Best Practices for Conducting Faculty Searches

HARVARD UNIVERSITY | Office of the Senior Vice Provost
Faculty Development & Diversity

Acknowledgements:

This brief practical guide presents key points to consider throughout the faculty search process, including helpful tactics to use and potential pitfalls to avoid in the practices used at Harvard and at most universities.

In preparing this guide, we have drawn on extensive social science research, as well as the practical wisdom of many colleagues at Harvard and elsewhere. A foundational document for us, as for many institutions working to diversify their faculties, was *Searching for Excellence & Diversity: A Guide for Search Committees*, by Eve Fine and Jo Handelsman, first published in 2005 (Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI), University of Wisconsin, rev. ed., 2012). We recommend the WISELI guide as a comprehensive source that delves into the published research on aspects of the search process.

We also recommend other materials we have learned from and adapted, distributed by Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the Association of American Colleges and Universities, the NSF ADVANCE program, MIT, Stanford, Columbia, UC Berkeley, University of Michigan, and the University of Washington.

Table of Contents

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Harvard University is committed to pursuing the benefits of faculty diversity. As the Presidential Task Force on Inclusion and Belonging recommended, our faculty recruitment strategies should be founded on the principle of **inclusive excellence**, whereby we maximize excellence and diversity simultaneously. Embracing the inclusive excellence principle is essential for keeping our institution productive, creative, competitive, and successful in its mission to train the next generation of scholars and leaders in every field.

> "Great faculty are at the core of every great university. At Harvard we scour the world to recruit the very best faculty to work with the very best students to produce scholarship that shapes entire fields and disciplines as well as the larger world."
>
> President Lawrence S. Bacow

Each faculty search provides a chance to attract the broadest talent pool from which we can identify future colleagues. Each search also provides a strategic opportunity to reshape the faculty, offering the twin possibilities of enhancing strengths in fields for which we are already distinguished while striking out in new intellectual directions not currently well represented on campus. Recent research in economics, psychology, sociology, and organizational behavior helps us understand how to do this work well.

This guide offers concrete advice and practical strategies for search committee members as they engage in the four steps of the faculty search process:

1. Starting a productive search
2. Recruiting a broad and deep group of candidates
3. Evaluating candidates fairly
4. Implementing informative campus visits

Pages 10 and 11 present a special section on the concept of unconscious bias and how to mitigate its effects on candidate evaluations.

This guide is intended to *supplement* existing School-specific faculty search guidelines and may be customized to suit the needs of individual Schools. For simplicity, we use the term "department" throughout, recognizing that not all Harvard Schools have departments and some use other terms (e.g., areas or units to refer to intellectual subgroups within the School).

Questions or Comments?

Please contact Elizabeth Ancarana, Assistant Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity (elizabeth_ancarana@harvard.edu) or Judith D. Singer, Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity (judith_singer@harvard.edu). We're happy to talk and brainstorm with all faculty members serving on search committees.

1.0 Starting a Productive Search

1.1 The Position Description

Develop a clear position description that includes essential qualifications and experience but don't make it so specific that it inadvertently deters highly qualified applicants.

- The position description should be as broad as possible, while obviously noting the desired area(s) of scholarship, experience, and disciplinary background. In identifying areas, distinguish between teaching needs and research needs to enhance your ability to attract candidates, particularly highly qualified women and minorities, whose scholarship may focus on different areas but who are fully qualified to teach a broader array of topics.

- Avoid characterizing any search as a "replacement" for a departed or retired faculty member. Searches are an opportunity to look forward, not backwards.

- Think carefully about the qualifications you list. What is required and what is simply preferred? Detailed lists may deter otherwise qualified candidates. The search committee can consider only those candidates who meet all "required" qualifications.

- Make the advertisement welcoming to *all* candidates. Barriers to entry, both perceived and real, may deter some of the best candidates from applying. We have learned that advertisements for tenure-track positions that include superlatives such as "exceptional" or "distinguished" may deter very qualified individuals from applying because they assume—incorrectly—that they must have already achieved great acclaim. Instead use language that encourages all candidates with strong records and promise to apply.

- In addition to the Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity language that must be included in all Harvard job postings, consider including a statement that emphasizes your Department's interest in diversifying its faculty. Some examples are:

  "The Department is keenly interested in diversifying its faculty and encourages applications from diverse candidates, including from women and minorities."

  "The Department values diversity among its faculty, is committed to building a culturally diverse intellectual community, and strongly encourages applications from women and minorities."

- Ask applicants to describe their "experience working with and teaching diverse students." Doing so provides useful information and signals the committee's interest in recruiting a diverse pool of candidates.

- Include language that signals that Harvard is also a family-friendly environment:

  "Harvard is committed to supporting the work-life balance of its faculty."

- Instead of listing a firm application deadline, provide a start date for review and indicate that applications will be accepted until the position is filled. This enhances the possibility of reaching more diverse applicants and allows consideration of candidates who might learn of the job opportunity later in the search process.

- Solicit opinions from less vocal faculty members to gain a broader and deeper perspective on the position description.

- Before posting the job description, reread it with the perspectives of a diverse array of candidates to ensure that it will attract the broad pool of applicants you seek.

1.2 The Initial Search Plan

Before the search committee is formed, the department—in collaboration with the Dean's Office—should sketch an initial search plan based on the approved position description.

- To ensure the largest, most diverse pool of candidates, the initial search plan should sketch some outreach activities, including lists of: (1) nominators (potential sources of candidates) and nominees (potential candidates) ; (2) listservs, blogs, Twitter feeds and other online venues where the position can be posted; (3) conferences where candidates can be scouted and screening interviews might be conducted; (4) award lists that can be searched for nominees; and (5) venues for advertisements. Many lists of advertising venues as well as directories, associations, and publications can be found on the website of the Office for Faculty Development and Diversity (FD&D): www.faculty.harvard.edu/recruitment-diverse-applicants. The initial plan will be modified over time, but it's wise to have a place to begin.

- Post advertisements early since many peer institutions have earlier deadlines than Harvard.

- Develop a realistic timeline for recruiting and interviewing, working backwards from a target completion date or offer letter date, recognizing that some fields have specific job market periods. Be sure to account for holidays, grading periods, and other times when it will be difficult to get faculty members' attention.

