Diversity
Inclusion
Equity
Excellence

A User Guide
Best Practices for Affirmative Recruitment at The University of Vermont

Human Resources, Diversity, and Multicultural Affairs
Introduction & Purpose

The University of Vermont has long recognized that a diverse and inclusive community is a compelling interest that is indispensable to achieving our goal of inclusive excellence.

A strong commitment to diversity is the responsibility of the whole campus. Because faculty and staff in particular play a critical role in preparing our students for an increasingly complex global society, our hiring processes and decisions must reflect our values and prioritize diversity and inclusion. This “Best Practices for Affirmative Recruitment” guide is intended to assist you with conducting recruitments in a way that is consistent with the University’s core value of inclusive excellence, and that furthers the goals of our Affirmative Action Plan.

In order to keep it a manageable size, this guide focuses on key best practices and tips for affirmative recruiting. It is not intended to include every best or emergent practice, and you should work with the Human Resources (HR) Representative in your College or Division as needed for further guidance. The University also offers a range of in-person and/or the Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs trainings dedicated to affirmative recruiting and hiring practices through the Office of Professional Development and Training. This guide is not a replacement for attendance at such a training.

We highly encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities to learn more about best practices for affirmative recruiting, and to ensure that your hiring managers and search committees do the same.

Best of luck in your recruiting efforts, and thank you for being a part of this important process!

“We seek diversity not only because it’s the right thing to do, but because it is the smart thing to do.”
David Rosowsky, Provost and Senior Vice President, University of Vermont – Why Diversity Matters
## Best Practices for Affirmative Recruitment at The University of Vermont

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Understand the goal of a recruitment

Competitive searches are the best way to find the most qualified candidate(s) for your position. The following steps will help you navigate the process.

AA/EO and Affirmative Search Process at UVM

An employer who agrees not to discriminate against employees or job candidates because of their membership in particular legally protected categories can be defined and classified as an Equal Opportunity (EO) Employer.

Affirmative Action (AA) requires employers who receive money from and/or conduct business with the federal government at a significant level to have an affirmative action plan. An affirmative action plan is a tool to help employers measure whether who they are recruiting and hiring matches the demographics of who is available to hire based on several categories: race/ethnicity, gender, disability, and protected veteran status.

While the University is proud to be an AA/EO employer, those attributes only reflect what we are “required” to do. Because diversity – and preparing our students for an increasingly multicultural world – are strategic priorities at UVM, we are committed to taking additional steps beyond AA/EO requirements to attract and retain a diverse, multi-culturally competent workforce. The goal of Affirmative Recruiting is to hire the most appropriately qualified person for the position through a recruitment process which is:

• Fair
• Welcoming
• Efficient
• Consistent

and which considers diversity, cultural competency, and commitment to diversity and inclusion as factors, in alignment with UVM’s strategic priorities.

ASK YOURSELF
Is your applicant pool DIVERSE enough?

Ask your HR Rep to run a diversity report to see if you are achieving the goal of having a diverse applicant pool. You can also see if your hiring process is causing too many diverse candidates to be eliminated from contention.
Steps Toward Affirmative Recruitment

STEP 1: Organize the search committee

- Start the process as soon as possible! Consult your unit’s diversity plan. For faculty recruitments, refer to the guidelines and instructions provided by the Office of the Provost.

- Consider diversity and cultural competency when selecting search committee members. (Please note the guidelines for Tenure Track recruitments). It is valuable:
  - to have different perspectives evaluating candidates.
  - to have a diverse personal and professional network when doing outreach.
  - to demonstrate to candidates that we have diversity at UVM and value it.

- Discuss confidentiality.
  - Respect the privacy of the candidates and the integrity of the process.
  - Search committee members should feel free to bring up anything for discussion during the recruitment process – all discussion stays in the room.

- Review the charge to the committee and make sure they are clear about:
  - what the duties of the position will be.
  - what experience, education, skills, and abilities a successful candidate must have.
  - what the hiring official is asking the search committee to produce.
    - Best practice is for the search committee to produce an unranked list of candidates that the committee would be willing to hire along with a summary of the candidates’ strengths and weaknesses.
  - what the desired timeline is to complete the search process.
Talk about and identify the importance of diversity.

- What are the benefits of a more diverse workforce? (And therefore the benefits of a diverse applicant pool and potentially a diverse hire).
- How can search committee members contribute to the goals around having a diverse applicant pool? (e.g., professional networking, recruiting at conferences, etc.)

Create a timeline for the recruitment.

