



Equity-Minded Faculty Hiring Practices

Practicing Faculty, Administrators, and Faculty Development
Supporting Student Success in Higher Education

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The California State College Opportunity Center December 2023

Preface

Over 50% of American students in our public schools are Latinx, Black, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI), or American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN). Tapping into their talent and ensuring their access to a college education is essential to our future economic power and the success of our multi-racial democracy. Despite the historical exclusion and current underrepresentation of many Americans in our colleges and universities, in June 2023, the Supreme Court of the United States severely curtailed the use of race in higher education admissions, prohibiting the consideration of an applicant's racial status as part of that process.

Race-conscious admissions helped ensure America's colleges and universities were more diverse. Without it, there is a greater urgency for college leaders and policy makers to review current practices for equity, and to identify solutions that provide a fairer approach to preparing students for college, admitting them, and supporting their success. Towards that aim, the Campaign for College Opportunity is releasing a series of briefs, including this one, as part of our [Armig Equity, Ensuring Inclusion and Empowering Action](#) initiative. The series will elevate practices that support the college preparation, admission, affordability, and success of Latinx, Black, Asian American, NHPI, and AIAN students, ensuring America does not return to an era of exclusion in higher education.

Overview

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EXCUSES FOR UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TO DIVERSIFY FACULTY

Several excuses are commonly used to limit institutional efforts to diversify faculties or to explain the ineffectiveness of these efforts. One common excuse for not hiring candidates who are Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN is that they are less qualified, and, therefore, hiring them would lower a department's standards and expectations. This runs counter to the reality that thousands of Black, Latinx, Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN scholars are earning doctoral degrees every year. Of the nearly 100,000 doctoral degrees conferred by California institutions between 2017-2021, over 58% were awarded to members of racial minorities. Often, the excuse for not hiring faculty members from these groups is rooted in stereotypes about the intellectual capabilities of Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN people. This excuse contrasts with extensive research demonstrating that Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN faculty members are often among the highest quality instructors and are more invested in campus and community service than their colleagues.

Another common set of excuses assumes that, if hired, these candidates will not accept jobs at the institutions, and if they do, they will not stay long. Often, when Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN candidates do not take jobs or are not retained, it is because mistreatment during the search process stymied their interest in an institution, or because a campus provided them with inadequate support, hypertaxed them with service obligations, or was simply racist and unwelcoming. These issues are not a function of the candidates, but of institutional cultures.

DIVERSIFYING FACULTY

Before the search, academic leaders must communicate the rationale for diversifying the faculty to ensure buy-in from faculty colleagues. Institutions must align institutional and departmental commitments to ensure the desire to hire and support faculty members of color is authentic and part of a genuine commitment to action. A genuine commitment means the institution has efforts in place to proactively: create a welcoming academic environment; secure resources for incoming faculty members; and expand the institution's professional relationships to include diverse candidates and disciplinary associations intentionally.


During the search, the campus must form a search committee committed to faculty diversity that contains committee members from diverse constituencies. The institution should provide the committee with training and development on topics that will better prepare it to conduct the search, including implicit bias, racial microaggressions, inclusive job calls, recruiting diverse candidates, and debunking myths about Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN candidates (discussed more in the next section). Committees also should be prepared to host campus visits by candidates in a manner that recognizes the candidates are interviewing the campus as much as the campus is interviewing the candidates.

After the search ends, the long-term work begins, including providing support for the new hire.



EQUITY-MINDED HIRING PRACTICES

There are four hiring practices that can advance faculty diversification efforts. Collectively, these practices prioritize student success (e.g., learning, retention, graduation) and address racial equity gaps. The four hiring practices embed an intensive focus on hiring faculty members who will be most effective in supporting Black, Latinx, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN students. Faculty members who are effective often come from these same communities; thus, the focus on student success and racial equity aligns with efforts for faculty diversification. These practices should be implemented in tandem with the steps from Turner's guidebook⁰.



In addition, it is our expectation that base-level bias reduction strategies also are being integrated into the search process, including:

Screening candidates without knowing their identities to reduce the likelihood of bias on the basis of a candidate's name or other identifiers.