1.3 The Search Committee

The search committee should include faculty from diverse backgrounds who may have helpful—and divergent—ideas that can enhance efforts to recruit and evaluate candidates. If everyone on the committee thought the same way or had similar backgrounds and experiences, a committee of one would suffice. Research shows that committees of individuals with diverse perspectives make better decisions. Pragmatically, it also ensures that issues that will ultimately surface in broader discussions in the department and beyond will have been identified and discussed earlier in the process.

- Include women and minorities on the committee, paying attention to subfield, career stage, gender, and race/ethnicity composition. At the same time, be mindful that women and minorities often have greater administrative commitments.

- Consider including faculty from outside your department, especially if you're searching in a field in which your department lacks deep expertise or one that is emerging or interdisciplinary. Harvard faculty from related departments can bring new perspectives to your search. It's also a great strategy for engaging with colleagues from outside your department over substantive topics of common interest.

- If some faculty members with relevant expertise are not included on a given search committee, search committee chairs can still reach out to these faculty members to get their perspectives.

- Consider forming a graduate student advisory group to work with the faculty search committee.

Graduate students, especially those interested in faculty positions, find this to be a superb experience that gives them insight into the academic job market. Experience shows that graduate students—who are early career themselves—can be especially good at identifying emerging scholars. (If your department has postdoctoral fellows, consider including some of them on the advisory group for the same reasons.)

- The chair of the search committee should be familiar with the relevant subfield, but need not be the faculty member whose field is closest to that of the position to be filled. The most important quality in a chair is the capacity to ensure that diverse points of view are honored throughout the committee's deliberations.

1.4 Setting the Ground Rules

The chair should lead the committee in a discussion of ground rules, including:

- **Consensus or votes.** The committee should decide how decisions will be made, either by consensus or by voting. If the latter, then the committee should also decide if absentee votes will be allowed, and if the votes will be open or confidential.

- **Confidentiality.** All search committee members must be sure that they can confidentially share their views with colleagues. Limit casual discussions with colleagues not on the committee about how the search is progressing.

- ***The New York Times* rule.** Don't write anything in an email that you wouldn't want attributed to you on the front page of a major newspaper. Email is great for distributing information but deliberations about candidates should be done in person. Email is not a subtle medium and emails can be forwarded.

- **Recordkeeping.** The committee must keep complete records, including all job advertisements, postings, lists of nominators and nominees, candidate dossiers, rating sheets, long and short lists, and interview notes. The documentation must demonstrate that Harvard has made good faith outreach efforts towards women and minority candidates. We encourage you to use Harvard ARIeS as the system of record.

- **Decorum.** During committee meetings, agree to turn off phones and laptops, to interact respectfully, and to allow for all points of view to be heard.

1.5 Dealing with Common Committee Problems

All committee members share responsibility for everyone's full engagement in the search.

- Imbalances of power among committee members can silence some members while allowing for others to control too much of the process. Dealing with these dynamics and the behavior of colleagues are some of the chair's primary responsibilities. It is helpful when other committee members draw colleagues into the discussion since it is the *committee*, not a single individual (or even pair of individuals), which is making all decisions.

- Without intending to, tenured faculty may intimidate untenured faculty on the committee. Untenured faculty may feel uncomfortable disagreeing with tenured colleagues who later will be evaluating them. Periodically, the chair should ask untenured colleagues outside official committee meetings if they have such concerns. If so, the chair can serve as the "official source" of their alternative points of view during committee meetings.

- Encourage an open airing of ideas and opinions by all committee members on the topic of excellence and diversity. Learn how to persuade colleagues to be open to new ideas. (We discuss strategies for doing so in subsequent sections.)

1.6 For Committee Chairs: Making Meetings Productive

Committee members need to feel that the search is well-conceived, well-run, and that the committee meetings are essential.

- To avoid time pressure from the very beginning, and to give the committee members a chance to discuss the issues in the search, their responsibilities, and the ground rules, hold the first meeting at least a month before the application deadline. Pay attention to group dynamics, be open to questions or comments, and foster a positive working environment among committee members.

- At that meeting, and subsequent ones, offer a clear agenda, review it with the committee to make sure all can accept it, and then try to stick to it.

- If the meeting goes off track, or runs on too long, acknowledge it, and offer a brief frank explanation for why it happened, why it was understandable, and how the danger will be avoided next time. Doing so signals – again – your appreciation for the work your colleagues are doing and your plans to make the meeting time as useful as possible.

- At the end of each meeting, give each committee member a "to do" list to be done before the next meeting. When sending out the email reminder of the next meeting, include the items to be done and ask them to let you know in advance if they've run into problems.

2.0 Recruiting a Broad and Deep Group of Candidates

2.1 Take Responsibility for Developing a Broad Pool

Committee members are decisive in forming and developing the pool and so all should be engaged in this process and reminded that their contributions are needed.

- Consider giving at least one committee member the task of "pool development"—the responsibility of keeping track of all efforts to develop the broadest pool of applicants.

- Consider asking another committee member to be responsible for ensuring that there is broad outreach designed especially to attract women and minority applicants.

- Foster the engagement of *all* committee members in matters related to the diversity of the search. Ensuring a diverse pool is the responsibility of every committee member, not just those keeping track of pool development or affirmative action outreach.

- The chair should consult with your School's Office of Faculty Affairs to learn if there is an affirmation action placement goal for faculty positions at the advertised level. A goal is by no means a quota. But in searches with a placement goal for women or minorities, it is that much more important that the committee conduct robust outreach.

2.2 Examine National Availability Pool Data

Analyze the relevant national pool data. This provides a benchmark for what your pool should look like; if your pool is narrower than the availability data suggests, additional outreach is needed. Your School's Office for Faculty Affairs should have these data, and many relevant professional societies also distribute related information.

2.3 Examine the Faculty Rosters of Peer Departments

How diverse is your department in comparison to your peers'? Are peer departments more diverse? If so, the committee should discuss why. This exercise is part soul searching but is also important because departments with diverse faculty will, on average, have more diverse graduate student and postdoctoral populations from which to recruit.

