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STRIDE at Northeastern Brochure

ADVANCE at Northeastern University, Northeastern University

What is STRIDE?

The STRIDE Committee is composed of highly respected senior faculty, who are leading workshops for chairs and faculty search committees on innovative strategies for improving hiring practices. STRIDE provides information about best practices that will maximize the likelihood that diverse, well qualified candidates for faculty positions will be identified, recruited, retained, and promoted at Northeastern University.

Schemas that allow us to make short-hand assumptions about someone based on the person's or group's main characteristics unknowingly shape our expectations and judgments. Advantages accumulated by some (such as attending the best graduate schools, or working with influential mentors) are often viewed as signs of individual merit. Cumulative disadvantages (such as attending less prestigious institutions or taking time out for a baby) more often characterize the experiences of women and people of color and are assumed to reflect less talent or commitment. Small differences can add up to large differences in salary, promotion, and prestige over a career.

(Valian, 1999)

Bias and Schemata

Both men and women hold unconscious biases about women AND men. Research has shown that the brain employs these biases to make sense of complex situations. These biases disproportionately affect minorities, and can be found in:

• **Letters of Recommendation:** A study of over 300 recommendation letters for successful medical faculty applicants found that letters for women were shorter, placed less emphasis on research, more emphasis on teaching, contained twice as many "doubt raisers," and were less likely to include "stand-out" adjectives such as "brilliant" and "superb" (Trix & Psenka, 2003).

• **Performance Evaluation:** Both men and women are more likely to hire a man applicant than a woman applicant with an identical record (Steinpres et al., 1999). Deaux & Emswiller (1974) found that success is more frequently attributed to "skill" for men and "luck" for women, even when the evaluators are presented with evidence of equal success for both genders.

• **Small Numbers:** Women and minorities are judged more fairly when they are at least 30% of the applicant pool (Sackett et al., 1991; Heilman, 1980).

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STRiDE
at Northeastern

Strategies and
Tactics for
Recruiting to
Improve
Diversity and
Excellence

Tips for Pool Development

- Broad search definitions produce diverse applicant pools. Language matters. The description should not just encourage women and minorities to apply. More assertive language could include, for example, *"The search committee is especially interested in qualified candidates who can contribute, through their research, teaching, and or service, to the diversity and excellence of the academic community."*

- Expanded recruitment sources also produce diverse applicant pools. Active search committees will identify and contact graduate programs with high numbers of women and minority PhD candidates and utilize databases and fellowship directories that identify outstanding and diverse candidates.

- When asking colleagues at other schools about potential applicants, follow-up with a second question: *"Do you know any qualified women or minority candidates?"* This often introduces an entirely new set of qualified candidates.

Tips for Search Committees

- Create **transparent** policies and procedures.
- Make sure policies are modeled and **reinforced by leadership**.
- Create a **candidate evaluation form.** Rater responsibility has been shown to increase the accuracy and objectivity of ratings.
- Strongly encourage contributions from all search committee members. Asking all members to comment on a candidate ensures that a vocal minority does not dominate the discussion. This provides an **incentive** for everyone to **"do their homework."**
- Include individuals with a variety of perspectives, including women and minorities, on hiring and personnel committees. Faculty from adjoining departments can be a resource if necessary.
- Timely written justifications for supporting hires can help to overcome biases, especially for short-listed candidates.
- Consistently assess hiring and promotion practices. Consider whether **qualified women and underrepresented minorities are included.**

Tips for Evaluation of Candidates

- Develop clear criteria for evaluating candidates and apply them consistently.
- Use multiple criteria for evaluation which account for diverse paths of excellence.
- Considering the entire package – review the CVs carefully and comprehensively.
- Be aware of how the style or origin of a reference might bias against women or racial/ethnic minorities.
- Recognize personal biases and prejudices that might influence hiring and promotion decisions.
- Acknowledge the impact of cumulative disadvantage.
- Do not eliminate anyone for personal reasons (e.g., dual-career needs) until you have actively tried to recruit the candidate. Often, qualified potential candidates are struck from the list based on assumptions about their personal life.
- Be able to defend every decision to reject or retain a candidate.

The STRIDE model was developed at University of Michigan (sitemaker.umich.edu/advance).

Text sources: ADVANCE at the Earth Institute Columbia University (www.earth.columbia.edu/advance), Advance Virginia Tech (www.advance.vt.edu).

To Learn More…

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