- When will you stop accepting applications?
- When will the initial review of candidates be done?
- When, if applicable, will you conduct a first round of interviews?
- When will you conduct on-campus interviews?

Book time on the committee members’ calendars as far in advance as possible.

Assign committee members, when applicable, to the following tasks:

- Schedule the meetings.
- Serve as the primary point of contact.
- Develop evaluation materials.
- Conduct reference checks.
STEP 2  Create the Posting language

- Language about required and preferred qualifications should be as inclusive as possible.
- Use an advertising/posting title that is more descriptive than the classification title.
- Speak to the duties, experience, education, and skills required to be successful in the position.
- Encourage or require candidates to speak to diversity in their cover letter.
- Try not to have too many preferred or desired qualifications, and to include considerations for equivalent combination of education and experience, if applicable.
- Be clear as to what materials you are requiring the applicant to submit.

Required EEO language for job advertisements:
The University of Vermont is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. Applications from women, veterans, individuals with disabilities and people from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds are encouraged.

STEP 3  Advertising and Outreach

- Use the knowledge and expertise of the search committee members to determine where to advertise.
- Target diverse populations with your advertising.
- Bold and creative outreach by each committee member is critical. Examples:
  - Emailing listservs.
  - Bringing copies of the postings to professional conferences.
  - Contacting members of your personal and professional networks.
  - Cultivating networks ALL YEAR, not just when you are part of a recruitment.
  - Holding committee members accountable to do their own outreach.

- Contact the Graystone Group for additional advertising ideas. More information about this, and other resources, can be found on the HRS website under Recruiting Resources, and at the end of this guide.
STEP 4  Develop evaluation materials

- Create a rubric for each step of evaluation (initial screening, round one interview, round two interview, etc.) and discuss it with the committee.
  - Each row on the rubric should be directly related to the duties of the job or the experience/education/skills/abilities needed to be successful in the position.
  - Include a row that speaks to diversity and cultural competency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKILL/QUALITY</th>
<th>RATING AND COMMENTS: Please circle the appropriate rating and provide your comments for each SKILL/QUALITY.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal and written communication skills</td>
<td>Weak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scheduling experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrated ability to work in a team</td>
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<td>Office Software Knowledge</td>
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<td>Commitment to Diversity and Fostering Multicultural Environment</td>
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<td>Budget Knowledge</td>
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<td>Writing &amp; Editing</td>
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- Create a list of interview questions.
  - Use the same “core” group of questions for each candidate.
    - It is okay to ask follow-up questions and/or additional questions that are specific to a candidate’s individual skills and experience.
    - Questions must be directly related to the experience/education/skills/and abilities needed to be successful in the position.
  - Ask appropriate diversity-related questions (see page 9).
  - Consider using some behavior-based interview questions (see page 10).
  - Stay away from personal questions, especially questions that elicit information about an individual’s identity (see page 11).
  - Create a list of questions to give to other stakeholders outside of the search committee who will be part of the interview process.
Interview Questions

There are many questions you will want to ask applicants to assess whether they are the most qualified candidates for the job. In addition to experience, be mindful to include questions about diversity.

The following examples will provide language to use and language to avoid. Remember, we should never ask them to disclose their individual identity.

Sample Diversity Questions

- How has your experience and background prepared you to be effective in this environment with this diversity value/initiative? (Provide the mission statement with value on diversity).

- What do you see as the most challenging aspect of a diverse working environment? What steps have you taken to meet this challenge?

- Tell me about a time you had to alter your work style to meet a diversity need or challenge.

- What efforts have you made, or been involved with, to foster diversity competence and understanding?

- What kind of leadership efforts would you make to ensure a commitment to the diversity initiative or value?

- What strategies have you used to address diversity challenges? What were the positives and negatives?

- The University has a strong commitment to a diverse and inclusive campus. Can you tell us what that means to you and how you would contribute towards that goal?
Sample Behavior-Based Questions
(as relevant to the position)

Behavior based interview questions regard past performance as the best predictor of future performance. They ask candidates to cite specific examples from their past to answer questions about how they would perform in this role. Examples:

- Tell me about a time when you accomplished something significant that wouldn’t have happened if you had not been there to make it happen.

- Give me an example of a situation where you had to overcome major obstacles to achieve your objectives.

- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze facts quickly, define key issues, and respond immediately or develop a plan that produced good results.

- If you had to do that activity over again, how would you do it differently?

- Tell me about a time when you had to present a proposal to a person in authority and were able to do this successfully.

