Diverse Hire Recommendations:
Recruiting, Developing and Retaining Faculty
Prepared by EEO/AA & Employee Selection
April, 2009
Define Diversity

According to a recent Society for Human Resources Management report (*SHRM 2008*), while organizations tend to believe that diversity in the workplace is important, only 30% have agreed on the definition of “Diversity”. 
Define Diversity (cont.)

- Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines Diversity as “the condition of being different.”
- R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr. author of *Beyond Race and Gender* defines diversity as “any mixture of items characterized by differences and similarities.” He also states that “the components of a diversity mixture can be people, concepts, concrete items or abstractions.”
Define Diversity (cont.)

- The definition of diversity is defined broadly and goes far beyond race, national origin, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression. Diversity is the presence of differences between individuals and among groups. It varies in personalities, work and learning styles, religious beliefs, socioeconomic, education level, skills, talents and geographic locations.
Define Diversity (cont.)

• In short, diversity should be defined as embracing personal and cultural differences and having an appreciation for the differences that are viewed in others. Diversity must not be a fixed position but an action oriented word with real meaning that allows each of us to value who we are as opposed to what we do.
Define Diversity (cont.)

• In the United States, diversity and demographics are changing constantly in terms of other differences that make one different. No single definition can capture the broad range of differences diversity includes, the nature of the process it represents and the impact on individuals and organizations. It is all the unique things that each of us bring to the table at work that will help make this University more successful.
Some Factors that Impact the Search and Hiring Process
A search committee’s composition could represent diversity by including males, females, representation from all ethnic backgrounds, disabled and veteran status members, and individuals from varied age groups, yet still result in a failed search or ill-matched hire.

Reflecting back on the definition of diversity, it is important to look deeper than gender and ethnic backgrounds. The way people think places a large part in defining and finding diversity.
Common Search Committee Practices

The following factors are examples of how search committee practices can inhibit diversity at The University of Akron.

• Selecting the same individuals over and over again rather than ensuring that the search committee is not only diverse in gender, culture, and ethnic background but also representative of various institutional cultures and perspectives.

• Forming committees with individuals who are experts in their field and well respected yet who have limited intercultural communication competence.
Common Search Committee Practices

- Viewing the EEO/AA Office as a department whose purpose is to monitor and scrutinize search committees as opposed to a resource to guide hiring units through the recruitment process which ultimately results in hiring a diversely qualified candidate.

- Overspecializing the position description and required criteria thus narrowing the pool of finding diverse applicants.

- Viewing diverse hiring decisions as something that has to be done rather than a proactive action for the hiring unit, students, and institution as a whole.
Cultural Context

We rely on the observable parts of communication to both transmit our messages and to collect the information needed to receive a message. However, the observable factors that are seen by others are largely due to our cultural context or background. It is those broad dimensions of cultural context which help make an individual unique (diverse).
Cultural Context

If the cover of a book represented what others saw when we communicated with them, and the book’s contents represented our cultural context, imagine how it might change perceptions and assumptions of others and create a richly diverse environment.

**OBSERVABLE:**
- Verbal Communication
- Facial Expressions
- Body Language
- Tone of Voice

**NON-OBSERVABLE:**
- Emotional state
- past experiences
- educational level
- Biases
- Values
- Beliefs
- Life experiences
- Learning styles (seer, feeler, hearer)
- Geographic location
Biases

Search Committee members should be aware that unconscious and conscious biases or preconceived notions of search committee members whether personal or collective have a direct impact on search results. Some factors that may create problems and cause a failed search or ill-matched new hire include:

• Subconsciously wanting a culturally diverse/minority candidate to be similar instead of different

• Using comparable or equivalent experiences to screen out diverse candidates

• Using a group’s similarity and cultural identification as a determining factor of which candidate is best
Biases

• Allowing cultural and racial bias to instigate a re-evaluation of the qualifications of the job in the middle of the search to favor a candidate over a diverse or minority candidate (raising or lowering the bar.)

• Wanting a minority candidate to have superstar skills in order to be seen as qualified versus requiring a traditional candidate to have average skills to be qualified.

• Other biases include:
  – Inconsistency in questioning
  – First-impressions
  – Negative emphasis
  – Halo/horn effect
  – Nonverbal bias
  – Contrast effect
  – Stereotyping
Our cultural backgrounds affect our perceptions and assumptions of people as well as how we interact and communicate with others. Search committees must be aware of their individual unique observable communication factors and non-observable cultural context in order to effectively apply strategies to reduce or eliminate diversity inhibitors.
Identifying Strategies For Hiring And Retaining Successful Diverse Employees
1. Increase faculty’s notion of how, where, and why to recruit culturally diverse minority employees is important

- Search committees and administrators need to understand that advertising in diversity focused venues is not the only alternative. Past practice shows that not all successful minorities look for jobs in minority publications only, or use this as a first place to seek employment opportunities.

- Working with existing successful minorities in the department is key in the recruitment of other minorities.

- Using conferences and professional organizations for recruitment purposes. Even though there are no openings today, networking with outstanding professional minorities should never stop.
2. Expand New Employee Orientation to promote a more culturally diverse environment

- Discussion about the importance of diversity at the University and surrounding community; not just different ethnic backgrounds, but the values, norms, and traditions that other people have to bring to the table.

- Introduction of the Office of Chief Diversity Officer for Inclusion -- its goals, and achievements.

- Introduction of the Office of EEO/AA and Employee Selection -- its goals, and achievements.
3. **Retention is key for success - What can we do to retain and attract successful minority achievers?**

- Retaining good minority candidates is key to create a beautiful mosaic.

- Being inclusive before the employee starts employment is key. We want to know how we can help the transition of moving to the area, adapting to the new place, etc.

- Being inclusive just with the employee is not enough. We want to know how we can help to include his/her family as well.

- We tend to tell the new faculty/employee a lot about us, but we need to know more about the employee in order to attain retention.

- Compensation is not always the case why people seek other employment opportunities, especially minority employees.
4. When selecting committees.... Do not just look at the outward skin color; diversity is more than that...

- Different beliefs, values, and norms make people diverse in addition to their race.
- Do the members selected to form the committee have a positive look towards diversity and the place they work?
- Committees working on creating the selection criteria for positions should not raise/lower the bar or use biases during the interviewing process. This can affect our ability to recruit diverse applicants.
5. **Assess and evaluate a candidate’s credentials fairly**

- Be careful when non-traditional and community service experiences come across on resumes. Outstanding diverse applicants may be disqualified.

- Avoid inconsistency in questioning (e.g.: asking only Hispanic candidates to describe their successes on previous jobs.)

- Evaluating candidates differently based on their background is not acceptable.
6. Find out from exiting faculty why they are leaving the institution

• The question to ask is: Was this a problem employee or does the problem exist internally?

• Use of exit interviews/surveys
  – will help uncover reasons why employees leave and how they were treated during their tenure. Did they feel included?
  – will help assess how we are doing overall in terms of inclusion.
  – will teach us what works and what does not work while recruiting and retaining employees.
If you have any questions please contact the Office of EEO/AA and Employee Selection

- 330-972-7300
- UnivAkronEEO@uakron.edu