School of Education

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Mitigating Bias in Recruiting Guidelines

1. While developing a job description and qualifications, think of how we are integrating diversity and intercultural competencies into the description itself. If we are not including soft skills or giving enough weight to equity, diversity, and inclusion in the job description, we are sending the message that it is not important to our organization.
    a. Ask yourself, how does working in diverse teams or with individuals who are different than you impact the job description?
    b. Are we incorporating language about inclusivity and the commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?
    c. Are we requiring a commitment or experience with equity, diversity, and inclusion in the qualifications or knowledge, skills, and abilities sections of job descriptions?
    d. What weight are we giving prior experience with equity, diversity, and inclusion in the search and screen process? Are we giving proper weight to candidates who mention that commitment or experience?

2. Remember that we all have *bias for* and *bias against* candidates. Recognizing your own bias while also monitoring the biases of others can reduce bias during the recruitment process.
    a. We may think more favorably of candidates who have higher levels of education because that's what's familiar to us, or we may look less favorably at candidates with a stilted writing style (potential indicator of non-native English speaker)
    b. Take a step back and take a moment before drawing a conclusion - why do I like this section of a candidate's resume? What about this cover letter stood out? Is it relevant to the job, or just relevant to me?
        i. In other words, move away from "gut testing."
        ii. Have evidence in the materials to back up your feedback/evaluation.

3. Be able to defend every hiring decision with how it would serve the larger mission/vision for the position/unit/School.
    a. What education, experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities does the candidate bring to the job?
    b. E.g., Try using: "I appreciated how student- centered their letter was, it speaks to what we're looking for in a colleague and is integral to being successful in this position."; Avoid/limit general statements without evidence: "I thought this candidate's cover letter as good"

4. Rely on inclusion rather than exclusion when evaluating candidates and making selection decisions.
    a. Look at your criteria - who is included, who is excluded?
        i. Is there a degree requirement? If so, what experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities does that person possess from having that degree rather than experience?
        ii. Are we requiring a degree/excessive years of experience because "it's always been required for this position"? What purpose does it serve? What experience would the candidate have gained from 10 years of experience that they wouldn't have from 7 years of experience?
            • Reminder – it can be more difficult to underrepresented populations to receive promotions or accumulate more years of progressively more responsible experience.
            • Make sure education and experience requirements are what you **need** (what you **prefer** should be considered, but not as a requirement to interview) to open applicant pools and increase diversity.
        iii. What does the candidate need to come into the position with? What can be taught? A great deal of knowledge, abilities, and skills can be taught, but soft skills are more difficult to coach/teach.
            • E.g., We can always teach someone our governance structure or specific relevant systems, but we can't teach them how to motivate a team of six to meet a tough deadline.
        iv. Does the candidate have transferable skills that could benefit the unit and School?
    b. E.g., Try thinking: "What are qualities in someone who excels at tech support, and where can that come up?" versus "We need someone with technical support experience"

5. Be wary of likability and "culture fit"- how important is it the actual job?
    a. We find people who look and sound like us are more "likeable" or are a "good culture fit." This reduces diversity in hiring.
    b. Instead, look for "cultural add." What are we looking for to enhance our workplace with new perspectives, lived experiences, and diversity in thought?
    c. E.g., Look for evidence-based feedback, such as "I think they have a great collaborative approach to problem-solving based on what they said in their cover letter/interview."; Avoid/limit: "I would like to work with this person, they seemed nice";

6. Ask specific questions that can be backed up with examples. Use behavior-based questions.
    a. E.g.,; Try using: "Tell us about a time when you had to learn something on the job for the first time. What did you learn from that experience?"; Avoid/limit: "Describe your working style"

7. Have a clear, consistent evaluation tool for applicant materials and interviews. Make sure that everyone is working with the same set of standards.
    a. Be sure to distinguish between "must-have" (what does the person need on day one on the job) and "nice to have" education, experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities
        i. Make sure that these are communicated in job posting and interview questions
    b. Always be asking - what does this look like on a resume? How do we measure for that? Can we? Why is this important to the position?
    c. Stop periodically to review your criteria

8. Give yourself significant time to review and evaluate each applicant - *as an individual* - with minimal distractions.