

# Conducting Inclusive Faculty Searches

## A Concise Guide

Office of Human Resources - January 2021

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# I. Legal and Policy Context

## Inclusive Searches

An inclusive search results in the hiring of a well-qualified faculty member through processes that are not influenced by biases such as "cloning"

## Faculty Hiring Policy

The guiding principles for faculty hiring at the University of West Georgia are outlined below:

1. To recruit and appoint faculty to advance the university's strategic goals;
2. To ensure that faculty recruitment, selection, and appointment are conducted in accordance with all relevant federal and state laws, and BOR and University of West Georgia policies;
3. To support the university's goals of inclusive excellence through intentional efforts to attract diverse applicant pools; and
4. To permit review and authorization of academic position requests with respect to budget and program priorities.

## Equal Opportunity Statement

It is the policy of the University of West Georgia to follow federal law in regards to affirmative action and equal opportunity. The University of West Georgia's affirmative action program and related policies are developed in compliance with Executive Orders 11246 and 11375, as amended; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Sections 503 & 504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II) and their implementing regulations; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; and the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, as it amends 38 U.S.C. 4212.

## Affirmative Action in Faculty Searches

At UWG, affirmative action "requires that special efforts be made to employ and advance in employment qualified women and minorities in areas where they are employed in fewer numbers than is consistent with their availability in the relevant labor market. Affirmative action also extends to persons with disabilities and disabled or Vietnam era veterans. The University seeks to employ and promote qualified candidates. Consistent with this practice, affirmative action requires that where the best candidates for a position are otherwise equally well qualified, the individual(s) selected should be the one(s) who will contribute to the achievement of affirmative action goals". The legal basis of affirmative action in employment is summarized by the U.S. Department of Labor at <https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/hiring/affirmativeact>.

The areas where women, minorities, persons with disabilities, and disabled or Vietnam era veterans are employed in fewer numbers than is consistent with their availability in the relevant labor market are highlighted in UWG's Affirmative Action Plan (AAP). For more information

regarding UWG's Affirmative Action Plan, please contact UWG Office of Human Resources. Efforts to remove barriers to the employment of women, minorities, persons with disabilities, and disabled or Vietnam era veterans commonly include expanded efforts in outreach and recruitment to increase the pool of qualified individuals from these groups.

## II. The Search Committee

### Appointment of the Search Committee

The search committee plays several important roles:

- It has a powerful role in determining which applicants are given further consideration.
- It represents the department, the college, and UWG as a whole.
- Each committee member can be an important resource for the selected candidate when acclimating to UWG.

For all these reasons, departments should form their committees by considering the following factors:

- A diversity of perspectives
- A diversity of expertise
- Demographic diversity
- Members who have demonstrated a commitment to diversity and inclusion through their teaching, service to institution, academic achievement, and professional growth & development.

Diverse search committee membership helps ensure that a balance of perspectives is used when evaluating applicants. It also sends an important message to applicants about the department's—and UWG's—commitment to creating and supporting a diverse and inclusive community.

| <b>Possible Members Beyond Department Faculty</b>     | <b>Benefits of Inclusion</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Faculty from other department(s) or college(s)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Furthers interdisciplinary conversations and relationships (e.g., interdisciplinary research)</li> <li>• Can increase demographic diversity of search committees</li> </ul>                     |
| <b>Student</b>                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures that student perspectives are included</li> <li>• Enhances graduate student development and marketability</li> <li>• Can increase demographic diversity of search committees</li> </ul> |

|                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Staff</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporates important staff perspectives that may not be represented by faculty members</li> <li>• Promotes staff inclusion in the department</li> <li>• Can increase demographic diversity of search committees</li> </ul> |
| <b>Member of the larger community</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports the department's development of community partnerships and initiatives</li> <li>• Can increase demographic diversity of search committees</li> </ul>                                                                |

### Charging the Search Committee

Charging a search committee helps develop, articulate, and reinforce shared understandings of important concepts early on.