- Tell me about a time when you were tolerant of an opinion that was different from yours.

- Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.

- Describe for me a time when you had to delegate to a person with a full workload, and how you went about doing it.

- Tell me about one or two customer-service related programs that you’ve done that you’re particularly proud of.

Please go to the UVM Human Resources webpage for Recruitment and Interview Resources for an extensive list of sample behavior-based questions.
Certainly, the search committee has an interest in getting to know as much information about a candidate’s ability to successfully perform the job as possible. It is not uncommon for candidates to voluntarily divulge a range of personal details about themselves when talking with search committee members or other participants in the interview process. However, it is important that everyone participating in the interview process avoid asking the candidates personal questions, especially questions that could elicit information about their membership in a legally protected category.

Examples of questions you should **NOT** ask:

- How many children do you have?
- How old are you?
- Do you have any disabilities?
- What is your maiden name?

A more comprehensive list of questions to avoid, and why, is available on the Human Resources website at “[What You Can Ask and What You Can’t – Legal/Illegal Interview Questions.”](#)
STEP 5  Evaluate the Candidates: Initial Screening, Telephone Interviews, and On-Campus Interviews

The following considerations apply to all steps of candidate evaluation:

- At least two committee members should review each candidate (preferably all committee members review every candidate when possible).
- Use a rubric to help you focus only on the most important qualities of the candidates (including diversity and cultural competency).
- Consider what constitutes an equivalent combination of education and experience, and define what that might look like ahead of time.
- Consider transferable skills.
- Use the rubric to minimize the impact of implicit bias.
- Use the rubric to sort your candidates into three groups, typically:
  - A small number who are clearly least qualified.
  - A small number who are clearly the most qualified.
  - A larger number who require additional discussion.
- Discuss candidates and decide who will move forward in the recruitment process.

Please note that diversity and cultural competency should be one factor among all of the important qualities of your candidates. It should never be the only reason that someone moves forward in your recruitment process.

Retain search committee materials that are not stored in the applicant tracking system for three years (e.g. evaluation materials summaries, rubrics, etc).
Best Practices for Initial Evaluation of Candidates

- Create a rubric using the best practices listed on page 8 in this guide.
- Discuss the rubric with the search committee so that everyone understands what to look for in each category.
- Allow yourself plenty of time to review each candidate’s materials.
- Score each candidate on the rubric and give comments to support each score. At least two people should score each candidate.
  - Preferably, the whole committee is able to review each candidate.
  - Consider transferable skills and equivalent combination of education and experience, when possible.
- Reduce the potential impact of implicit bias (see next page for greater detail)
- Compile the scores and sort your candidates.
- Have a discussion with the committee to determine which candidates will move on to the next step in your recruitment process.
Understanding Implicit Bias

- Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. In other words, our accumulated life experience affects our decision-making without us knowing it.

- Examples of implicit bias:
  - Applicants with white sounding names are 50% more likely to receive a response from employers. (source\(^1\))
  - Female candidates are less likely to be perceived as having leadership skills than male candidates with identical CVs. (source\(^2\))

- We should actively try to combat implicit bias when reviewing candidates at every stage of the recruitment process. The best way to do this involves two basic steps:
  1. Acknowledge that you have implicit bias. We don't always know what biases we have, but simply being aware of their existence is the only way you can start to reduce their impact.
  2. Slow down when evaluating your candidates. If you are rushed, you allow your unconscious to take over and thus your biases have a greater impact. Every time you give a score, consciously identify to yourself why you believe the candidate deserves that score.

1 http://www.nber.org/papers/w9873.pdf
2 http://www.cos.gatech.edu/facultyres/Diversity_Studies/Steinpreis_Impact of gender on review.pdf
Best Practices for Interviews

Telephone Interviews:

- Develop an introductory script that will be used for each candidate when they meet with the search committee and other participants in the search process.
- Use best practices for interview questions outlined earlier in this guide.
- Re-read application materials before the interview.
- Introduce everyone on the call and lay out the structure of the interview to the candidate (how much time will they have, how many questions will be asked, etc).
- Reintroduce yourself if you are a new speaker.
- Leave time for the candidate to ask questions.
- End the interview by giving the candidate a timeline of when they will hear back from you (and make sure to follow up within that period of time, even if it is only to give them a new timeline).
- Grade and discuss the candidate immediately after the interview ends. Do not immediately go into another interview.
- Be aware of implicit bias and use a rubric.