2.4 Review the Successes (and Oversights) of Previous Searches

Examine the lists of applicants to the last several searches in your department. Were candidates who have gone on to great success overlooked? Discuss how this might have happened and how this committee can avoid these pitfalls. For women and minorities who were recently recruited successfully, discuss the reasons for which they accepted their Harvard appointment.

2.5 Concrete Strategies for Developing the Applicant Pool You Want

At this stage, the committee should focus on expanding the applicant pool by encouraging as many candidates to apply as possible. Reaching them and convincing them to apply requires proactive outreach. Reviewing and evaluating candidates occurs downstream.

- Develop lists of nominees (potential candidates) and nominators (potential sources for candidates). The larger and more diverse you make these lists, the better.

- Potential candidates mentioned early in the process often have a leg up along the way, so ensure that the early lists include women and minorities.

- Ask others in your department—including faculty not serving on the search committee and graduate students and postdoctoral fellows not involved with the search—to provide lists of potential nominators and nominees.

- Review journal editorial boards to identify rising stars. Examine lists of award winners in relevant professional societies. Librarians are often happy to help with these tasks.

- When you read journals, look for articles by scholars you do not yet know.

- At conferences, attend sessions given by younger, up-and-coming researchers whom you may not yet know. Committee members—especially the chair—should attend receptions hosted by special interest groups for women and minority scholars. You may meet potential candidates you might not have considered and the presence of Harvard faculty at these events sends an important signal.

- Identify and consult with institutions (and individuals) that are especially successful at producing women and minority doctoral graduates or postdoctoral fellows in your field. The critical masses found at those institutions often help them continue to become more diverse (at the expense of other institutions).

- Consult with colleagues from diverse backgrounds, who are often well positioned to help you reach highly qualified women and minority candidates.

- Use your networks and expand them. Consult with alumni, visiting committee members, and consortia.

- Be open to consider candidates who come from institutions outside your immediate peer group, particularly women and minorities who may be publishing interesting work and who are perhaps under-placed.

- Develop and nurture a talent pipeline. Encourage nominators to identify candidates who are "not quite ready." Many departments maintain a standing committee that cultivates a diverse slate of potential candidates over time beyond the specifics of any search.

- Make sure your department website includes text and images that promote an inclusive environment.

- Review directories to identify potential candidates. No multipurpose guide like this can identify all the relevant resources. The FD&D website lists many online directories: www.faculty.harvard.edu/recruitment-diverse-applicants.

2.6 Actively Recruit Candidates to Apply

Despite the tight academic job market, the best candidates—the ones you want—have many good options. There may never really have been a time when "post and pray" worked, but it certainly doesn't work now. Search committee members need to think creatively—and work proactively—to recruit candidates. Many highly qualified candidates have to be invited to apply, especially if they do not see themselves as a natural fit for Harvard, the Boston area, your department, or this specific position. Simply placing ads in the relevant places will not produce the applicant pool you want. An MIT study found that nearly two thirds of their underrepresented minority faculty members applied to MIT *only* because they were actively recruited (in comparison to just over one third of majority faculty).

- Email and call nominees directly to invite them to apply. Personal outreach is *the* single most effective tool for building and diversifying the pool.

- Chairs should ask each member to contact their colleagues for candidate recommendations. If the timing works, ask committee members or other faculty to contact potential candidates at professional conferences personally. Make sure you keep track of all individual contacts (who, what, when, and where).

Personal outreach is *the* single most effective tool for building and diversifying the pool.

- As applications come in, committee members should informally assess who might be missing and follow up with exceptional nominees.

- Avoid making assumptions about candidates; don't assume anyone is unavailable or unmovable. Circumstances change and with them people's responses.

- Let the candidate decide whether your department and Harvard are a good fit. Assuming that the field does not have qualified women or minorities, or that candidates from other cultures or

those with family commitments would not apply may be completely wrong and can negatively impact your pool.

- Under University guidelines, the committee chair—who has the primary responsibility for ensuring the integrity of the search—can see the confidential individual, self-identified demographic data, including gender, race, and ethnicity, captured in ARIeS. Although these confidential data should not be shared with the committee, the chair should evaluate—and help the committee evaluate—whether the search is wide-ranging and thorough, whether the committee has identified candidates from diverse populations, and whether everyone is evaluated fully and without bias. The chair should also use this information to encourage diversity in the applicant pool, long list, and short list. But ultimate hiring decisions must be based on qualifications, not demographic characteristics such as gender, race, or ethnicity.

2.7 Advertise in Publications that Target Female and Minority Scholars

Scholars—regardless of gender or race/ethnicity—tend to look to their field-specific associations, journals, listservs, and websites for job postings. Enhance your outreach efforts and reinforce your commitment to diversity by advertising in professional journals, websites, and listservs within the discipline that are geared toward women and minorities as well as in publications with diversity-focused associations. Sources for outreach to potential faculty candidates, including directories, associations, and publications in the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and professions, can be found on the FD&D website (www.faculty.harvard.edu/recruitment-diverse-applicants).

Consider advertising in alumni publications and contacting graduate schools of women's colleges and colleges servicing minorities, including historically black colleges and universities and institutions that serve Hispanic and Native American students.

Faculty postings on ARIeS are automatically posted to the New England and Central HERC websites. Many diversity organizations provide discounts to HERC members (Harvard is the host institution for the New England HERC). The list of organizations and discounts can be found at https://member.hercjobs.org/myherc/discounts.

2.8 Review Resources for Applicants with Disabilities

To ensure the largest, most diverse pool of candidates, including candidates with disabilities, the search and hiring process should integrate the following major accessibility elements: effective communication, access to facilities, and procedures and protocols for reasonable accommodations. The University Disability Services (UDS) website (www.accessibility.harvard.edu) provides University-wide and local school resources, initiatives, and procedures.

More information on disability-related resources for the search and recruitment process as well as disability support services for current and prospective faculty can be found at www.faculty.harvard.edu/recruitment-best-practices.

Also consider advertising your open faculty positions in some of the disability-related organizations listed on the FD&D website (www.faculty.harvard.edu/recruitment-diverse-applicants). As a HERC member, Harvard receives discounts on job postings with partnering organizations that serve individuals with disabilities.