Providing training on implicit bias and racial microaggression in the search process.

Certifying that applicant pools are based on whether the representation of diversity within the pool matches the availability in the marketplace

Including a representative on the search committee whose role is to ensure that processes and conversations avoid bias.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that identifying practices that can be effective in achieving faculty diversity should only be the beginning of an institution's efforts. Commitment and cooperation from key institutional constituents, like academic senates, faculty unions, governing boards, presidents, provosts, deans, and department chairs, are essential to meaningfully implement and sustain these practices — especially when there is political pressure and opposition to this goal. In some contexts, it may be necessary to garner support from external partners, like major donors, key legislators, foundations, and policy advocacy organizations.

EQUITY-MINDED HIRING CRITERIA

When a search concludes, the overarching evaluation of the process's effectiveness is the extent to which the new faculty member satisfies and exceeds the documented search criteria. Search criteria refer to the benchmarks a department sets to evaluate prospective candidates for a faculty position. There are usually different levels of search criteria: "required" or "minimum," and "preferred." Required or minimum criteria are mandatory factors that each candidate must meet for consideration, such as whether the applicant has a terminal degree, the discipline that degree is in, a record of relevant research and/or service, and/or demonstration of an ability to secure funding. In contrast, preferred criteria are those that are desired or preferred, regarding a candidate's years of experience, areas of specialty, or understanding of an institution or a department and its mission. Our focus here is on required or minimum criteria.

One strategy that promotes equity-minded student success, but also increases faculty diversity, is to have required evaluation criteria focused on minoritized communities. To identify the focus of the criteria, a campus should evaluate its outcomes data (e.g., persistence, graduation, achievement) to determine groups that experience disproportionate impact. Most commonly, institutions will find that Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN students are underserved by the institution, compared to other groups. Then, the campus should select the group or groups to be the focus of the search. These criteria should appear prominently among the posted criteria. For example, in a search for a counseling/therapy faculty member, a campus could have search criteria focused on whether the candidate has demonstrated a commitment to serving Latinx populations or a history of effective work at a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Other examples could be requiring candidates to



Table 2. Sample Hiring Criteria

Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) Hiring Criteria
<p>A candidate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Has experience in or has demonstrated commitment to teaching, mentoring and/or engaging in services for Black and Brown students.<input type="checkbox"/> Has demonstrated knowledge of barriers for Black and Brown students and experience in addressing disproportionate impacts at an institution.<input type="checkbox"/> Has experience in or has demonstrated commitment to helping Black and Brown students navigate higher education institution.<input type="checkbox"/> Has experience or has demonstrated commitment to integrating elements of culturally relevant and inclusive pedagogy.<input type="checkbox"/> SBCC has reserved the following 24 tenure-track faculty positions to seek faculty members with the expertise to lead its institution in serving Black and Brown students.
San Diego State University Hiring Criteria
<p>A candidate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Is committed to engaging in service with underrepresented populations within the discipline.<input type="checkbox"/> Has demonstrated knowledge of barriers for underrepresented students and faculty members within the discipline.<input type="checkbox"/> Has experience or has demonstrated commitment to teaching and mentoring underrepresented students.<input type="checkbox"/> Has experience or has demonstrated commitment to integrating understanding of underrepresented populations and communities into research.<input type="checkbox"/> Has experience in or has demonstrated commitment to extending knowledge of opportunities and challenges in achieving artistic/scholarly success to members of an underrepresented group.<input type="checkbox"/> Has experience in or has demonstrated commitment to research that engages underrepresented communities.<input type="checkbox"/> Has expertise or demonstrated commitment to developing expertise in cross-cultural communication and collaboration.<input type="checkbox"/> Has research interests that contribute to diversity and equal opportunity in higher education.

EQUITY-THEMED CLUSTER HIRING

Cluster hiring can serve as a key strategy for increasing faculty diversity. A cluster hire refers to hiring

announce a total of 10 to 20 tenure-track faculty positions that have been set aside for a search, with a theme for the cluster related to the targeted population. The overarching criteria for the cluster would be to hire faculty members with a demonstrated record of success in teaching students in the targeted population.

