Simon Fraser University
Guidelines for Faculty Recruitment & Retention

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Working Draft – Comments Welcome
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Leadership is fundamental in promoting equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigenization within an institutional context. If SFU seeks to hire in a way that promotes these values, senior administrative leaders must charge the Chair of the Search Committee with that goal in mind. Initial discussions among committee members need to focus on the goal of attracting qualified women, Indigenous peoples, racialized or visible minorities, people with disabilities, and people of all sexual orientations and genders (i.e., members of equity-seeking groups). The Chair and committee must also commit to adhering to equitable, transparent, and accountable search practices. Success in hiring in a manner that overcomes historical barriers faced by members of equity-seeking groups requires that implicit biases against them are acknowledged and addressed, all candidates are assessed according to clear, publicly available criteria on the basis of evidence, and justifiable reasons are documented and provided to the academic unit for decisions concerning short-lists and rank-ordered successful candidates.

SFU is committed to furthering equity, diversity, and inclusion, and to fulfilling its obligations as an equity employer. It is also committed to the Calls to Action in the report of the Aboriginal Reconciliation Council (2016). The University commits to taking steps to increase training for hiring committees to ensure that qualified individuals from historically underrepresented groups and individuals who represent marginalized perspectives in and approaches to their field of study have equal opportunities. All recruitment and appointment procedures in an academic unit are also governed by BC Human Rights legislation, University policies, immigration rules and the SFU Faculty Association Collective Agreement.

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¹ This document is based on Grace Wong-Sneddon, Simon Fraser University
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1. The Search Committee

The composition of the Search Committee and its charge are factors that have consequences for the outcome of the search.

Composition

The composition of the Search Committee affects the outcome of the search. To the extent possible, the Chair should endeavour to include a broad representation of individuals from equity-seeking groups. As Sensoy and DiAngelo write, consider “committee balance in terms of bodies as well as perspectives” (2017, 565). They go on stating if the “institution has the numbers, ensure the search committee tilts to redress the racial imbalance by having members of color as the majority and, especially, in senior roles on the committee” (2017, 565). Diversity on the Search Committee provides a wider range of views in assessing candidates’ qualifications. Studies indicate that better problem-solving and creative decision making are made by more diversity in the group (Phillips, Liljenquist, and Neale 2008; Woolley, Chabris, Pentland, Hashmi, and Malone 2010). A diverse search committee also shows the candidate the committee is serious about widening the pool of applicants.

Sometimes the small number, untenured rank, or workload of women or other equity-seeking group members in a unit makes it more difficult for them to serve on search committees. In such cases, consider seeking search committee members from outside to ensure a diverse representation and a wider range of perspectives. Chairs and Deans should consider how to recognize the contributions from those members of equity seeking groups who are especially burdened by service on search committees (and other evaluative committees).

Roles and Responsibilities

The Chair sets the tone and influences the attitude of the committee to ensure all members are involved, valued, and motivated. The committee should discuss their principles for engaging respectfully with each other. The Chair should have significant knowledge of equity, diversity, and inclusion related to their research, teaching, mentoring, and/or other service. Where the Chair does not have expertise, they should request support from Faculty Relations and in particular from the Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Some committees will find it beneficial to assign roles for each member to help the committee stay on task and for each member to participate fairly and responsibly. Some key committee roles include:
An **ethical leader** who is familiar with the ethics of recruitment, and who guides and advises the committee on ethical issues throughout the hiring process;

A **teaching leader** who provides expertise on pedagogic effectiveness and use of teaching portfolios to keep the committee’s focus on teaching criteria;

A **scholarship leader** who attends to the track record of research, publication, and grants, and ideally who is familiar with non-traditional and community-based approaches to research; and

An **equity leader** who ensures the hiring is carried out in a way that aligns with best practices for promoting equity, as well as diversity, inclusion, and Indigenization, and with Human Rights legislation, Collective Agreement, immigration rules and university policy.