2.9 Review Resources for Applicants who are Veterans

To enhance your outreach efforts to veterans, you may want to contact faculty at military colleges

and advertise your open faculty positions in some of the veterans organizations listed on the FD&D website (www.faculty.harvard.edu/recruitment-diverse-applicants). As a HERC member, Harvard also receives discounts on job postings with partnering organizations that serve veterans.

2.10 How to Handle Information about Sexual or Gender-Based Harassment

Harvard University is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy educational and work environment in which no member of the University community is, on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination in any University program or activity. Gender-based and sexual harassment, including sexual violence, are forms of sex discrimination in that they deny or limit an individual's ability to participate in or benefit from University programs or activities.

As Harvard faculty, you may receive disclosures regarding potential sexual and/or gender-based harassment from students, postdocs, staff, fellow faculty members, or candidates. Unless you are identified by the University as a confidential resource, you are considered a Responsible Employee and must promptly notify a Title IX Coordinator about possible sexual or gender-based harassment.

Visit https://titleix.harvard.edu/coordinators for a full list of Title IX Coordinators. You should call, email, or meet in person with a Title IX Coordinator as soon as possible to share the information (which includes whatever has been shared with you, such as the name(s) of the individuals involved, the details of the incident(s), and the disclosing individual's goals for next steps). You may also contact the University Title IX Office at (617) 496-0200.

3.0 Evaluating Candidates Fairly

3.1 Develop Evaluation Criteria

Before reviewing dossiers, the search committee should agree on the criteria to be used to evaluate applicants. Experience shows that without explicit criteria stated up front, evaluators tend to "back into" criteria that support their favored applicants. Defining broad yet clear criteria around the following qualifications will be helpful:

- Scholarly impact
- Research productivity
- Research funding
- Ability to attract and mentor graduate students
- Ability to teach and supervise undergraduates
- Ability to attract, work with, and teach diverse students
- Commitment to collaboration with colleagues
- Relationship to department priorities
- Ability to make a positive contribution to the department's climate
- Ability to be a conscientious department citizen

> "The faculty search process needs to be comprehensive, fair, and consistently applied."
>
> Provost Alan M. Garber

In each domain, consider both past accomplishment and future trajectory. Discuss how to weigh the various criteria. Stick to the established explicit criteria as much as possible to ensure an equitable review across candidates. These criteria will also be used during future reviews. Also ask if changes in your discipline, such as increased interdisciplinarity or technological advances, might warrant expanded criteria by which to judge talent.

continued on page 12

Unconscious Bias and its Influence on Decision Making

What is Unconscious Bias?

An enormous body of literature confirms that we all have biases—some explicit, many implicit. These biases have an effect on how we view others and how we make decisions, including decisions about faculty hiring. Perhaps most disturbing, implicit biases can be at odds with our own conceptions of ourselves and our conscious values and standards. You may believe yourself to be open-minded and you may be determined to select the most meritorious candidate before you. But a good deal of evidence from the behavioral sciences—some of it conducted on university professors themselves—demonstrates that actual achievements are often set aside in favor of those who fit some group stereotype of those likely to succeed.

Recognize Your Own Unconscious Biases

Acknowledging and understanding your biases and those of your colleagues can minimize the influence they have on the search. Spending sufficient time on evaluation can also reduce the influence of assumptions that may not be warranted.

Harvard Professor Mahzarin Banaji, Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics in the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, is a leading authority on unconscious bias and its effects on decision making. Search committee members are encouraged to read her book: Banaji, MR & Greenwald, AG (2013) *Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People* (New York: Delacorte Press). It's a great read and will change your view of the world.

Take an Implicit Association Test (IAT)

Professor Banaji and colleagues have developed an online set of tasks designed to assess associations between personal attributes (e.g., gender, race, or sexual orientation) and your positive or negative views about them. Project Implicit, hosted at Harvard, includes dozens of IATs that allow you—in the privacy of your office or home—to explore your implicit biases.

We strongly encourage every search committee member to take at least one IAT. (Registration is free, and the first test takes no more than 15 minutes.) The tests are not meant to challenge your conscious attitudes, but to reveal the extent to which you may nevertheless associate groups like "female" with "family" and "male" with "career." As members of this intellectual community, you will surely find it of some interest to discover that your mind contains associations of which you are unaware. You can find the IATs at https://implicit.harvard.edu.

Beware of How Unconscious Bias Can Affect Candidate Evaluations

Search committee members often give preference to applicants they know, whose advisors or mentors they know, or who hold a degree from their own alma mater or one of a small number of elite institutions.

- Women, minorities, and candidates from institutions other than traditional peers can be held to higher standards. Search committee members may scrutinize their records in an unconsciously dismissive way, evaluate the same achievements as others to be less important, and fail to notice unexpected achievements.

- Search committee members—and sometimes letter writers—can inadvertently, or even overtly, minimize the contributions by women and minorities, and may unfairly attribute success to mentors and collaborators. It can be helpful to explicitly ask and discuss—as a committee—if a letter writer is unduly shaping a view of a candidate in a positive or negative direction based on scant or unreliable evidence.

- Letters of recommendations often reflect stereotypic views of demographic groups. A man's research will be described as seminal. A woman will be described as warm and collaborative. These implicit cues can influence decision-making.

- Be especially vigilant about statements concerning "fit." This euphemism is often used to exclude individuals whose demographic characteristics don't match the demographics of the department or field. If "fit" were the best driver of decision making, the Harvard of today would be identical to the Harvard of the past.

- Another concept to scrutinize is "potential." Since decisions about early career stage scholars often depend upon predictions about potential, superficial qualities such as dress or style of speech should not color assessments of actual achievements.

- For women especially, it is important to not let the concept of family commitments enter the evaluation. Here are some excerpts from recent letters of recommendation: "She balances work and life in a way that detracts from her career." "And what's more remarkable is that she did all of this while having three children." [NOTE: the same person who wrote this last sentence also wrote a letter for the candidate's husband and did not mention the three children, although they were indeed his too.]

