

## **Best Practices for Diversity and Excellence Faculty Recruitment & Retention**

Northern Kentucky University, an institution committed to educational excellence and learning, actively promotes a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community that values, affirms, and advances the diverse background, interests, experiences, and aspirations of all its members. The University acknowledges that fostering a culture that embraces diversity and inclusiveness advances the intellectual and social vitality of the NKU community. The University also acknowledges that diverse faculty are critical to advancing and sustaining the intellectual and social vitality of the NKU community. Diverse faculty enrich scholarship, curriculum and pedagogy, contribute to the recruitment and retention of diverse students, and prepare students to achieve in an increasingly global and diverse world.

Recruiting and retaining excellent and diverse faculty is hard work and requires relentless intentionality. While, it is true that some disciplines do not have women and/or culturally and ethnically diverse people in large numbers, there is no discipline in which diverse faculty are totally unrepresented. Specific and intentional strategies must be developed for enlarging the pool of applicants to include ethnic and cultural diversity, women (STEM), and persons with disabilities. These strategies must address how the University educates its search committees and departments, designs and monitors its search processes, and tracks its efforts and results. Below is a summary of best practices. A few of the best practices require funding, but many do not.

- I. Enhancing Search Committee Processes
  - a. Ensure that the membership of search committees reflect the diversity of experience, perspective, background, and culture and ethnicity of the campus. Mindful of not imposing a minority tax on the diverse faculty we have, consider asking students, staff, or faculty members from other departments to serve on the committee.
  - b. Conduct workshops on best practices on hiring for diversity for all chairs and faculty members who have been asked to serve on search committees. The workshop would focus on affirmative action data, research on the value of diverse faculty, the power of networking, posting sites, job description language, campus visits, and campus resources available to assist in the search. The training session would prepare search committee members to identify biases that may occur during the evaluation process of faculty searches and faculty candidates and to examine assumptions related to competence and best fit of a candidate.
  - c. Submit a recruitment plan to the appropriate office (Affirmative Action Office? EEO Office, Deans? Associate Deans?) The recruitment plan would propose activities that actively seek an applicant pool of qualified individuals that includes

members of underrepresented groups. When the University, through the Affirmative Action Officer and appropriate official/s, sets a hiring goal for a unit, the special efforts to recruit affirmatively must be exceptionally strong. The goals articulated can represent the under-utilization numbers generated by the Affirmative Action Plan.

- d. Develop the role of an Inclusive Excellence Advocate to serve on search committees. This position would bring the lens of equity and inclusion to the search process. Advocates would be educated on implicit bias, search protocol, Affirmative Action, and how to skillfully challenge search committees. A faculty member from the hiring College or from a different College, a staff member, HR, and/or Inclusive Excellence could fulfill the role of Advocate.
- e. Plan for cluster hiring. The term cluster hiring is used in two ways. The first describes the practice of hiring a group of people at all levels that are well versed in more than one area and can float between disciplines. The advantage of this is to have a cohort of flexible and dynamic minority scholars well suited to the new challenges facing them in a constantly changing environment.

The second method aims at hiring more than one person of color at a time, minimizing feelings of isolationism and overload. It is possible that both types of cluster hiring may occur in one recruitment phase but not necessarily.

- f. Shape job descriptions to attract diverse candidates. *“Whenever a vacancy occurs – whether for an existing position or for a newly created position, review the position description to ensure that it is aligned with the commitment to diversify the faculty.”* AAC&U

## II. Building a Diverse Applicant Pool

The following recruitment activities are offered for consideration. The list is not exhaustive and should be supplemented by ideas generated in the department or program unit to increase the number of qualified candidates in the applicant pool.

These suggestions are offered with the understanding that it is not feasible to blueprint one recruitment plan for all disciplines or academic units because the means of reaching large numbers of qualified applicants differs from discipline to discipline. The list is also offered with the appreciation that NKU currently practices several of these activities. Practices that could be strengthened or explored further are starred\*.

The key to building an exemplary applicant pool is **personal contact**. The most effective way to locate prospective applicants, especially people of color, women, and people with disabilities include:

- a. \* Calling your colleagues at other colleges/universities. The calls may be

difficult but most colleagues enjoy the opportunity to recommend someone and appreciate being seen as a resource for someone's professional advancement. Outstanding applicants often do not apply for advertised positions, but may do so if personally contacted. If potential applicants do not respond to a nomination or a letter of inquiry, telephone them to determine if their reasons for not responding can be addressed and resolved.

