

## BROADENING PARTICIPATION SEARCH TIPS

*Objective: Our goal is to transform the culture of Montana State University by implementing sustainable strategies, programs, and policies that allow diverse faculty to flourish, thereby benefitting the entire campus community.*

### STRATEGIES FOR YOUR APPLICANT POOL

- ◆ Keep your job ad as BROAD and OPEN as possible to ensure that the position description does not needlessly limit the pool of applicants. Some position definitions may exclude female (or other underrepresented minority) candidates by focusing too narrowly on subfields in which few women specialize. Use “and/or” and do not list out specific courses. You can always screen for that later. Women are often less likely to apply if they don’t think they are a “perfect” fit and match every single preferred qualification.
- ◆ Use Inclusive language in the EEO statement, such as: *Montana State University values diverse perspectives and is committed to building a multicultural work force. We strongly encourage women, racial/ethnic/gender minorities, persons with disabilities, and veterans to apply. MSU is responsive to the needs of dual career couples and is dedicated to work-life integration.*
- ◆ Be assertive and specific: Call or email colleagues and ask them to “give you the names of their outstanding female students.” Personally invite those people to please consider applying.
- ◆ Ask for names of references instead of letters. Research on medical school applications showed reference letters for women are significantly shorter and overemphasize personality (vs professional experience). Instead have a very specific list of questions to ask each reference on the phone.
- ◆ Post the advertisement on list serves/websites for your field’s professional society for women and/or minorities.

### STRATEGIES FOR YOUR SCREENING PROCESS

- ◆ **Who is the Best Candidate?** There is no single “best candidate” for a position. Do consider “adds diversity” as a qualification. Just as search committees do not always hire the “best” candidate because the person is not in the “right” area, is redundant with another faculty member’s work, or is of a different rank... it is ok to consider other factors that make someone the best person for the job. By generating larger and more diverse pools of applicants for every position, the best candidate for the position will be underrepresented person more often than in the past. (*Fine and Handelsman, 2012*)
- ◆ **Value diversity:** Someone who brings a different life perspective can serve as a role model for students, enhance innovation and discovery, and can bring creative energy to a faculty.
- ◆ **Ask yourself to use a “bias correction”** by re-reviewing the women and minority candidates and consider “promise” for the future alongside that of past performance. Consider how long the person has had their PhD and the hurdles they might have had to overcome.
- ◆ **Go back and add one more:** at every point in the search process, force yourself to go back to the second-list and ask yourself if you should “lift up” the best qualified represented candidate to the next level. Perhaps after reviewing everyone, you might want to have a second look.
- ◆ **Phone interview many applicants** before narrowing down the finalist list. And remember to add “one more!” Having only one woman in the finalist pool renders that person “The Woman” candidate. Having two or more removes the token status.
- ◆ **Invite an Equity Advocate to sit on your committee.** For information on this call the ADVANCE Project TRACS office at 994-4690

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*Broadening the  
Participation of  
Women in Science  
Technology  
Engineering  
Mathematics and  
Social Behavioral  
Sciences*

**Project TRACS:** Invoking the metaphor of a “runner’s track” suggests women faculty in STEM/SBS frequently find themselves on an “outside” track with hurdles to overcome and a longer distance to run than their male counterparts. We aim to transform MSU by removing those hurdles and advancing women to an equal starting point



*Adapted from Fine and Handelsman (2012) with permission*

**BUT: “There are no women in our field, and those who are available are in high demand and MSU can’t compete with our low salaries.”** Though women and minorities are scarce in some fields, it is rarely the case that there are none. In a study by Turner (in *Diversifying the Faculty*) the majority - 54% - of prestigious Ford Fellowship recipients (all of whom are minorities) were not aggressively pursued for faculty positions despite holding postdoctoral research appointments for up to six years. Only 11% of women/minority scholars were recruited by several institutions thus, the remaining 89% were not involved in any “competitive bidding war.”

**BUT: “I am fully in favor of diversity, but we have to hire the best candidate.”** True. But what is the “best?” As mentioned previously, the criteria for “best” is a moving target. What is best for the department? The university? The students? Diverse faculty members can enhance the educational experience of students and can help enhance academic and research excellence.

**BUT: “Academe is meritocracy.”** Although scholars like to believe that they select the best candidates based on objective criteria, decisions are in reality influenced by subtle biases about race, sex, sexual orientation and age that have nothing to do with the quality of a candidate’s work. A 2012 study published in PNAS by Moss-Racusin et al., showed science professors given an identical resume for a lab manager rated the applicant with a man’s name as more competent and offered \$4000 more in starting salary than when the applicant had a woman’s name. Both men and women science faculty showed this bias.

**BUT: “I am not biased.”** Even with the best of intentions, people like familiar others; those who look and think like us. This is why it is so difficult to broaden participation. Everyone has implicit connections between concepts. Decades of research on the Implicit Association Test at Harvard for example shows that *both* men and women associate “Science” with non-minority men. The important thing is to acknowledge we all have these implicit associations to some extent and challenge ourselves and our colleagues to speak openly about these issues. To get the conversation started take the Harvard Implicit Association Test at: <https://implicit.harvard.edu>

## Responses to Common Views

### STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITING YOUR BEST UNDERREPRESENTED CANDIDATE

- ◆ Convey how the department and university is a place in which all faculty – including underrepresented groups or women – can thrive.
- ◆ Keep the visit format consistent across applicants. Schedule a brief visit with the University Family Advocate (call 994-4690) for all job candidates to discuss information about potentially relevant policies (dual career, parental leave, etc)
- ◆ Help the candidate get the best possible start-up package and starting salary. Be aware that women and minorities on average, do not negotiate as aggressively as non-minority men. (*Fine and Handelsman, 2012*)
- ◆ ***It is important to emphasize that every person hired at the MSU should know that they were hired because they were the best person for the job.*** (*Fine and Handelsman, 2012*)



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## Disclaimer

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Portions of the material in this Broadening Participation Search Tips were informed by and adapted from original work by *Fine & Handelsman (2012). Searching for Excellence & Diversity: A Guide for Search Committees National Edition. Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute, University of Wisconsin-Madison*. This summary is meant to supplement this important handbook. Please consult, purchase and reference Fine & Handelsman (2012).

Research showing the effectiveness of this two page summary coupled with other intervention materials, are reported in Smith et al., 2015 at <http://bioscience.oxfordjournals.org/content/65/11/1084>. See also Fine et al., (2014) at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S1529-212620140000019012>.

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For other university faculty search toolkits and research papers on this topic see: <http://www.montana.edu/nsfadvance/resources.html>

For complete information on the university faculty family advocate program, see <http://www.montana.edu/provost/family-advocates.html>