- Studies document that the achievements of women and minorities tend to be evaluated less positively than white men of equal accomplishment. Ask yourself whether you unconsciously read the dossiers of candidates differently? You will be impressed with your own ability to correct your assumptions once you become aware of their contaminating influence.

continued from page 9

Most committees use a conventional five-point scale to rate applicants: outstanding, excellent, good, fair, and poor (as well as 'unable to judge' when insufficient information is available). But even this familiar scale is not sacred. Be flexible as long as everyone agrees with whatever scale is chosen.

3.2 Look for All Exciting Applicants, Even Those "Not Quite Right" for the Current Position

All committee members should look for applicants who may not be ideal for this specific position but who are still attractive as potential faculty members. The committee should discuss and bring all such individuals to the attention of the Dean's Office.

3.3 Reviewing Dossiers

Reviewing dossiers is time-consuming. If possible, all committee members should review all applications. If there are hundreds of applicants, the chair should read all applications and assign subsets to each committee member.

- Each applicant should receive an in-depth review—that includes reading the candidate's work—from a few committee members. Vary the pairings of committee members with dossiers so that you don't inadvertently create "mini-committees of two."

- Committee members must commit to thoroughly reviewing each assigned dossier. Shortcuts invariably lead us to rely on implicit biases. Imagine removing all identifying information from every application and judging each candidate based upon your assessment of the work. You don't want to make the mistake of overlooking someone later discovered to be outstanding.

- Consider reading the applications of women and minorities first and select the strongest of them to get a sense of the standards and to establish benchmarks. This provides a potential check on evaluation bias, informed by behavioral science that shows that women and minorities do not necessary get evaluated fairly under traditional processes.

- Identify all strong applicants, keeping in mind that this list should be larger than just those who are your own personal preferences. As you read each dossier, imagine how departmental colleagues with different preferences would react to the candidate's portfolio. What's attractive to you may not be attractive to them, and vice versa.

- Be cognizant of "hiring for cultural fit" which can exclude promising candidates who come from backgrounds or experiences not similar to yours or who might not look, think, or act according to the norms and expectations with which we are familiar. Your job is not to hire someone who you like or who has similar personal interests. Rather, it is to hire a colleague who challenges students and enhances the faculty in novel and innovative ways.

- Be mindful that selection criteria can be subjective and even biased. Research shows that women and underrepresented minorities are often stereotyped by their demographic groups and evaluated more harshly in recommendation letters and student evaluations. Watch for wording that speculates on "fit" or "potential" or work-life issues.

- Consider all aspects of diversity, including new fields or technologies, geographic regions, style of work, and intellectual or political points of view, alongside other dimensions you are working to improve.

- Look at the CV and letters carefully to identify the applicant's record of working with diverse students and diversity-related work.

- Any use of Google to obtain information on candidates should be judicious and job-related. For example, candidates' online presence might help assess how active they are in their disciplines. But searches should not be done to elicit information that could not be appropriately obtained directly from a candidate (See "Guide to Acceptable Interview Questions," pp. 20-21). And remember that information found through online searches is not always accurate.

3.4 Identifying the "Long List" of Credible Candidates

Hold a committee meeting to discuss committee members' assessments of all applicants; the goal is to generate the "long list."

- All ratings should be shared—in advance of the meeting—with the committee chair. The chair (or an administrator) should assemble the data in a spreadsheet and present the committee with a sorted list of applicants. The sorting will be "rough" because assigning equal weight to all criteria is rarely best, but having a sorted list will make the committee meeting more efficient.

The "long list" stage is an ideal time to reach out to potential candidates who may not have yet applied and ask if they would submit an application.

- The chair should examine the ratings to determine if some committee members assign consistently higher or lower ratings to all applicants. If so, these rater differentials can be taken into account when sorting the list.

- The committee should decide whether the ratings will be shared anonymously or with committee members' names. Experience shows that discussion will be fuller and more open if assessments are anonymous. Even if anonymous, the chair—who has the responsibility of running the meeting—should know who gave which set of ratings.

- "Long lists" typically have 8 to 10 candidates. Often there is a "natural break" although sometimes the chair will have to set a numerical limit to focus discussion.

- As the committee iterates towards the "long list," the chair should continually monitor its composition. How diverse is it? Does its representation of women and minorities reflect the applicant pool? The chair and other committee members should periodically ask whether implicit biases may have inadvertently influenced ratings.

- The chair should bring forward women or minority applicants who might deserve a "second look." Pay special attention to individuals just below the "long list" cutoff. Also look out for applicants who excel on one or two criteria, but not necessarily all.

- Pause and have a second meeting before moving to the "short list" so that all committee members can read—and re-read—all long-listed candidates' dossiers.

- Although practices vary across Schools, it is wise to have the chair meet with someone external to the committee—preferably from the Dean's Office—to review the "long list."

- Ask departmental colleagues to review the "long list" to see whether known strong candidates

are missing. This is an ideal time to reach out to potential candidates who may not have yet applied and ask if they would submit an application. Do not rush to a final list until you are certain that you have the best candidates in the world.

- If the timing works, all "long list" candidates can be interviewed initially at a conference to help provide more information that can be used to identify the "short list." If you do so, all interviews should be conducted in the same format. Section 4.1 describes strategies for developing interview protocols.

- Avoid using Skype to identify short-listed candidates. Bringing the visual into the long list may open opportunities for implicit biases that otherwise would not be present until a longer visit when there is more opportunity for biases to recede. Skype should also not be used for subsets of candidates as it makes the search unbalanced.

- Although practices vary across Schools, it is wise to have the chair meet with someone external to the committee—preferably from the Dean's Office—to review the "long list" before a short list is identified.

3.5 Identifying the "Short List" of Candidates to be Interviewed

A strong diverse "short list" is crucial because it is *this* set of people who will receive intense scrutiny. If the short list isn't strong, with several credible candidates, the entire search may not be successful. This is a depressing outcome everyone would like to avoid.

Schedule enough time to hold a distinct committee meeting (i.e., separate from the meeting to select the "long list") to select the "short list" of candidates to come to campus for a visit.

- To ensure a thorough and objective review, the chair should restate the criteria for evaluating candidates, reminding committee members to apply uniform clear standards in choosing people. A version of the *New York Times* rule applies here: those standards should be ones that could be clearly and persuasively outlined to other faculty members, the Dean's Office, and the Provost's Office, to demonstrate that the review was even-handed, thoughtful, and fair throughout.