Academic departments should be given an opportunity to submit proposals to secure a new faculty line in the cluster. Tenure-track faculty positions are highly valued resources at most colleges and universities; thus, there is an inherent incentive for departments that want to maintain and grow faculty lines. Proposals could include faculty members who will work in a single department (e.g., counseling, biology, public health) or those who may have joint appointments. One strategy for conducting a cluster hire with no new resources is to use replacement lines. Every year, faculty members retire or move on to different institutions, which creates an opportunity to hire new employees using existing funding sources. Clear instructions on how to submit a request for a new faculty line that will be part of a cluster should be provided to academic departments.

The campus could implement a rigorous process to evaluate proposals based on their connection to the theme and to related plans for the recruitment and support of the candidates, if hired. Institutions should consider a department's readiness to foster a healthy environment for Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN colleagues as a factor in hiring determinations. One step toward doing so is to require the department to conduct a self-assessment that gets it to consider the status of its climate and what it needs to do to make sure it will be an environment where new colleagues thrive.

The campus should advertise the cluster search extensively, such as with diverse professional organizations and associations in the targeted discipline or field. Intentional emphasis should be placed on the cluster theme. From here, the search process could follow the normal search process procedures (e.g., review of applicants, semifinalist interviews, job talks).

Beyond this, the campus should have a clear talent retention plan for how the cluster hires will be supported through tenure and promotion. This plan should include orientation and onboarding, pre-identified support (e.g., research assistants, professional development dollars), intentional connections with campus leaders (e.g., president, vice presidents, chief diversity officer), and community building. The latter points are key. These individuals can support each other as they grow and develop in their careers at the institution. Again, they are best positioned to support one another when the criteria more narrowly target a specific racial community. Using equity-minded search criteria and cluster hires is only effective to the extent that the search process authentically honors the focus on racial equity

Finally, to increase the likelihood of success for cluster hiring processes, institutions should include policies and strategies that allow for the hiring of spouses and other partners of desired candidates. This will likely require some additional resources, in the short term, for hiring units.

In summary, successful cluster hiring will:

- Target cluster hires for one racial/ethnic group of prospective candidates

- Highlight a track record of success in working with Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and/or AIAN students

- Prioritize hires across departments that are a part of the cluster

- Ensure that departments have supports in place to foster a healthy environment for recruited hires

- Advertise and engage in outreach for cluster faculty openings intentionally and beyond traditional approaches

- Have a plan of action for supporting these new faculty members' first several years on campus.

As a result, the next two recommendations focus on how to apply these criteria during candidate interviews in both the teaching evaluation and the assessment. We begin with the teaching evaluation.

EQUITY-MINDED TEACHING EVALUATION

A common assessment used to make determinations about the “quality” of a faculty candidate is the teaching demonstration. The teaching demonstration provides applicants with an opportunity to make a presentation on a topic to provide the committee with insight on their teaching effectiveness. The presentation is often attended by faculty colleagues and a small group of students. That said, the teaching demonstration is not often seen as a key evaluation tool for determining whether applicants have a demonstrated record of success in teaching and serving disproportionately impacted Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN students. If an analytic lens for teaching strategies and practices for students of color is employed, the teaching demonstration can be maximized for determining candidates’ potential for success. In terms of key strategies and practices that can be used to evaluate candidates, decades of research on minoritized students can inform a department’s approach. For instance, scholars have long discussed the importance of culturally relevant teaching, validation, relationship building, intrusive practices, and an understanding of racial microaggressions. These practices involve the following:

Culturally relevant teaching . This practice refers to when educators intentionally connect the course content to their students’ lives, experiences, and cultural contexts. The approach centers diverse students in every aspect of the teaching and learning experience and can be accomplished by ensuring that the course content, learning objectives, perspectives, readings, illustrations, and examples are tied to the lived experiences of students of color. Culturally relevant teaching also acknowledges and leverages the cultural strengths and assets that students bring with them to the learning environment.

