Searching for Excellence & Diversity

An evidence-based approach to training search committees
Outline

- What is WISELI?
- Why focus on hiring?
- Searching for Excellence & Diversity workshops
  - Emphasis on research on bias and assumptions
- How’s it working?
Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute

- National Science Foundation/ADVANCE Institutional Transformation award
- Mission: Promote the participation and advancement of women in academic science and engineering
- Activities
  - Workshops
  - Grants
  - Seminars
  - Research & Evaluation
Why focus on hiring?

- Gatekeeping role of search committees
- Shapes the “complexion” of the faculty for years to come
- Obvious disparities for women in science and engineering

- Hiring is NOT the only important thing to think about as we diversify our workplaces (e.g., climate, leadership, equity)—but it is an important place to start!
Five Essential Elements of a Successful Search

- Run an effective and efficient search committee
- Actively recruit an excellent and diverse pool of candidates
- Raise awareness of unconscious assumptions and their influence on evaluation of candidates
- Ensure a fair and thorough review of candidates
- Develop and implement an effective interview process
Run an effective and efficient search committee

- Writing the job description/ad
- Effective leadership of a search committee

*The “nuts and bolts”*
Actively recruit an excellent and diverse pool of candidates

- Discuss diversity up front
- Build a diverse pool of candidates
  - Dispense with assumptions that may limit the pool!
  - Personal contacts are the key
  - Actively involve all members of the search committee

*Putting the “search” back into “search and screen”*
Before Training: Passive Recruiting

“We just cast out our nets and see who swims in.”
“There are very few women in [this discipline], and even less in [this subfield] . . . so we contacted all of them and asked them to apply. We were fishing for a guppy and might have caught a barracuda.”
Have you heard these statements?

- “I am fully in favor of diversity, but I don’t want to sacrifice quality for diversity”
- “We have to focus on hiring the ‘best’”
- “Recruiting women and minority faculty diminishes opportunities for white male faculty”
- “There are no women/minorities in our field”
- “The scarcity of women/minorities in our field means that those who are available are in high demand and we can’t compete”
- “Minority candidates would not want to come to our campus”
Raise awareness of unconscious assumptions and their influence on evaluation of candidates

- What is “unconscious bias”?
- How might unconscious biases affect the search process?
- How can a search committee overcome these tendencies?

Show them the data
What is “unconscious bias”

- Unconscious bias and assumptions
- Schemas
- Stereotyping
- Cognitive shortcuts
- Statistical discrimination
- Implicit associations

The tendency of our minds to judge *individuals* based on characteristics (real or imagined) of *groups*
Unconscious bias

- When shown photographs of people who are the same height, evaluators overestimated the heights of male subjects and underestimated the heights of female subjects.
- When shown photographs of men of similar athletic ability, evaluators rated the athletic ability of African American men higher than that of white men.
- When asked to rate the quality of verbal skills indicated by a short text, evaluators rated the skills as lower if they were told an African American wrote the text than if they were told a white person wrote it, and gave higher ratings when told a woman wrote it than when told a man wrote it.

Biernat et al. 1991; Biernat and Manis 1994
Unconscious bias in the search process

- Applications/CVs/Résumés
- Reference Letters
- Evaluation of Leadership/Competence
Unconscious bias in the search process: Applications/CVs/Résumés

- 238 academic psychologists sent a curricula vitae with either male or female name
  - Entry level: more likely to vote to hire man, more likely to indicate man had adequate teaching, research, and service experience
  - High level: no gender differences
  - No differences between male and female evaluators
  - More write-in comments for women

Steinpreis, Anders, and Ritzke 1999
Unconscious bias in the search process: Applications/CVs/Résumés

- Meta-analysis of studies of hiring
  - Aggregate of 1,842 subjects over 19 studies
  - Applications assigned male or female name
  - Reviewers hired male candidates more often
  - Between-subjects design showed less bias than within-subjects
  - No difference in results if study done with student subjects vs. professional subjects

Olian, Schwab, and Haberfeld 1988
Unconscious bias in the search process: Applications/CVs/Résumés

- MBA students evaluating a woman applicant for a managerial position
  - Vary the proportion of women in the applicant pool (12.5%, 25%, 37.5%, 50%, 100%)
  - Evaluate candidate on qualifications, recommend hire, potential for advancement
  - In the 12.5% and 25% pools, women applicants rated lower on qualifications, less likely to recommend hiring, and less potential for advancement
  - NO DIFFERENCE in ratings of male or female evaluators!