In the written charge, the hiring authority should clarify:

- Strategic nature of the position.
- Type of recommendation the committee should provide the hiring authority. Examples include:
  - a recommended candidate
  - a ranked list of acceptable finalists,
  - an unranked list of acceptable (or all) finalists with analysis of strengths and weaknesses.
- Deadline for that recommendation.
- Importance of conducting the selection process in accordance with federal and state laws.
- Expectations for confidentiality, attendance, fairness, and the use of appropriate mechanisms to mitigate bias.
- The importance of inclusive excellence for this search.

The committee should determine at the first meeting:

Timelines and tips for these steps:

- Plan a calendar backwards from the deadline for the recommendation.
- Block off committee members' calendars in weeks of screening and campus interviews
- Determine roles that the department and its other members will play in the search at various steps.
- Determine how the committee will handle documentation of the selection process.
- Develop shared understanding of the qualifications and how they will be applied.

### III. Developing Position Announcements

The guidance below synthesizes required language and recommendations based on best practices used at UWG and other universities. Use this along with other guidance specific to your academic unit and discipline to prepare an effective announcement.

#### Compelling Opening Paragraph

The opening paragraph should generate enthusiasm about the position by describing in a compelling and distinctive way the faculty member's contributions to UWG's strategic initiatives and vision, while conveying an inclusive environment. See below for additional guidance:

- Revise statements about what the faculty member is "expected to" do into statements about how they will "contribute to" something - often a specific, forward-looking strategic initiative
- Convey how the faculty member will *become* part of a team, cohort, or other supportive community
- Consider starting sentences with verbs/commands, such as "Join," "Be part of"
- Say what will support the faculty member (facilities, a center, groups of people, time/financial support)
- Reference to a faculty member's "commitment to" something here must be supported by one or more specific qualifications related to that commitment in the separate "Qualifications" section
- Faculty title can be incorporated in this section

#### Describing UWG

This second paragraph will ideally reinforce themes in the opening paragraph. Here is an example:

*"Welcome to one of the most dynamic universities in the nation. Since 1906, UWG has been home to those who are eager to take their own path, learn, and grow. With more than 13,400 students and 85+ programs, we've come a long way since then. Today, we're a regional powerhouse with locations in Carrollton, Douglasville, and Newnan, Georgia, making a difference in the lives of our students, our neighbors and the world. The one thing that's never changed: Amazing things happen when you Go West."*

#### Responsibilities

Include a clear and concise paragraph stating the job responsibilities. Consider how the language you use here sustains or breaks the welcoming and supportive tone established in the first paragraph. For example, "The selected candidate can anticipate teaching X, Y, and Z courses and participating in service at the program/department. . . level," or "Teaching responsibilities include. . . Service responsibilities include. . ."

#### Qualifications

Qualifications should support the themes in the opening paragraph and the paragraph about UWG. Criteria used in all stages of the selection process will be developed from these lists of qualifications. The search committee's work will be clarified, and implicit bias can be interrupted more effectively, if the announcement includes a bulleted list of qualifications, including required and preferred:

- Applicants must have all required qualifications to be considered. This list should address education and key skills and experiences that are truly essential to perform the job successfully at UWG. Because this list of essential qualifications will be used for the first screening stage, it should not be excessively long or restrictive.
- The preferred qualifications should outline key skills and experiences that will help an applicant perform the job at UWG at a higher level. Well-written preferred qualifications provide ways for applicants from diverse backgrounds to demonstrate their ability to perform the job at a higher level. The preferred qualifications may be used to develop multiple lists for first round interviews, enabling the search committees to consider applicants with varied strengths. It is not necessarily expected that the finalists invited to campus interviews will possess all of the preferred qualifications.

### Application Materials

Consider these questions when choosing what application materials to request:

- What kind of time, barrier, and/or burden does produce a particular applicant documentation place on an applicant, and will it act as a deterrent? How might that exclude or disadvantage certain applicants?
- How may a particular piece of documentation reveal more about an individual applicant's interest in, and suitability for, the position at UWG?
- A simple way of obtaining evidence specifically related to the qualifications at the outset of the selection process without excessively burdening or turning away applicants is by asking them to submit:
  - A letter of application addressing the essential and preferred qualifications;
  - A curriculum vitae;
  - Names, email addresses, telephone numbers and titles of at least three professional references.