- Review and read the *complete* dossier. However high the stack, resist the temptation to sort them by salient but single features, like the prestige of the candidate's educational institutions or the awards the candidate has won.

- Look intentionally for reasons to consider applications to ensure that strengths are not overlooked and that all promising candidates are included.

- The chair should attend to all women and minorities on the long list. Once again ask if unconscious bias is impacting the decisions being made.

- Beware of what can look like tokenism on the short list: one woman, one minority member, and an otherwise all-white, all-male group. Studies show that interviewers evaluate women and minorities more fairly when more than one is interviewed.

- Although practices vary across Schools, it is wise to have the chair meet with someone external to the committee—preferably from the Dean's Office—to review the "short list" before official invitations to visit are extended.

4.0 Implementing Informative Campus Visits

4.1 Designing an Effective Interview Protocol

Develop interview guidelines that will yield sufficient information for the committee to reach consensus and a persuasive recommendation.

- Develop a common set of questions to ask each candidate. Although most interviews are unstructured in format, all committee members should have a core set of questions that will help them compare candidates.

- Ask the candidates the same questions in the same order. This ensures that the responses follow the same flow of thought.

- Questions might relate to: research experience, teaching experience, teaching interests, publication record, current and future research interests, current funding and potential future funding, ideas for future publications or collaborations, and experience working with diverse populations.

- Stick to professional—and not social—content in your interview discussions. Common personal preferences, hobbies, or activities that are discussed could influence the "likability" of a candidate who should be evaluated instead on professional accomplishments and interests, and not on personal or social ones.

- Feel free to supplement the core list of questions with additional queries customized to each candidate. Remember, you are not only evaluating candidates, you are recruiting them. Asking questions that demonstrate that committee members have read a candidate's work is essential for projecting respect.

- Describe to tenure-track candidates how they will be mentored and the resources available to them in the department and across Harvard.

- Avoid conducting panel-style interviews. Although this structure allows for the panelists to hear the same responses, they will interpret the information differently in any case and only hearing the information once limits a more thorough, individual assessment. Studies also show that panel-style interviews promote "group think" in that there is a strong tendency for the panelists to form a consensus of the candidate after the panel interview, and before the full evaluation process is complete.

Note that Massachusetts recently passed two laws which affect the professional lives of current and prospective faculty and staff. Because these laws affect how we interact with prospective faculty, including how we conduct interviews during the hiring process, it is important for everyone involved in the search to know about these laws and to review the Guide to Acceptable Interview Questions in the Appendix of this search guide. Two recent changes of particular importance are: (1) the "Act to Establish Pay Equity" (which went into effect on July 1, 2018), and (2) the "Pregnant Workers Fairness Act" (which went into effect on April 1, 2018). Further details are given in the Appendix.

4.2 Planning Campus Visits

Careful planning helps ensure that all candidates have a similar, high quality visit.

- Develop an information packet to share with each candidate, with a detailed schedule identifying the name and affiliation of each person they will meet. Photographs, websites, and a map make it easier for candidates to orient themselves before arriving.

- Include a common set of instructions to help candidates prepare for their visit. Common instructions help level the playing field and improve the quality of interactions and talks. This is especially important if some candidates have degrees from programs different from yours (e.g., disciplinary PhD candidates interviewing at professional Schools; individuals with degrees from one department interviewing for a position in a related but different department). Describe the expectations and decorum of your department's typical job talk. Are candidates interrupted or do audience members typically wait until the question period? Give candidates a rough sense of the preferred division between a formal presentation and question period. Have a clock in the room so the candidate can monitor his or her pace. Who will moderate the question period: a committee member or the candidate? Who will escort the candidate around campus to meetings and meals?

- All candidates should interact with faculty and students in multiple venues, including talks, individual and group meetings, and meals. Consider a Q&A session with graduate students, "chalk talks," and other less formal interactions. For candidates in technical fields, consider asking them to teach a sample class, so that the research talk need not also serve as a venue for evaluating teaching ability.

- To ensure that each candidate has an equally high-quality experience, standardize the schedule as much as possible while also providing opportunities customized for each candidate. Candidates should meet with each person for roughly the same amount of time. Strive to treat internal and external candidates with consistency. However, if your short list includes alumni, be sure to allow non-alumni to spend more time on campus to become acquainted with people and receive equitable consideration. When possible, all candidates should meet with diverse faculty.

- Contact candidates about any accommodations they may require such as physical access needs or dietary restrictions. Also provide information on family-friendly policies and practices (e.g. parental leave, dual-career support, and childcare) and policies related to their appointment, review, and promotion.

- Have candidates meet people not on the search committee who can serve as "independent resources" to provide a broader sense of the faculty experience at Harvard. Graduate students can be excellent ambassadors in this vein, as can members of your School's Office of Faculty Affairs. The latter can give information about working at Harvard and living in the Cambridge area; they can also inform candidates of helpful resources and services to manage work and life, including on matters related to diversity, housing, benefits, and dual-career assistance. Refer candidates to the Office of the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity website, www.faculty.harvard.edu, which has a wealth of information on these topics.

4.3 Ensuring the Best Possible Campus Visit

Candidates remember campus visits for years to come, sharing their experiences and describing how they were treated. (It is now common for candidates to post descriptions of what happened during their campus visits on blogs and websites. Reading how previous candidates experienced

their visit can be sobering.) Remind yourself that candidates are evaluating you and your department as much as you are evaluating them.

Candidates are evaluating you and your department as much as you are evaluating them.

- Prepare interviewers to conduct interviews. Provide the visit schedule, appointment materials, interview questions, the Guide to Acceptable Interview Questions, and the candidate evaluation sheet (the last two documents can be found in the Appendix). Avoid any direct or indirect questions that are impermissible. If a candidate volunteers information on these topics, make no further comments or inquiries, even if they seem harmless.

- All committee members should attend all job talks. Ideally, all voting members of the department should as well. Without consistent attendance, committee members and others may inadvertently give more weight to candidates whose talks they attended.