Heilman 1980
Unconscious bias in the search process: Reference Letters

- 312 letters of recommendation for medical faculty hired at a large U.S. medical school
- Women’s letters compared to men’s more often:
  - Were shorter
  - Offered *minimal assurance*
  - Used *gender terms*
  - Contained *doubt raisers*
  - Used *stereotypic adjectives*
  - Used *grindstone adjectives*
  - Used fewer *standout adjectives*
  - Contained less *scientific terminology*

Trix and Psenka 2003
Top 3 semantic realms following the possessive for men and for women
Unconscious bias in the search process: Evaluation of Leadership/Competence

- Students seated around the table—when is the head of the table identified as the “leader?”

Porter & Geis 1981
MALE

\[ X^2 = 21.25, \ p < 0.001 \]

SAME-SEX STIMULUS GROUPS

\[ X^2 = 43.75, \ p < 0.001 \]
FEMALE

\[ X^2 = 35.36, \ p < 0.001 \]
Unconscious bias in the search process: Evaluation of Leadership/Competence

- Finding not affected by conscious beliefs
- For female leaders, “warmth” negatively correlated with leadership
Unconscious bias in the search process: Evaluation of Leadership/Competence

**Prescriptive Gender Norms**

- **Men**
  - Strong
  - Decisive
  - Assertive
  - Tough
  - Authoritative
  - Independent

- **Women**
  - Nurturing
  - Communal
  - Nice
  - Supportive
  - Helpful
  - Sympathetic

“Leader”
Unconscious bias in the search process: Evaluation of Leadership/Competence

- Evaluate fictional Assistant Vice Presidents
  - Male-assumed job—company makes engine products and other AVPs are men
  - Rated under two conditions: performance clear and performance ambiguous
  - Characteristics rated:
    - Competence, personality, likeability, interpersonal hostility

Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, and Tamkins 2004
Unconscious bias in the search process: Evaluation of Leadership/Competence

- Competence
  - Performance clear—no gender difference
  - Performance ambiguous—women less competent

- Likeability
  - Performance clear—women less likeable
  - Performance ambiguous—no gender difference

Only women were “unlikable” for being competent at their jobs!
Overcoming unconscious bias—best practices

- Learn about research on biases and assumptions—consciously strive to minimize influence of unconscious tendencies on your evaluations. (Kruglanski and Freund 1983)
- Spend sufficient time evaluating each applicant. (Martell 1991)
- Reach out to applicants from under-represented groups individually. (Wenneras & Wold 1997)
Overcoming unconscious bias—best practices

- Do not depend too heavily on any one element of a portfolio

- Develop evaluation criteria prior to evaluating candidates and stick to the criteria. Periodically review evaluation decisions and ensure that criteria continue to guide the selection of candidates.

- Switch the gender/race “thought experiment”

Trix and Psenka 2003
Biernat and Fuegen 2001
Valian 1998
Ensure a fair and thorough review of candidates

- Evaluation criteria
- Conduct review in stages
- Communicate with applicants

More “nuts and bolts”
Develop and implement an effective interview process

- Plan for an effective interview process
  - Articulate interview goals
  - Avoid inappropriate questions
  - Provide candidates with information
- Ensure that unconscious bias and assumptions do not enter the interview process

*Do not underestimate the damage a candidate’s bad interview experience can do to your department*
Delivering the message to search committees

- **Active learning**
  - Literature on teaching and learning shows that people learn best when *engaged*
  - Faculty take the message more seriously when they are hearing it from a peer than from somebody “outside”

- **Presentation of data**
  - Firmly-held beliefs can only change when data are presented to counter those beliefs

- **Variety of formats, venues, styles**
Success?

- Run approximately 17 sessions for over 90 individuals per year
- Evaluation results:
  - ~60% of attendees report being "attentive to possible biases implicit in the criteria used to review candidates"
  - ~60% of attendees report "sharing information about research on biases and assumptions with their search committees"
  - 90% of attendees reported feeling "prepared to address diversity hiring assumptions" after participating in the workshop
Percent Female, Offers Made to Assistant Professors
Biological & Physical Sciences

NOTE: "Trained" departments sent at least one faculty member to a WISELI hiring workshop or meeting.
Percent Female, New Assistant Professors
Biological & Physical Sciences

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New Hires' Satisfaction* With the Hiring Process
Biological & Physical Sciences

* Agree Strongly to the item "I was satisfied with the hiring process overall."