### Required and Recommended Closing Language

Required language that is included in all postings is underlined; other language illustrates a recommended way of managing other aspects of the application process:

- Review of applications will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled. To ensure consideration, submit all materials by DATE.
- Please be advised that if you should be recommended for a position; an offer of employment will be conditional on background verification.
- University of West Georgia is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate against applicants due to race, ethnicity, gender, veteran status, or on the basis of disability or any other federal, state or local protected class.

- Additional sample language: As a campus with a diverse student body, we encourage applications from women, minorities, and individuals with a history of mentoring under-represented minorities in discipline.

### International Applicants

Please contact the UWG Office of Human Resources for guidance if considering an applicant who has indicated they will require sponsorship to work in the U.S.

## IV. Developing the Candidate Pool

Use ongoing recruitment strategies long before the start of the search!

### Examples of Ongoing Recruitment Strategies

- Hold symposia that bring 3-5 promising scholars to your department to give a presentation. Enjoy a dinner or reception with your faculty and graduate students for informal networking and experiential learning opportunities.
- At conferences, identify and talk with graduate students and faculty at other institutions, including women and underrepresented scholars. Maintain a list of these scholars and invite some to speak at UWG. Even if they're not currently seeking a faculty position, these scholars, their students, or their colleagues may become applicants, or they may nominate their students for a faculty position after learning about our research profile, diverse students, and advantageous location. Therefore, it's crucial to address scholars working in any subfield, including those for which you have no immediate hiring need.
- Identify an academic department at a possible feeder institution and have your faculty visit the department, talk to their undergraduate majors about graduate study at UWG, and talk to graduate students and faculty informally. Explore the possibility of organizing a co-sponsored symposium, collaborative research experiences, or similar partner activities, which will deepen and sustain these relationships with students and faculty over time. Departments seeking to diversify their faculty should identify and partner with institutions that attract and support women and historically underrepresented students.
- Partner with related departments at UWG to host a short conference to expose nearby doctoral students and faculty to our campus and community. Consider a conference theme with cross disciplinary appeal, appeal for underrepresented students, and/or appeal for those committed to advancing diversity and inclusion in higher education. Include ample time in the schedule for networking and informal exchanges of ideas and experiences. Develop strategies for fostering over time the relationships initiated at the conference. Funding opportunities are listed below.
- Hold Professional Development Workshops open and advertised to graduate students from nearby institutions who will be on the job market in 1-2 years. Departments seeking to diversify their faculty should attract, engage, and support graduate students who are committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in higher education. Include meals and modest support for their travel expenses.



## Involve All Department Members

Ongoing recruitment requires time. It becomes feasible when it is a responsibility shared by department members. These steps can build a department culture of shared responsibility for active recruitment:

- Develop an expectation that faculty use every professional trip as an opportunity for recruitment. Ask faculty to report or share their efforts and contacts with the department.
- Encourage all faculty members to contact colleagues or use social media for recruitment purposes.
- Pool resources with other UWG departments. Consider hosting interdisciplinary events with related departments in your college or another college.

## Registries and Key Institutions

There are numerous registries or databases of doctoral and postdoctoral scholars from underrepresented groups that may help in ongoing recruitment efforts. Academic Affairs and the Office of Human Resources can partner to compile a list of resources for future reference.

## V. Reviewing Applications

### Using a Criteria-Based Approach

A systematic, criteria-based approach to evaluating applicants in the faculty selection process has several benefits over an approach that involves a rapid and possibly intuitive identification and separation of a top group of candidates. The latter approach may lead committees to overlook strong candidates who come from backgrounds different from those reflected in the department or have strengths that may not be immediately recognized. It can leave the committee without clear direction if some candidates can no longer be considered for any reason immediately before or after on-campus interviews, or if the committee decides to expand the pool at a later point by reviewing applications received after the priority deadline.