- Make sure that all job talks are well attended. There is nothing more depressing for a job candidate than a poor turnout or few questions. Enlist graduate students to attend and ask questions (and be sure to solicit their feedback).

- Videotape job talks and ensure that all voting members of the department who are unable to attend the talk watch the video. But make sure that the availability of a video doesn't decrease attendance at the talk itself.

- Everyone interviewing candidates should behave appropriately and communicate respect for candidates and their time. We have all heard reports of incidents during campus visits that were determinative in "turning a candidate off"—even candidates who were the consensus top choice. During the job talk, avoid interruptions so that candidates can present their work fully and provide a strong closing. Also be especially careful about what happens outside the formal interview, particularly at meals, when everyone may be less on guard.

- Be intentional about being inclusive. Because professional communities of women and minorities can be small, candidates need to feel that Harvard and the department truly embrace diverse faculty.

- Avoid informal discussions about candidates outside scheduled committee meetings. This allows for independence of thought and the development of diverse perspectives.

- One common tendency to avoid is discussing the candidate in the car-ride after a faculty dinner. This leads to the temptation to agree on the "likability" of a candidate before more thorough feedback is submitted to the search chair and before the vote occurs. Tenure-track faculty involved in the car-ride discussion may also feel pressure to agree with their more senior colleagues, foreclosing further deliberations.

- Immediately after each campus visit, the chair (or administrator) should email everyone who interacted with the candidate—even if by just attending the job talk—asking for feedback, preferably on a standardized form. The appendix presents a sample form. Note that it asks evaluators to explain their sources of data, which gives the committee additional information about how much contact—and how in depth—each evaluation may be.

4.4 Selecting the Preferred Candidate (and Perhaps an Alternate)

Hold a search committee meeting to select a preferred candidate (and perhaps an alternate in the event that the top choice declines).

- By now, the experience of having multiple search committee meetings should set the stage for a productive discussion about the candidates. Review the previous sections of this document that describe best practices for the conduct of search committee meetings, the pernicious effects of implicit biases, and how best to make decisions.

- Beware of placing excessive weight on the job talk. It's important, but it's just one slice of an individual's portfolio and not always the best source of data.

- Committee members should ask hard questions now, for these same hard questions will surface during the subsequent discussions of the recommendation that take place after the committee has reached its decision and written its report.

- Conduct a post-search debrief to discuss how the search went for the committee, the chair, and the new hire. Also discuss the reasons why any candidates declined offers.

4.5 Develop an Initial Mentoring Plan for the New Faculty Member

It's never too early to start thinking about mentoring. The committee discussions that led to the recommendation for appointment provide a wonderful in-depth review of the individual's strengths, potential, and areas for improvement.

- Brainstorm strategies that could help the candidate succeed at Harvard if the recommendation to appoint is approved and the candidate decides to come. Ask the committee who will volunteer to serve as a mentor. Who not on the committee should also be approached? Write a proposed mentoring plan into the search report.

- Customized mentoring strategies can provide Harvard with a leg up during recruitment. All prospective new faculty members want to know that Harvard is a place where they belong and can succeed. Proactively developing a mentoring plan sends a strong signal of your department's commitment.

- Identify a faculty member in the department who agrees to serve as a "buddy" for the new faculty member through the transition to work and life in the department and at Harvard at large. The faculty buddy will introduce the new faculty member to resources, offices, faculty, and administrators on campus who can assist with all aspects of the transition. The buddy will also check in periodically with the new faculty member to ensure that s/he is acclimating successfully over the course of the appointment.

Sample Candidate Evaluation Sheet

This evaluation sheet is offered as a general template; search committees should feel free to modify this for their own purposes. These questions are designed for assistant/associate professor faculty searches; committees may want to modify some of the language used for non-ladder and tenured faculty searches.

Candidate's Name: _____

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

- ☐ Read candidate's CV
- ☐ Read candidate's scholarship
- ☐ Read candidate's letters of recommendation
- ☐ Attended candidate's job talk
- ☐ Met with candidate
- ☐ Attended meal with candidate
- ☐ Other (please explain)

_____

Please comment on the candidate's scholarship (noting the basis of your assessment):

Please comment on the candidate's teaching ability (noting the basis of your assessment):

Please rate the candidate on each of the following:

	Excellent	Good	Neutral	Fair	Poor	Unable to judge
Potential for (Evidence of) scholarly impact						
Potential for (Evidence of) research productivity						
Potential for (Evidence of) research funding						
Potential for (Evidence of) collaboration						
Relationship to the department's priorities						
Ability to make a positive contribution to department's climate						
Potential (Demonstrated ability) to attract and supervise graduate students						
Potential (Demonstrated ability) to teach and supervise undergraduates						
Potential (Demonstrated ability) to attract, work with and teach diverse students						
Potential (Demonstrated ability) to be a conscientious department/School community member						

Adapted from materials developed by the STRIDE Committee at the University of Michigan.

Guide to Acceptable Interview Questions

It is essential for all members of a search committee to be aware of these guidelines and follow them in both spirit *and* letter. Avoid any direct or indirect questions that touch on material that may not be asked. This information about an applicant should never be discussed with regard to his or her candidacy for a position.