**Other Considerations**

The Chair must inform all unit members involved in the recruitment process about the issues of apprehension of bias and conflict of interest prior to evaluation of candidates for a position. A unit member with a conflict of interest or whom a reasonable apprehension of bias exists should withdraw from the committee.

The deliberations of committees must be confidential.

### 2. Developing the Criteria

Criteria are a written list of skills, knowledge, abilities, experiences, and qualities necessary to perform the tasks and responsibilities and to meet position expectations. The position description drives the criteria and the criteria drives the rest of the process. Criteria should function as touchstone throughout the hiring process.

A fair process sets clear job-related criteria and measures the candidates against the criteria on the basis of qualifications. It evaluates the candidates against the criteria in all and multiple methods of evaluation.

Setting out selection criteria and the weighting of each factor provides the Search Committee with a fair and organized structure for decision-making. Selection criteria should be related to the position, be relatively brief, measurable and ranked in order of the importance to the position’s expectations.

When developing the criteria, consider the position description and the actual duties of the position. It is helpful to ask questions such as, ‘What will the person do?’ ‘What are the job expectations of the successful candidate?’ ‘What are the tasks and responsibilities to be accomplished by the person in this position?’ To determine the expectations of the job, consider the full range of tasks and responsibilities so the evaluation of the candidates will focus on objective job-related requirements: teaching, research, supervising students, University service
and collegial relationships expectations. Be sure to include all criteria that are pertinent to the department’s goals such as experience working with diverse students.

Determine the essential criteria. These are the threshold qualifications without which a candidate will not be selected. Consider including demonstrated skills and experience necessary to further the University’s stated commitments to equity, diversity, inclusion, and Indigenization. Some criteria may be assets rather than essential criteria. Rank these in order of importance. Identification of these can assist the committee in making a decision between strong candidates.

Review documents such as your departmental five-year Academic Plan, SFU’s Strategic Vision, Strategic Research Plan, Academic Resource Planning documents, SFU’s latest Employment Systems Review, SFU Faculty Profiles generated by Institutional Research and Planning, to align academic strategies with hiring plan.

Be sure to consider whether any of the qualifications could pose barriers to any groups of candidates.

**Before the Search Begins**

The Chair, equity leader, and administrative assistant can gather and review past departmental searches to find out the following:

- Number of women and under-represented equity group members who have applied for past positions in the department (as a percentage of the total applicant pool).
- Number of those who were long-listed and shortlisted who were invited to campus for interviews and successful hires.
- Women or equity group members who had been offered positions but have turned down them down, with the reasons why.
- Women or equity group members who were not offered positions in previous searches, where they are now?

Sharing this information may provide the Search Committee some insights into departmental practices that might have been a factor in candidate selection and can help in reconsidering and redefining departmental evaluation systems in ways that may better take into account the strengths of women and underrepresented candidates. Conversations on whether positions have been defined too narrowly in the past can be a useful guide at the beginning of the search process.

**3. The Advertisement**

Generally, a good ad will use inclusive language, provide a description of responsibilities and expectations, state the essential qualifications plus other key evaluation criteria, provide relevant
University information, contain instructions for applicants and include equity and immigration statements. State the department, unit or school’s commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion at the beginning of the advertisement. Consider using the following template:

We acknowledge the Squamish (Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw), Musqueam (x̕ʷməθkʷxʷy̓əm), Tsleil-Waututh, Katzie, and Kwikwetlem peoples, on whose traditional territories Simon Fraser University’s three campuses stand. By recognizing the Unceded Traditional Coast Salish territories, we aspire to create space for reconciliation through dialogue and decolonizing practices.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are essential to SFU’s excellence as an engaged university. In keeping with SFU’s strategic vision which pledges to foster a culture of inclusion and mutual respect and to celebrate diversity among faculty, SFU is committed to ensuring that no individual is denied access to employment opportunities for reasons unrelated to ability or qualifications. SFU is dedicated to building a diverse faculty by advancing the interests of underrepresented groups, specifically women, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, visible minorities, and sexual and gender diverse communities. We strongly encourage individuals from these groups to apply. We are especially interested in candidates with a demonstrated history of advocating for equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Position Description/Qualifications