The type of methodical, consistent, and rigorous evaluation approach outlined here has additional strengths. Articulating criteria helps ensure that all committee members have a shared understanding of the qualifications and are prepared to evaluate applicants consistently. Criteria help ensure that applicants are measured against a consistent standard, rather than a shifting standard, or in relation to a “top” candidate. This ensures all members of the search committee have an equal voice and guards against forceful and opinionated committee members from disproportionately influencing the outcome. Clear criteria also help establish continuity in the evaluation process as other faculty and students join the process during on-campus interviews.

### When and How to Develop Criteria

Criteria can be developed early in the process when the job announcement is drafted. Committee members need to reach consensus on and establish clear criteria *before* reviewing applicants’ materials.

These criteria are the foundation of the consistent and equitable selection process that follows. This will ensure the application materials requested in the announcement will give the committee sufficient information to evaluate all applicants using the criteria. It can also help

create an announcement that communicates committee and department expectations more clearly to applicants, improving the quality of the applicant pool. Committees develop selection criteria from the qualifications listed in the job announcement. Committees can reach consensus on selection criteria by posing questions for discussion.

Examples of questions to help produce criteria used in the initial screening stages:

- If a PhD in “a related field” was included as an option in the required qualifications, what are examples of those related fields?
- If an “ability” to do something was specified in one of the essential or preferred qualifications, what would demonstrate this ability in the initial application materials? To develop inclusive criteria, include multiple answers to this question based on committee members’ previous experiences with faculty searches.
- If “experience” doing something was specified in one of the essential or preferred qualifications, what would this experience look like in the initial application materials? To develop inclusive criteria, include multiple answers to this question based on committee members’ previous experiences with faculty searches.

Criteria also supports later stages in the evaluation process. For example, criteria developed from teaching qualifications for use during on-campus interviews might focus on finalists’ ability to engage UWG students in learning. It is recommended that search committees get broader departmental input when developing the criteria used in the selection process.

### Developing Inclusive Criteria

Criteria used in evaluating applicants must be job-related. The race or gender of candidates may not be factors considered in employment decisions. However, it is important to consider in advance how the criteria developed for use in the selection process can have significant impacts on the diversity and range of skills represented by the short-listed candidates and finalists. Think carefully about what inclusive excellence means for your department and how certain criteria may include or exclude applicants from further consideration.

- In the absence of clear criteria, some committees may be inclined to exclude from further consideration candidates without a degree from a Tier 1 doctoral program, even those who have impressive publication and grants records. How would a closer and graduated evaluation of the quality of the applicants’ research have a different impact? And could these candidates who would have been otherwise excluded be able to bring additional strengths in teaching and mentoring students from diverse backgrounds?
- Consider the possible impact of criteria on those who have not followed traditional career patterns but may nevertheless be able to help your department reach its goals (e.g., someone whose academic career was interrupted but along the way gained significant practical experience or community experience)? These strengths could be instrumental in pursuing particular lines of research, in applying for certain types of grants and for supporting students from diverse backgrounds.

### Questions when reviewing possible criteria:

- Is the criterion that you plan to use really essential for someone to succeed in this particular position?
- What strong performers might get excluded by this criterion?
- How could the criterion be reworded more inclusively?

Criteria restricted to or heavily privileging previous experience may significantly reduce the diversity of candidates who are interviewed. Instead, consider how criteria could be developed to enable a full consideration of the varied strengths of all candidates. The search committee should discuss and determine the relative importance of the criteria drawn from the essential or preferred qualifications before beginning to review applications. It is unlikely that individual applicants will be rated highly on all criteria. Therefore, having a prioritization of criteria in place at the outset will help the committee determine how to evaluate applicants who have different strengths and combinations of strengths.

The criteria developed above are key to the various stages of the review and selection process and it is recommended that their use be documented in some form. A sample template for this is shown on the next page.

## SAMPLE - Applicant Evaluation Tool

The following offers a method for department faculty to provide evaluations of job applicants. It is meant to be a template for departments that they can modify as necessary for their own uses. The proposed questions are designed for junior faculty candidates; however, alternate language is suggested in parenthesis for senior faculty candidates.