Validation. This occurs when educators provide messages of encouragement that affirm

students' abilities and efforts. Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN students are remarkably able to persist through significant external pressures (e.g., food insecurity, employment challenges) and hostile campus climates when they are exposed to educators who validate them. As noted by Rendón, "Validation is an enabling, confirming and supportive process initiated by in- and out-of-class agents that foster academic and interpersonal development"¹² We discuss positive and encouraging messages as being one way, among many, that educators can validate students. Validating messages are most impactful when they are positive and encouraging and received by students as authentic and supportive. Students need messages that encourage them in a range of different areas, including their expectations ("I know you are capable of great things"), degree utility ("This will create a better life for you and your family," "Your hard work is worth it"), resilience ("If you can overcome this, nothing can stop you," "No one has your drive"), intelligence ("You have the ability to do the work," "You can succeed"), and engagement ("I want to hear your perspective in the next class," "I can't wait to hear what you thought about the readings!").

Relationship building. This occurs when educators build relationships with students as a precondition for effective teaching and learning. Positive relationships between Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN students and their instructors have been shown to foster an environment conducive to success. As Wood et al. noted, educators should foster an environment where students can (a) trust or rely on them for support; (b) expect that they will be respected and that educators will be approachable and open; and (c) know their educators authentically care about them, both academically and personally. Wood et al. assessed relationship building between faculty members and students of color by considering whether educators knew students' names, referred to them by their names, sought opportunities to talk or acknowledge their presence, and understood their personal and academic goals.¹⁴

Intrusive teaching. This refers to strategies that build proactive assessment and interventions for students. For instance, if a faculty member recognizes that a student is experiencing a challenge, the faculty member can engage with the student directly to ask what is occurring and connect the student to relevant support services. In other words, intrusive teaching means intervening before a smaller issue with students (e.g.,

absenteeism, struggling with material, low exam scores) becomes a larger issue (e.g., a low grade, dropping out). One strategy for intrusive teaching is to require students to engage in practices known to lead to success in class. For instance, an instructor may know that the students most likely to succeed in the class are those who attend office hours and tutoring. An intrusive approach would be to build office hours and tutoring into the course.

Understanding racial microaggressions . This refers to understanding statements that communicate racism in subtle ways, the underlying messages they convey, and how racial microaggressions affect student performance. Racial microaggressions refer to subtle messages that insult or invalidate the lives and experiences of minoritized people. Pierce developed the concept of microaggressions, which are the ways that subtle, everyday racism impacts the dignity of Black people⁴⁵. Since then, Sue et al expanded the concept of racial microaggressions to address the experiences of people of color (broadly

rates of their faculty peers. These faculty members also are among those with a reputation for creating a culturally relevant teaching and learning experience for students, as well as for building relationships with students that are intrusive and grounded in trust, mutual respect, and authentic care. These faculty members will be most readily available to help the institution address racial equity gaps and will be more representative of Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN faculty members. Thus, a focus on student success can also be a win for faculty diversity.

Appendix A presents a sample teaching evaluation rubric that can be used to assess a candidate's ability to foster a healthy learning environment for disproportionately impacted Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN students. The ve-part rubric includes evaluation criteria for culturally relevant teaching, validating messages, relationship building, intrusive teaching, and racial microaggressions. When a candidate participates in a teaching demonstration, the evaluation from faculty peers and students should be focused on the degree to which this candidate would resonate and be effective with Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN students, based on the criteria offered. Feedback from Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN students should be part of this evaluation strategy, which we address in the next section. Ultimately, candidates who do not excel in these practices should not be advanced in the search process, as they will not be effective in reducing racial equity gaps. An authentic evaluation of candidates' teaching practices is essential to the effectiveness of an equity-minded teaching evaluation.

Although this recommendation focuses on teaching demonstrations, candidates for faculty positions

EQUITY-MINDED INTERVIEWS

Another major component of the faculty hiring process is the candidate interview. Candidates often are interviewed multiple times during a hiring cycle, including in a semi-structured interview, structured interview, and community meetings or presentations (e.g., research presentation, teaching demonstration, community forum, meeting with students).

This question better addresses how candidates have employed what they learned to improve their practice, providing a better indication of their readiness to serve Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN students and ameliorate racial equity gaps.