All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply; however, Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be given priority. Under the authority of the University Act, personal information required by the University for academic appointment competitions will be collected. For further details see: http://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/faculty_openings/collection_notice.html

The minimum requirements for publicizing the availability of a position are that all continuing positions are:

A.) Advertised on the Vice-President, Academic website.
B.) Advertised for at least 2 months in relevant publications including University Affairs and CAUT Bulletin.
C.) Circulated to Canadian universities.
D.) The position should also be advertised in the following:
   • A professional journal specific to the discipline that advertises academic employment opportunities;
• A newspaper with circulation in a geographic area(s) where potential qualified candidates likely reside; and
• Relevant listservs or external web sites such as Higher Ed Jobs or Academic Careers.

It is also recommended that the advertisement for the position be placed on the SWAAC (Senior Women Academic Administrators of Canada) listserv and website (see http://www.swaac.ca for information). The advertisement may also be forwarded for distribution to the Canadian Universities Employment Equity Network (OUEEEN). Additional listservs, journals, groups or other sources that focus on women and other equity-seeking groups should also be contacted in order to attract a wide and diverse pool of candidates such as Diversity Working, Aboriginal Careers, and Inside Higher Ed Careers: Disability Network. Additional posting options can be found on the Faculty Relations website.

When a position is being advertised, it helps to start early. Often outstanding candidates do not apply for advertised positions, and they may have to be approached.

Best practices include:

• Use networks and encourage departmental members to make contacts about the position.
• Contact Deans, Chairs, and Directors in other universities, especially those who have a high number of PhDs awarded to underrepresented individuals.
• After sending announcements of the ad to departments at other universities, follow up with a personal contact or phone call to inquire about potential candidates at those institutions.

4. Evaluation

The criteria should be established before the advertisement is published and applications are vetted. The ranking of candidates in relation to the criteria usually takes place in two stages: the development of a long short-list, and the development of a short-list for interviews. Before the development of short-lists, the committee should agree on a method of ranking candidates, which should be consistently applied to all candidates within a given search. Developing long-lists and short-lists is challenging for a range of reasons, including differences in principles and practices that units and committee members may use to narrow the pool of candidates. Led by the Chair, the committee should reach an agreement on an approach to evaluating candidates early in the search process. Where there are differences of opinion, the committee should discuss these and try to resolve them by consensus or contact the Dean.

As a starting point, the Chair and committee members must acknowledge and seek to address their unconscious or implicit bias. Unconscious or implicit biases are unintentional preferences
for, or aversions to, a particular group of people based on social identity characteristics such as
gender, sexual orientation, ethno-racial background, Indigeneity, and ability/disability status (see
Choudhury 2015 and Smith 2017). We all have these biases, which are unconscious or implicit in
that they serve in our decision making in ways in which we are unaware. While unintentional,
these biases have systemic consequences that are exclusionary, inequitable, and unjust. In the
university context, as Smith writes, they “limit entry into the academy and stall progress through
the ranks, as well as fuel ‘leaky pipelines’” (2017, 263). The effects of unconscious or implicit bias
cannot be overcome by maintaining current approaches to recruiting and retaining women and
members of equity-seeking groups (see Moss-Racusin et al. 2012). To reduce unconscious or
implicit bias in hiring, we all need to be better educated about its existence and effects, and work
harder to counter this bias. As Smith points out, “the focus on unconscious biases is not meant
to suggest that more explicit forms of discrimination have disappeared or are any less harmful to
academic careers” (2017, 263).

Research has found that despite the best efforts of search committees, there are many places
where various forms of bias and discrimination enter the search process (see Smith 2017). For
example, they occur in evaluating letters of references, teaching, research, methodology, and
publications. They also occur during the site visits, job talks, and teaching demonstrations.