Applicant's name:

Please indicate which of the following are true for you (check all that apply):

- Read applicant's CV
- Read applicant's statements (research, teaching, etc.)
- Read applicant's letters of recommendation
- Read applicant's scholarship (indicate what):

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|                                                     |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Please rate the applicant on each of the following: |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Evidence of research productivity                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Potential for scholarly impact / tenurability       |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Evidence of strong background in [relevant fields]  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|                                                                                                 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Evidence of [particular] perspective on [particular area]                                       |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Evidence of teaching experience and interest (including grad mentorship)                        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Potential to teach courses in core curriculum                                                   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Potential to teach the core curriculum on [particular area] (including creation of new courses) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Other comments?

## VI. Conducting First-Round Interviews

Videoconferencing is now commonly used for screening interviews in academia. Consider holding these interviews in a location that illustrates UWG's contemporary facilities.

### Questions

- Develop a list of questions for the first-round interview and ask all of them, in the same order, of all those you interview at this stage. This structured interview format helps ensure an equitable process. Internal or known candidates should be treated in the same way and asked the same questions as other candidates. Committee members may also ask follow-up questions, such as those designed to elicit clarification or elaboration of an individual candidate's response.
- Questions are best developed from the qualifications and job duties listed in the publicly circulated job announcement. Include as part of your question list a question prompting each candidate to add any other comments or information that they would like to share at this time and a prompt for them to ask one or more questions of the search committee.
- Begin each interview by letting the candidate know the structure of the interview and then prompting committee members to introduce themselves to the candidate. Conclude by letting each candidate know the next step(s) and thanking them for their interest in the position.
- All committee members should review this guide to appropriate and inappropriate inquiries during the selection process. This guide pertains to both the list of questions planned for the interview, follow-up questions, and less formal exchanges that may occur, especially during on campus interviews.

### Documentation

When deliberating over the short-list interviews and how they have provided additional evidence of candidates' qualifications, refer once again to the committee's agreed-upon criteria and document the committee's decisions clearly. Record in writing the committee's rationale for

no longer considering each candidate who has been disqualified. This evaluation and rationale can be added to a cumulative committee evaluation sheet. Note specific job-related reasons that are rooted in the job announcement cannot be construed as discriminatory. An employer may not base hiring decisions on stereotypes and assumptions about a person's race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information.

Committee members' notes and selection documentation may be scrutinized following the completion of the selection process in the event of litigation, an audit, or a public records request. An unintended impression of bias can be created by comments that are not related to the job and the qualifications and skills required to perform it. Retain records per the USG records retention schedule, and send official search records to the Office of Human Resources.

## Reference Calls and Checks

Reference calls Can be conducted after videoconferencing interviews, to help determine who to invite to an on-campus interview;

- Conduct the reference checks in the same way (e.g., by phone) if you will be conducting reference checks for more than one finalist (or semi-finalist).
- Have at least 2 search committee members present for each call.
- Ask the same questions of all those you call ("structured interview").
- Ask follow-up questions as appropriate.
- Document answers clearly so information gained through reference calls can be treated consistently as evidence in the selection process.
- All these steps help ensure an equitable process.

## VII. Bias during the Screening Process

### Recognizing Bias

Bias is a common factor in selection processes. For example, in a randomized double-blind study on gender bias, both male and female science faculty were equally likely to exhibit bias by rating male applicants more highly than identical applicants assigned female names. Academic psychologists reviewing CVs rated a male applicant higher in teaching, research, and service experience and were more likely to hire him than the equally qualified female applicant. And when names were randomly assigned to résumés, applicants with "white-sounding names" were more likely to be invited for a job interview than equally qualified applicants with "African-American sounding names" (Moss-Racusin, et al., 2012; R. Steinpreis, et al., 1999; Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004).

Both explicit and implicit biases—the beliefs that we consciously endorse and the biases that operate below our conscious awareness—can have major impacts on the outcomes of individual selection processes. Cumulatively, they can have even greater impacts on the faculty that make up a department and a university. Biases in perception and attention can fuel quick, inaccurate, and poorly substantiated determinations about applicants. They can unconsciously influence how much attention is paid or not paid to particular types of evidence among all the materials submitted, which strengths and weaknesses of individual applicants receive the most consideration, and how particular qualifications are perceived. As a result, these biases often

lead to the elimination of qualified women, underrepresented minority applicants, and applicants with non-traditional career paths at various stages of the selection process.

