

Appendix B. The Use of Diversity Statements in Faculty Hiring

Institutions are increasingly requiring diversity statements as part of the academic hiring process, with the broad aim of enhancing diversity and inclusiveness on university campuses. It is important to note, however, there are a variety of more specific goals that might be achieved with the use of diversity statements as well as a variety of ways to use them in the search process. Therefore, search committees should give careful attention to a number of factors when deciding whether and how to use diversity statements. Below are some questions for discussion to help committees make these decisions.

What is a diversity statement?

Diversity statements often include a description of a candidate's contributions to diversity in their professional lives as well as plans for the future.

What is the committee trying to achieve by requiring diversity statements?

The use of diversity statements might serve a number of valuable purposes, such as...

- To send a message that the department or the institution values diversity.
- To attract a diverse pool of applicants.
- To identify faculty who have demonstrated skills or interest in supporting diversity and inclusion efforts within the department or on campus.
- To give search committees a tangible way to make diversity a part of the search process.

There are also some perceived drawbacks associated with the use of diversity statements, such as...

- Some are concerned that requiring diversity statements will discourage some candidates from applying.
- For international candidates, it can be difficult to understand diversity and inclusion in the U.S. context.
- Search committees may not know how to effectively use and evaluate diversity statements.

It is also important to be aware that requests for diversity statements in faculty hiring is a relatively new phenomenon. Consequently, there is very little research on their effectiveness for achieving these or related goals. Additionally, some have argued that there are potential drawbacks associated with the use of diversity statements.

What type of equity and inclusion projects or goals do you hope to achieve with this hire?

There are a variety of ways in which an individual can contribute to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The committee should discuss departmental or institutional priorities as well as the type of contribution(s) that they expect of their future colleague. For example, is the committee seeking...

- a candidate who can teach and/or mentor an increasingly diverse student population?
- a candidate who can support K-12 outreach and/or pipeline building?
- a candidate who addresses diversity and equity in one's research or teaching?
- a candidate who can support diversity related initiatives on campus or in the community.

How should the request for a diversity statement be framed in the job advertisement?

Because of the variety of ways in which an individual can contribute to equity and inclusion in one's professional life, the job advertisement should be as specific as possible about the type of contribution(s) expected of a successful candidate. Ideally, these should be linked to departmental and institutional priorities as discussed above. Below are examples of requests for diversity statements from a variety of job ads. It is up to the committee to determine the type of description that best fits their departmental culture and needs.

Emory University is committed to student and faculty diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the diversity statement, applicants should reflect upon their experience and vision regarding the teaching and mentorship of students from diverse backgrounds. (Emory Univ., Faculty Position, July 10, 2019, chroniclevitea.com)

To be in a better position to serve a fast growing and highly diverse student body, and to fulfill the University's commitment to promoting diversity, inclusiveness, and excellence on our campus, we actively seek candidates with demonstrated experience working with, teaching or mentoring students from underrepresented communities. (San Diego State Univ., Faculty Position, July 17, 2019, chroniclevitea.com)

The required [Diversity Statement] should be no longer than 2 pages and should discuss how the candidate would help achieve Angelo State University's goal to attract and graduate more women, Hispanic, and students from other underrepresented groups. (Angelo State, Faculty Position, Engineering)¹

In addition to the materials noted above, applicants should also submit a one-page diversity statement that discusses past or future contributions to inclusive excellence in the areas of research, teaching and/or outreach. (U. Mass. Amherst, Faculty Position, July 22, 2019, chroniclevitea.com).

How will you assess the diversity statement?

The search committee should create evaluation criteria for assessing a candidate's potential for contributing to equity and inclusion projects and goals as expressed in his or her diversity statement. Include specific diversity metrics in the assessment rubric used to generate the long short list.

The committee members should discuss how much weight they want to assign to a candidate's potential for contributing to diversity and inclusion projects and priorities. More suggestions for assessing diversity statements can be found here: [U of Washington Tips for Assessing Diversity Statements](#)

What are some other ways to include diversity and inclusion in the search process?

If the committee is not sure it wants to use a diversity statement, but still has an interest in making diversity an explicit part of the search process, consider one or more of the following options.

- Follow best practices for writing a job ad to communicate the value of diversity and to deepen the pool. For suggestions see [Stewart & Valian, 2018. Recruiting Excellent and Diverse Faculty, Inside Higher Ed.](#)
- Active and ongoing recruitment is an important part of the search process. Think broadly and creatively about recruiting candidates. Contact colleagues and ask them for names of potential candidates. Call candidates and invite them to apply. When you call, focus on their qualifications and experiences that make them a good candidate for the job. More suggestions for deepening the candidate pool can be found here: [UD-ADVANCE, Active Recruitment of Faculty Candidates](#)
- Ask a question during the virtual interview stage about the candidates' experience and ideas for contributing to equity and inclusion projects and priorities.

¹ This example is from Beck (2018). Developing and writing a diversity statement. Vanderbilt Univ. Center for Teaching.