Be aware that how you treat candidates who are not hired is just as important as how you treat your top candidate. Be mindful of the rejection emails that are sent automatically by the system and give personal communications where appropriate.
On-Campus Interviews

- Use best practices for interview questions listed earlier in this guide.
- When setting up the on-campus visit, ask if there is a particular group of people that the candidate would like to meet with outside of the interview process.
  - Remember, the candidate is judging us just as much as we are judging them!
  - This should be offered to all candidates, but the purpose is to give diverse candidates the opportunity to meet with people who might help them learn about life on campus for their identity group.
- Consider creating an informational packet about the Burlington area to give to each candidate.
- Consider creating an informational packet about UVM’s diversity initiatives, such as your unit’s diversity plan and the framework for inclusive excellence.
- If taking candidates out to a meal, every candidate should get taken to a restaurant of similar quality.
- If putting candidates up in a hotel, every candidate should be offered a hotel room of similar quality, even if they live locally.
- Give the candidate a schedule for their interview.
  - Make sure to schedule rest breaks into the day.
  - Consider assigning them a “host” to walk them from place to place.
- Be aware of implicit bias and use a rubric.
- If the candidate is meeting with stakeholders apart from the search committee:
  - Give the stakeholders questions to ask or review the questions they plan on asking.
  - Give the stakeholders a rubric to use to help limit implicit bias and to get structured feedback.
  - Consider asking stakeholders for feedback by using a very simple Lime Survey. Electronic surveys are more likely to yield a response than a paper form, especially if they are short and easy to complete.
- **AVOID ASKING ANY PERSONAL QUESTIONS.**
  - It is okay to answer any questions they have or to point them towards resources to answer those questions, but do not ask a follow-up.

Visit the HRS website for a list of diversity resources candidates may find helpful.
Reference Checks

- Thorough reference checks (and other types of background checks, where appropriate) are a critical part of the search process, and should always be completed before hiring a candidate.

- Reference checks are a great source of information about your potential hire and are usually done near the end of the process once top candidates have been identified.

- You can use our template for conducting reference checks.

- You may ask for additional or different references than those provided by the candidate. The best references are, in order:
  - Current or recent supervisor.
  - Current or recent co-worker or colleague.

- It is not advisable to rely on personal references.

- When a candidate submits their application, they are authorizing us to contact their references if they are a finalist.

- It is a courtesy to notify the candidates before contacting their references.

- Other checks and verifications include:
  - Criminal/background checks.
  - Educational Verification.
  - Employment Verification.
  - Performance Reviews or Disciplinary Reports (internal UVM candidates only).
  - Professional License Verification.
Waiver Hires

Under some circumstances, it may be appropriate to “waive” a competitive search. Human Resource Services may approve a waiver hire if:

- It is considered a promotion for a current employee.
- There is a compelling business need to have someone in the position temporarily until a competitive search can be completed.
- There is an opportunity to advance an affirmative action goal through the hiring of a qualified candidate.
- The candidate was a finalist in a recent competitive search for an identical or nearly identical position.
- The candidate is a prior UVM employee, and their position was eliminated within the last two years (e.g., due to reorganization or an end to restricted funds).

Contact us
Email HRSInfo@uvm.edu
Phone 802-656-3150
www.uvm.edu/hrs
Helpful Resources & Links

- Why Diversity Matters

- Diversity Plans by Unit
  https://www.uvm.edu/aaeo/recruitment_uvm

- Faculty Recruitment Guidelines from the Office of the Provost

- Search Committee Composition Guidelines for Tenure Track Recruitments

- Working with Graystone Group
  http://www.uvm.edu/hrs/?Page=managers/workingwithgraystone.html

- Recruiting Resources
  http://www.uvm.edu/hrs/?Page=managers/managers.html

- Recruitment and Interview Resources
  http://www.uvm.edu/hrs/?Page=managers/recruitment.html

- What You Can Ask and What You Can’t – Legal/Illegal Interview Questions
  http://www.uvm.edu/hrs/managers/recruitmentguide/LegalorIllegalInterviewQuestions.pdf

- Lime Survey
  https://www.uvm.edu/it/survey

- Local Diversity Outreach Resources
  http://www.uvm.edu/hrs/?Page=managers/localdiversity.html

- National Diversity Outreach Resources
  http://www.uvm.edu/hrs/?Page=managers/diversity.html

- Template for Conducting Reference Checks
  http://www.uvm.edu/hrs/forms/reference_check_for_job_applicants.doc

- Dual Career Hire Guidelines

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