Here are some specific types of biases and related cognitive errors and shortcuts that lead to poor quality decision-making during the selection process:

| Type of Bias                      | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Similarity Bias or Cloning</b> | Preference for those we perceive to be like us, have similar experiences, or be similar to a person we are replacing. Cloning reduces a department's approaches and perspectives in research and teaching.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Provincialism</b>              | Undervaluing something outside one's own circle or group.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Positive Stereotypes</b>       | Based on stereotypes, individual members of dominant groups are presumed competent or receive the benefit of the doubt when questions arise. Often applicants from dominant groups are evaluated with emphasis on their potential while those from non-dominant groups are only evaluated on their accomplishments and experience to date.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Negative Stereotypes</b>       | Based on stereotypes, individual women and members of underrepresented minority groups receive more scrutiny. They may be tacitly held to a higher standard of work, their qualifications may be questioned more, their work may be attributed more to their mentors and co-authors, and they may receive harsher evaluations based on their demeanor, accent, or appearance.                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Euphemized Bias</b>            | Applicants from dominant groups and non-dominant groups are held to different standards disguised through vague language such as "star," "visionary," and "fit." Such language may reflect an evaluation of applicants from dominant groups with an emphasis on their potential that is not afforded applicants from non-dominant groups. "Fit" is often about reviewers' personal comfort with an applicant, rather than a full, fair, and objective evaluation of applicants' abilities to perform the job. |
| <b>Contrast Effect</b>            | Evaluating one applicant in relation to another one, rather than in relation to the qualifications and criteria.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Groupthink</b>                 | The emergence of consensus influences an individual member's view.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Group Momentum</b>             | A rush to reach consensus prevents other views from being heard.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Snap Judgments</b>             | Rapid assessment and emphasis on certain pieces of evidence often resulting in devaluing an applicant for insignificant reasons or ignoring their strengths.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Halo Effect</b>       | One highly rated aspect of an applicant's qualifications generates an overall strong evaluation, regardless of other evidence.                                                            |
| <b>Horn Effect</b>       | One poorly rated aspect of an applicant's qualifications generates an overall weak evaluation, regardless of other evidence.                                                              |
| <b>Recency Effect</b>    | Judgment is excessively influenced by recently received information.                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Primacy Effect</b>    | Judgment is excessively influenced by initially received information.                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Confirmation Bias</b> | Tendency to seek or interpret information in a way that confirms one's preconceptions, while ignoring or undervaluing the relevance of information that contradicts one's preconceptions. |

### Interrupting Bias

We can interrupt and mitigate bias throughout the selection process by taking steps to address the conditions that often encourage it. We can:

- Reduce ambiguity by clarifying the structures being used for decision-making.
- Reduce cognitive overload on committee members.
- Reduce time constraints commonly placed on the decision-making process

### Create a Structure That Supports Clear Decision-Making

Such a structure can be created when criteria are established and prioritized prior to the review of applications, and when evaluation templates are well-designed, ideally reflecting the prioritization of criteria and including prompts to consider a broad range of evidence.

Search committee members can assist by holding one another to high standards when applying these criteria with available evidence. For example, are committee members introducing a threshold of a Tier 1 graduate program as a short-cut to evaluating applicants' research qualifications?

### Ask Questions to Clarify Decision-Making

During deliberations, search committee members can prompt one another to explain themselves in relation to the agreed-upon criteria when vague descriptors such as "bad fit," "great fit," "star," or "visionary" surface. If the committee is discussing the importance of finding a "good colleague," committee members can stop and ask what that means, and how, if at all, it relates to the qualifications included in the job announcement. This questioning can mitigate euphemized bias. Specifying key qualities will assist in maintaining a fair and consistent decision-making process.

In the course of decision-making, search committee members can periodically stop and genuinely ask, "*What is the evidence for the opposite conclusion?*" **This question can interrupt and mitigate confirmation bias.**

At various points in the selection process, search committee members can pause and reflect:

- Have women and minority applicants been held to a different standard?
- Have applicants from outside prestigious research universities been undervalued in the selection process?
- Have assumptions or inferences about an applicant's family responsibilities negatively impacted the evaluation of their qualifications and abilities?