Recognizing biases and other influences not related to the quality of candidates can help reduce
their impact on the review of candidates. The Chair of the committee should require all members
to view the Federal Government’s, Unconscious Bias Training Module (http://www.chairs-
Although limited, this module is a good start. Other resources that should be consulted include
the following:

- Westcoast Women in Engineering, Science, and Technology, NSERC, Chairs for Women
- Westcoast Women in Engineering, Science, and Technology, NSERC, Chairs for Women
  in Science and Engineering, “Gendered Language & Stereotype Awareness for Hiring
- Center for Work Life Law, “Bias Interrupters: Small Steps Big Change – Identifying and
  Interrupting Bias in Hiring” (2016): http://biasinterrupters.org/toolkits/orgtools/
- Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Center for the Advancement of Women’s
  Leadership, “Assessing Performance and Potential: See Bias/Block Bias” (Stanford
  University, 2015): https://womensleadership.stanford.edu/tools
- Other helpful resources can be found here:
  https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/vpdean/unconscious-bias

Research shows that every one of us brings a lifetime of experience and cultural history that
shapes the review process. Recognition of this experience, both individually and communally, is
the first step towards a fairer process.
A best practice is to create separate short-lists ranking people based on qualifications such as teaching, research potential, collaborative potential, mentoring capacity, and commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and Indigenization. Another consideration is to develop a final shortlist with the top candidates across the various criteria. The Chair is required to document the reasons for decisions concerning each candidate on the short-list in relation to those not short-listed.

The following are some suggestions for reviewing applicants:

- Develop clear criteria for evaluating candidates and apply them consistently to all applicants.
- Spend sufficient time evaluating each applicant.
- Evaluate each candidate’s entire application.
- Document reasons for every decision for rejecting or retaining a candidate.
- Periodically evaluate your decisions and consider whether qualified women and underrepresented groups are included in the short list pile. If not, consider whether evaluation biases and assumptions are influencing your decisions.
- Ensure all procedures during evaluation, interview and the campus visit do not unfairly advantage one group or individual over another.

Some considerations for reviewing reference letters include the following:

- Consider whether or not the referee is the most authoritative individual given the candidate’s discipline and pedagogical interests.
- Be aware of how words and phrases may be used differently by individuals and may also be applied differentially to them.
- Recognize the potential differences of referees, both geographically and culturally.

**Interview Questions in Evaluation**

The formal interview with the Search Committee should be conducted with care as it is a very important part of the evaluation process. Before the interview, the committee should establish a written list of questions arising from the criteria. Be mindful that questions are to be job-related and the BC Human Rights Code prohibits questions related to race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, physical or mental disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital or family status. In the interest of fairness, the same questions must be asked of each candidate, and each committee member should attend all interviews. Each candidate must be evaluated against the criteria after each interview.

The purpose of the interview questions is to discern the extent to which each candidate meets the criteria that are necessary for successful performance in the position. Use interviews with a
structured format as these provide the same type of information on all the candidates and are less susceptible to the personal biases of the interviewer(s).

Research on effective selection indicates the best predictor of how a person will behave in the future is how the person behaved in the past using similar skills in similar situations. Thus, it is important to look for demonstrated skills or evidence that the person has successfully used the skills, knowledge, etc. that the position requires using behaviour-based questions.

For example:

*What are some of the techniques you use to teach in a culturally responsive way* (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, 571)?

*How do you recruit and support racially diverse graduate students? What success have you had?* (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, 572)?

*More and more students are demanding faculty accountability on issues of race and equity. How have you responded? What areas of growth do you see for yourself* (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, 572)?

*Tell us about a situation where you took a lead role in support of equity, diversity, inclusion, and/or Indigenization in teaching, research, and service.*

Speculative questions have value in finding out how candidates would apply their skills in a particular situation and in understanding their knowledge, philosophy or vision and relationship with others.