Another focus of any interview should be evaluating candidates on anti-deficit and institutional responsibility language.⁷ Anti-deficit language refers to asset-based language that does not portray Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN students through a deficit lens. A deficit lens blames students, their families, and their communities as the primary reasons for gaps in success. There are several common ideas often expressed through this lens, suggesting students are “lazy,” “don’t care about school,” “come from bad communities,” “have parents who do not value

education,” and are “not committed to their studies.” Similar language or ideas are detrimental to the success of underrepresented students. In addition, committees should evaluate candidates on the use of language that demonstrates accountability and responsibility. This includes language that shows a candidate took personal responsibility for outcome gaps in student performance and for understanding the systemic barriers impeding student success. The goal is to hire educators who first look “into the mirror” at what they are doing, or not doing, to improve their practices and student outcomes.

In summary, key equity-minded interview questions for prospective faculty members should include:

Can you give me three examples of how you’ve changed your teaching practices to meet the needs of Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and/or AIAN students?”

Can you give me an example of an initiative that you carried out to address inequities for Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and/or AIAN people?

What training have you received about diversity, equity, and inclusion, and how have you implemented what you have learned?

Conclusion

As the nation seeks to maintain its standing in the global economy, there is a need to cultivate a culturally competent and diverse workforce. There are many benefits to diversifying the college and university faculty. Most commonly, arguments are made that Latinx, Black, underrepresented Asian American and NHPI, and AIAN faculty members are well situated to prepare students, particularly white students, for a diverse, global marketplace.⁴⁸ This perspective⁷⁶drIAN faat L

RUBRIC FOR EVALUATING FACULTY CANDIDATES

	5 = Always	4 = Often	3 = Sometimes	2 = Occasionally	1 = Rarely	0 = Not Relevant
<p>Culturally relevant teaching</p> <p>Evidence of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty candidate intentionally connects the course content to the lives, experiences, and cultural contexts of their students. Faculty candidate centers diverse communities in course content, materials (e.g., slides, web), readings, examples, and other course products. Faculty candidate actively demonstrates the contributions of diverse people to the field. 						
<p>Validating messages</p> <p>Example messages can include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I know you are capable of great things.” “This will create a better life for you and your family.” “If you can overcome this, nothing can stop you.” “You have the ability to do the work.” “I believe in you, I’m confident you will be successful.” “I can’t wait to hear what you thought about the readings!” 						

5 = Always 4 = Often 3 = Sometimes 2 = Occasionally 1 = Rarely 0 = Not Relevant

	5	4	3	2	1	0
<p>Racial Microaggressions</p> <p>Evidence of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fosters an environment where Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander students feel like they can engage in the classroom. • Instructor uses asset-based (non-de cit) language to refer to Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander students. • Instructor uses examples involving Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander communities that are not stereotypical. • Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander are presented as positive people or resisting racial inequities and systemic oppression. • Instructor guides conversation to avoid stereotypes and insults towards Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Southeast Asian, and Pacific Islander students. • The instructor intervenes and questions the thought process when issues of racial stereotypes emerge. 						

SUGGESTED EQUITY-MINDED FACULTY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What students in our university/college/department/program are disproportionately-impacted? On what student success metrics?
- As you are aware, we are intentionally seeking a colleague who can help us close racial/ethnic equity gaps in student success. What is it about this position that compelled you to apply?
- From your perspective, what are the reasons why racially diverse students are disproportionately-impacted in education?
- Please share one example of how you have redesigned a course and/or your teaching practices to meet the needs of racially diverse students.
- How have you incorporated a practice or lesson learned in an equity-focused professional learning experience into your teaching?
- What theories or perspectives inform your teaching practices?
- If you were to become a faculty member in our department, how can we best support you in building your capacity to serve disproportionately-impacted students?
- What can you learn/gain from teaching/working with racially minoritized students?
- What service commitments or other experiences have you been involved in at your current institution/organization/institute/etc. that reflect your commitment to advancing racial/ethnic diversity in our field?
- How do your lived experiences outside of your role as an educator reflect a commitment to racially diverse communities?
- What is diversity? What do you think are the challenges and responsibilities associated with teaching a diverse group of students while simultaneously maintaining rigorous academic standards? How do you meet those challenges and responsibilities?

Endnotes

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