### Allow Sufficient Time and Attention for Thoughtful Review

An emphasis on making offers before competing institutions do can result in poor quality evaluations of applicants, as well as competing demands on reviewers' attention. Here are several proactive ways to shape the use of time in a thoughtful evaluation process:

- Gain time for thoughtful review by using technology to simplify the mechanics of review processes; examples include uniform evaluation sheets or automating an anonymous pooling of comments and ratings from department members on finalists.
- Create intermediate deadlines to reduce reviewers' tendency to postpone and rush their evaluations; prompt them to allow sufficient time (15-20 minutes) to review each file (Martell 1991).

### Pause Before You Decide Who to Interview

Search committees often move too quickly from the list of applicants who meet the advertised essential qualifications to those that are invited for first round interviews, or from the list of candidates interviewed in the first round to the finalists that are invited to the campus interview. Take additional time to make sure the committee has given full consideration to applicants from less traditional backgrounds.

There are two recommended alternatives that can help ensure a fairer review and prevent or slow the creation of a homogeneous interview list from a diverse applicant pool:

- Make a medium list first. Review it and ask if bias may have played a role, for example, in eliminating women and underrepresented minority applicants, before proceeding to the next step in the selection process.
- Make multiple short lists, each created from those applicants who were rated highly on a different criterion. Then select applicants from all those short lists for further consideration. **This approach can help mitigate the halo effect.**

### Create Checkpoints

The committee can introduce checkpoints in the selection process to stop and assess whether bias or different standards may have impacted the extent to which women and underrepresented minorities remain under consideration. Doing so can have significant ramifications on the outcome of the search process: when women or minorities comprise less than one quarter of the applicant pool (or group of finalists) they are more likely to be negatively influenced by reviewers' gender (or racial) assumptions and much less likely to be offered a job (Heilman 2005; Van Ommeren 2005; Johnson, Hekman, and Chan 2016). One such checkpoint can be before conducting screening interviews.

If necessary, the recruitment phase of the search can be extended and/or the interview list can be expanded. However, such delays can be avoided or minimized by wording, advertising, and sharing the position from the outset in ways that will generate a diverse pool.



## Create an Inclusive and Welcoming Experience

- Share with finalists UWG's resources pertaining to family, work-life balance, benefits, and dual career resources, available on the [Public Service and Outreach](#) webpage.
- Set aside a portion of the finalists' campus visits that can be tailored to their individual's interests and needs. Before finalizing the interview schedules, ask all finalists to indicate anyone specific they would like to meet with during their visit. Be responsive to their requests.
- Incorporate opportunities for finalists to meet other groups and individuals with whom they may be interested in working or connecting.
- Involve other department members in the campus visit (other faculty, undergraduate and/or graduate students, and staff).
- Make sure finalists have opportunities to meet an ample representation of our diverse student body and employees as you invite and encourage campus members to attend the campus visit.
- Include ample breaks for the finalists.
- In the invitation to visit campus, include a prompt for finalists with disabilities to request accommodation: *"University of West Georgia is committed to providing access, and reasonable accommodation in its services, programs, activities, education and employment for individuals with disabilities. To request an accommodation during the application or selection process, please contact the Office of Human Resources at (678) 839-6403 or [hr@westga.edu](mailto:hr@westga.edu)."*

## Ensure a Lawful Process and a Positive Visit

- Develop a standard evaluation form or electronic survey to receive feedback from department members on specific aspects of finalists' qualifications that are directly related to the responsibilities of the position
- Remind department members that each finalist's visit is a two-way process with larger ramifications. Courteous interaction and positive comments about the University of West Georgia will make each visit a fruitful one.
- Remind department members that meals, hallway conversations, and other portions of the campus visit are parts of the interview process. To help with this, have one or more committee members present at any segment of the process.
- Make sure staff members have visit details so they are ready to greet and assist finalists
- Double-check room, meal, and lodging reservations.
- Provide finalists in advance accurate details about the time, location, attendees, and format of each segment of their visit.
- Designate someone to escort finalists between segments of their visit.
- Maintain a structured interview format if the search committee will interview finalists again during a portion of the campus visit. Make sure that you provide an equitable visit for all candidates, including any internal ones.