For example:

If you were asked to teach an introductory or survey course in your discipline, who would be the five to 10 authors or researchers that you would have students read and study? Why?

*A group of students comes to you and says that there is racial inequity in the classroom’s dynamics. How might you respond to its concerns? Studies nationally have indicated an increase of mental health issues in student population. If that were indeed the trend, what kind of strategies have you done or envision yourself doing to support and promote inclusion in your class yourself* (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, 572)?

Some best practices to consider:

- Questions must be matched to the position criteria and the candidate’s responses are subject to demonstrations of validity.
- All candidates must have the opportunity to answer all the questions.
- Develop some probes or follow-up questions to elicit sufficient information to make an evaluation.
• Questions that are not answered to your satisfaction should be rephrased; probe firmly but with discretion and sensitivity.
• Know the range of answers expected as well as the ideal answers; this provides a better parameter for scoring.
• Be aware that the order of the questions asked and the committee member who asks them can affect the candidate’s response.

Score the candidates on the basis of how well they measured against the position-related criteria. Openly and thoroughly review all the documented evaluation input and scores collected to determine the best match of person to position. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each candidate.

After the interviews, ensure that references have been checked and educational qualifications verified. When speaking to referees, ask the same type of questions the candidates were asked to confirm the demonstration of skills and abilities.

5. Site Visit

The site visit has two main purposes: to enable the candidate to understand fully the nature of the position and enable the Search Committee and/or nominations committee to assess the candidate in relation to the criteria. Fairness must govern all recruitment activities.

Procedural fairness requires that unit members involved in selecting the successful candidate participate in all activities that involve the assessment of candidates either directly or indirectly. It is important the search and/or nominations committee members attend all meetings where candidates are discussed or evaluated by the committee. The members should also attend public presentations. A committee member absent from part of the formal evaluation of any short-listed candidate should not participate in the final selection process for the position.

This is an opportunity to showcase SFU to all the candidates and to make the experience for each of them and the Search Committee/Nominations Committee a welcoming and inclusive experience.

Some considerations:

• Be aware of human rights legislation and its impact on questions that may arise: prohibits questions related to race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, physical or mental disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital or family status.
• No occasion should be treated informally. The interview process continues during meals and tours of the campus.
• Provide the same process for both internal and external candidates.
• Give candidates a choice around things like meals. Some candidates may be fasting and some candidates may not be comfortable participating in meals where alcohol is served.
• Don’t wait for candidates to ask questions, provide information on resources at SFU such as childcare, same sex marriage benefits, multi-faith services, disability services and accommodations, etc.
• Introduce the candidate to individuals and units that may be of interest to their research and scholarship.

6. Orientation

Newly hired colleagues can be helped considerably by orientation at both the unit and the University levels. A robust orientation program sets the tone, introduces the new colleague to the University culture and lets them know that SFU values their presence on campus. Orientation effectively begins as soon as the new colleague is hired. Following the assignment of courses, the new colleague will require advice in ordering textbooks and perhaps in establishing course syllabi. In disciplines where allocation of workspace and equipment is involved, the Chair/Director should ensure a contact person(s) is designated to address specific needs.

Best practices suggests that a new faculty mentor will benefit from having a mentor who can introducing them to available infrastructure, administrative support, and other services. Research indicates, especially for women of colour and Indigenous scholars, that mentorship is a critical component to their success and sense of belonging in the new environment.

Faculty leaders can create environments that help recruit and retain diverse faculty members. They can make a difference when they:

• Create a public inclusive climate for faculty and students.
• Starting with the Collective Agreement, set transparent and inclusive criteria and processes hiring, promotion, salary and resources.
• Give women and underrepresented groups assignments to gain leadership skills.
• Have all faculty actively mentor and recruit underrepresented students.
• Regularly discuss issues related to equity, diversity and inclusion at departmental and faculty council meetings, such as compare attitudes of beginning and completing graduate students. Do they want to be academics? Is here a gender and/or ethnicity difference in the response?

References