- b. \* Establishing and maintaining relationships with schools having quality programs in your profession/ discipline and seek their assistance in identifying, first, all persons they know who may be interested in a position like the one that is available and, second, persons of color, women, and persons with disabilities who may be interested. Ask about current students or recent graduates of their program. Each faculty member has at least one alma mater that could be contacted. It is important to keep a log of recruitment calls in order to document recruitment activities.
- c. \* Sending Notices of Vacancy to placement services of schools with graduate or professional programs known to prepare well-qualified teachers and scholars in your profession/discipline, including those having high enrollments of minorities and women.
- d. \* Establishing and maintaining contact with faculty members, unit heads and department chairs in the hiring discipline/program unit at other colleges/universities. Phone or e-mail them to inform them of vacancies; ask their assistance in identifying potential applicants.
- e. \* Sending Notices of Vacancy together with a cover letter to professionals in the field inviting them to nominate individuals for the vacancy, especially women, people of color, and people with disabilities. Contact nominees promptly and provide application information.
- f. Advertising in national or regional professional journals or newsletters of your profession/ discipline. Post announcements on web sites of your professional associations.
- g. Attending national, regional, or state conventions, conferences, or meetings. Be pro-active in seeking names of individuals who may be interested in a new position. Post job vacancies on announcement boards if possible.
- h. Using professional association placement services. Send or e-mail a vacancy notice to committee chairs or association presidents of organizations affiliated with your discipline.
- i. \* Establishing computer mail file of predominantly minority institutions.
- j. Contacting women's caucuses, minority caucuses, or minority or women's

professional associations in your discipline or profession.

- k. \* Using the literature in the specific discipline field or published abstracts to identify women and minority graduate students or post-doctoral candidates. Send announcements or contact them or their department.
- l. \* Networking with individuals who received their degrees in the Midwest. Often, people who have located in other regions have a desire to return to the Midwest.
- m. \* Making recruiting trips to other universities with outstanding programs in your discipline/profession, particularly to those that have significant women and minority populations.
- n. \* Preparing a recruitment plan in consort with another department or departments within your general academic or administrative area. This will aid in controlling advertising expenses by combining recruitment activities and may result in applications from two people seeking to relocate together and/or result in cohort hiring.
- o. Placing suitable value on nontraditional career paths.
- p. Connecting candidates to diverse communities in the region.
- q. \* Contacting governmental agencies, industrial or business organizations employing individuals in your discipline. People currently in nonacademic positions may seek to enter or return to academe. Individuals who have taken early retirement from their nonacademic employment also are potential applicants.
- r. Contacting predominantly women's colleges; professional women and minorities working at independent research institutions and libraries; women and minority doctoral or terminal degree recipients who are not presently using their professional training; and women and minorities presently candidates for terminal degrees.
- s. Obtaining directories of minority and women doctoral recipients to identify potential applicants. HR? Affirmative Action Office?

### III. Developing Proven Retention Initiatives

The impact of expectations, assumptions, and unexamined norms of behavior on diverse faculty at predominately white institutions (PWI) impact cannot be overestimated. Women and minority faculty are generally more likely than majority faculty to see academia as “chilly” and alienating”. Mentoring and positive social interactions are key

ingredients for reducing the experience of a “chilly” and “alienating” environment at the individual, departmental, or university level.

a. Mentoring programs

- Research the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD), an independent center that focuses on helping faculty, particularly, faculty from underrepresented groups, to make the transition from grad student to attaining tenure through professional development, training, and mentorship opportunities.
- Provide ongoing social events that connect diverse faculty with each other, with faculty with similar research interests, and with the community.

b. Funding initiatives

- Funding for Diverse Faculty Research Projects
- Internal grant program (Inclusive Excellence innovation fund to develop scholarship around pedagogy, curriculum design, retention best practices)
- Shared funding
- Fundraising campaign to support faculty and staff diversity

c. Cultural competence development for faculty and staff

d. Visiting Scholar Programs, Diversity Fellows, Faculty Exchange Programs

e. Leadership opportunities for diverse faculty

IV. Enhancing Retention Data Collection

NKU should annually track the diversity of applicant pools; how many diverse candidates were advanced in the search process; and how many diverse candidates were hired. Additionally, the question of *why* diverse faculty and staff leave is critical. A voluntary portion of an exit interview can include a survey for diverse faculty and staff to explain why they are leaving, if it is climate related, who did they speak with, what services were helpful etc. This information should be used to revisit and revamp the recruitment and retention effort.