## Appropriate and Inappropriate Interview Questions

| <b>SUBJECT</b>                    | <b>APPROPRIATE INQUIRIES</b>                                                                                    | <b>INAPPROPRIATE INQUIRIES</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>AGE</b>                        | None.                                                                                                           | Questions about age, date of birth, requests for birth certificate.                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>ARRESTS/CONVICTIONS</b>        | May ask if any record of criminal convictions and/or offenses exist, if all applicants are asked.               | Inquiries regarding arrest record.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>HEIGHT AND WEIGHT</b>          | None.                                                                                                           | Inquiries about the applicant's height or weight.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>CITIZENSHIP</b>                | May ask questions about legal authorization to work in the specific position if all applicants are asked.       | May not ask if person is a U.S. citizen or what citizenship the person holds.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>EDUCATION</b>                  | Inquiries about degree or equivalent experience.                                                                | None.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>DISABILITY</b>                 | May ask about applicant's ability to perform job-related functions.                                             | Question (or series of questions) that is likely to solicit information about a disability.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>MARITAL OR PARENTAL STATUS</b> | Whether applicant can meet work schedule or job requirements. Should be asked of all genders.                   | Any inquiry about marital status, children, pregnancy, or child care plans.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>NATIONAL ORIGIN</b>            | May ask if legally authorized to work in this specific position if all applicants are asked.                    | May not ask a person's birthplace; if the person is a U.S. citizen; questions about the person's lineage, ancestry, descent or parentage; how the person acquired the ability to speak/read/learn a foreign language.                                        |
| <b>PERSONAL FINANCES</b>          | None.                                                                                                           | Inquiries regarding credit record, owning a home, or garnishment record.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>PHOTOGRAPH</b>                 | None.                                                                                                           | Any inquiry for a photograph prior to hire.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>POLITICAL AFFILIATION</b>      | None.                                                                                                           | Inquiries about membership in a political party.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>ORGANIZATIONS</b>              | Inquiries about professional organizations related to the position.                                             | Inquiries about personal or professional organizations suggesting race, sex, color, religion, creed, national origin or ancestry, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, height, weight, disability, or veteran status |
| <b>RACE OR COLOR</b>              | None.                                                                                                           | Comments about complexion or color of skin.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>RELIGION</b>                   | Describe the work schedule and ask whether applicant can work that schedule. Should be asked of all applicants. | Inquiries about religious preferences, affiliation, denominations, church, and religious holidays observed.                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>SEX</b>                        | None.                                                                                                           | Inquiries regarding gender, gender expression or gender identity.                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</b>         | None.                                                                                                           | Comments or questions about the applicant's sexual orientation.                                                                                                                                                                                              |

Comments regarding the above prohibited subjects also should not appear in interview notes or otherwise be considered by the hiring manager or search committee members.

It is permissible to ask if a candidate has the necessary skills, training, experience and education to perform the job, provided this question is asked of all candidates. It is not permissible to eliminate an applicant from consideration if the applicant indicates a need for a reasonable accommodation for a disability.

It is also permissible to ask whether the candidate is available to work the schedule demanded by the job, provided this question is asked of all candidates. It is not permissible to eliminate an applicant from consideration because the applicant indicates a need for a scheduling accommodation either due to a disability or for religious purposes.

## Evaluation of Finalists

Committee deliberations following the campus interviews should remain focused on job-related criteria and include careful consideration of the full range of evidence gathered about the finalists' qualifications. Committee members should review and continue to use the techniques listed in [Bias during the Screening Process](#). The committee should provide clear written documentation of their evaluation of all finalists, continuing to follow the guidelines on documentation in [When and How to Develop Criteria](#). This evaluation can be added in summary form to a cumulative committee evaluation sheet and supplemented with a more detailed report of the committee's determinations. The exact nature of the written recommendation provided by the search committee should conform to what was set out in the committee's charge.

## VIII. Additional Resources

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