus, the funds for this initiative will not be allocated to LGBTQ recruitment and hiring. Nonetheless, we must continue to promote opportunities for individuals with disabilities and veterans, as well as engage in proactive outreach for LGBTQ+ faculty.

Q: Who requests the funding from the new \$50 million initiative to recruit and retain diverse tenured, tenure-track, and RTPC faculty? Can the faculty search committee make the request?

A: The request should come directly through a school's Dean or Dean of Faculty to the Executive Vice Provost.

Q: What specifically should the request for hiring or retention funding include?

A: In each proposal, the school must describe how the individual would contribute to/promote diversity in their field. For faculty hiring and retention, the school must make the case for designating the individual as extraordinary faculty. Schools may propose to request funds towards salary and/or start-up costs. The school should lay out the duration of the requested support, which may be up to five years, but which has Provost funding decreasing over time as school funding increases. The proposal should include a memo that makes the case for Provost support under this initiative and a spreadsheet detailing the allocation of proposed funding over time. Priority will be granted to those schools who have demonstrated progress in improving diversity and inclusion in the composition of their faculty.

Q: What will the Center for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion (CEDI) do and when will it be set up?

A: The Center for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion (CEDI) will serve as a focal point to recruit and retain diverse faculty, along with developing and sustaining campus initiatives.

Q: What is the USC Race and Equity Center?

A: The USC Race and Equity Center, opened July 2017. It is a research center that studies racial equity in educational and other institutions, and develops scalable and adaptable models of success. More information can be found at <https://race.usc.edu/>. Our goal for CEDI is to move USC from bias to intentionality in faculty services.

Q: Are there guidelines regarding the hiring of post docs?

A: The Provost's Postdoctoral Scholars Program for Faculty Diversity is seeking applicants with the potential to bring to their academic careers the critical perspective that comes from their non-traditional educational background or understanding of the experiences of groups historically underrepresented in higher education. Candidates who earned their Ph.D. after July 1, 2017 or will have their degree in hand by July 1, 2019 are eligible to apply. The Ph.D. degree must come from an institution other than USC. Applicants will be evaluated based on their prior academic accomplishments, the significance and intellectual merit of their research interests, and their potential contribution to building a culturally diverse community of postdoctoral scholars at USC. More information can be found at <https://postdocs.usc.edu/provosts-postdoctoral-scholars-program-for-faculty-diversity/>

Additionally, schools that hire one of these postdoctoral scholars into a tenure-track faculty position are eligible to receive up to \$100,000 to assist with start-up and onboarding packages.