Subject	What May Be Asked	What May NOT Be Asked
Name	Whether the applicant has worked for the University under another name. Whether any other information, such as a nickname or initials, is needed to check the candidate's work and educational record.	Birth name of a married person. Inquiries about the name that would seek to elicit information about the candidate's ancestry or descent.
Age	Discussion should be kept to questions about the applicant's career stage.	Inquiry into the date of birth or age of an applicant.
Gender and Gender Identity	No questions.	Inquiry into an applicant's birth name or any question that pertains to only one sex; questions about gender identity, birth gender, or changes to gender or gender identity.
Sexual Orientation	No questions.	Inquiry into applicant's sexuality.
Religion	No questions, except in extremely rare and narrow circumstances where religious beliefs and practices could be a *bona fide* occupational qualification for a position, with the employer bearing a heavy burden to show that this is so.	Inquiry into an applicant's religious beliefs, denomination, affiliation, place of worship, or religious holidays observed. Avoid any questions regarding organizations and/or affiliations that would identify religion.
Birthplace	No questions.	Birthplace of applicant or of applicant's parents, partner/significant other, or other close relatives.
Relatives	Names of applicant's relatives already employed by Harvard.	Names, addresses, ages, number, or other information concerning applicant's children or other relatives not employed by Harvard. Whether or not applicant is pregnant or plans to become pregnant.
National Origin	An employer may require an employee to produce documentation that evidences his or her identity and employment eligibility under federal immigration laws.	Inquiry into the applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, parentage, or nationality; nationality of parents or partner/significant other; applicant's native language.
Citizenship	Are you legally authorized to work in the United States?	Inquiries about citizenship or whether the applicant intends to become a U.S. citizen.
Language	What languages do you read fluently? Write fluently? Speak fluently?	Inquiries into how applicant acquired the ability to read, write, or speak a foreign language.
Education	Inquiry into the academic, vocational, or professional education of an applicant for employment.	Questions about education designed to determine how old the applicant is.
Experience	Inquiry into work experience. Inquiry into countries the applicant has visited. Inquiry into references.	Inquiry into organizations of which the applicant for employment is a member, the nature, name or character of which would likely disclose the applicant's protected class status.

Subject	What May Be Asked	What May NOT Be Asked
Disability	You can ask an applicant about his or her ability to perform job-related functions, as long as the questions are not phrased in terms which would elicit whether the applicant has a disability, and as long as such questions are asked of all applicants similarly situated (such as in all interviews).	Inquiry into whether the applicant has a physical or mental disability/handicap or about the nature or severity of the disability/handicap. Inquiry into whether an applicant has ever been addicted to illegal drugs or treated for drug abuse/alcoholism. Inquiry into whether an applicant has a disease. Inquiry into whether an applicant has ever received workers' compensation. Inquiry into whether an applicant has ever been hospitalized/treated for medical or mental health conditions. Inquiry into whether an applicant has ever been absent from work due to illness. An employer may not inquire as to the nature, severity, treatment, or prognosis of an obvious handicap or disability or of a hidden disability or handicap voluntarily disclosed by an applicant.
Pregnancy Status	No questions.	Whether or not applicant is pregnant, has a pregnancy-related condition, or plans to become pregnant. Further information is given in endnote 1.
Marital or Relationship Status	No questions.	Are you married? Where does your partner/significant other work? Is there a partner/significant other who would also need to find a job in the area? What are the ages of your children, if any? What was your birth or maiden name?
Address	Applicant's place of residence.	Do you rent or own your home? How long at each particular address?
Height, Weight, Strength	When hiring for a faculty position, there should be no reason for questions on these subjects.	When hiring for a faculty position, there should be no reason for questions on these subjects.
Photograph	No questions.	An employer cannot ask for a photograph to accompany an application.
Military	Applicant's work experience, including names, addresses of previous employers, dates of employment, reasons for leaving.	Inquiry into an applicant's type of discharge.
Criminal Record	While it is permissible to investigate criminal history as part of a background check conducted on finalists for a position, it is advisable to consult with Harvard's Office of General Counsel on any questions about criminal history.	Inquiry relating to arrests or misdemeanors. Any inquiry or check into a person's arrest, court, or conviction record if not substantially related to functions and responsibilities of the prospective employment.
Salary History	There are no permissible interview questions relating to salary history, under the Massachusetts Equal Pay Act, as amended effective 7/1/18. If a candidate volunteers information about their salary history, follow-up questions should not be asked.	Any inquiry into salary history. Further information is given in endnote 2.
Memberships	Are you a member of any professional societies or organizations? (Exclude inquiries into specific organizations the name or character of which indicates the race, creed, color, or national origin of its members.)	Inquiry into applicant's membership in nonprofessional organizations (e.g., clubs, lodges, etc.)

Acknowledgements: Harvard Office of Human Resources, MIT Faculty Search Committee Handbook (2002).

Endnotes:

1. **<u>Pregnancy in the Workplace</u>: In accordance with the Harvard University Pregnancy in the Workplace Policy (www.hr.harvard.edu/university-policies), which accords with the Massachusetts Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, the "Guide to Unacceptable Interview Questions" now states that employers should not ask prospective employees "Whether or not applicant is pregnant, has a pregnancy-related condition, or plans to become pregnant."** As Harvard's policy states, "University employees have the right to be free from discrimination because of pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, including but not limited to lactation or the need to express breast milk for a nursing child. The University will reasonably accommodate employees for pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions, absent undue hardship for the University. It is unlawful and contrary to University policy to deny an employment opportunity or take adverse action against an individual because of pregnancy or a condition related to pregnancy, provided that the individual is capable of performing the essential functions of their position, with or without reasonable accommodation. Adverse action against employees who request or use reasonable accommodations is likewise prohibited." Guidance and FAQ's on the Massachusetts Pregnant Workers Fairness Act are available at www.hr.harvard.edu/university-policies or by contacting the Faculty Affairs Dean for your School.

2. **<u>Salary History</u>: In accordance with the Massachusetts "Act to Establish Pay Equity," which amends the Massachusetts Equal Pay Act, the "Guide to Unacceptable Interview Questions" now states that, when interviewing prospective employees, "There are no permissible interview questions relating to salary history...If a candidate volunteers information about their salary history, follow-up questions should not be asked."** Detailed guidance and case law on the "Act to Establish Pay Equity" are limited, as the Act did not go into effect until July 1, 2018. However, the essence of the Act is that employers must offer equal pay for comparable work, with no discrimination on the basis of gender. In this spirit, the Attorney General's guidance indicates that salaries should not be influenced by such things as market forces, or the prospective employee's salary history. A competing offer, in and of itself, should not be a basis for setting salary. However, a competing offer might be an indication of the employee's education, training and experience, all of which might serve as a legitimate basis for salary setting. If a prospective employee volunteers salary-related information, the information should not be used by the employer in determining salary. Rather, salaries should be based on the nature and content of the job and the particular qualifications of the individual employee, and consistent with equal pay for comparable work, with no differences on the basis of gender. An overview and FAQ's related to the "Act to Establish Pay Equity" are available on the FD&D website (www.faculty.harvard.edu/recruitment-best-practices). If you have questions related to faculty recruitment, please contact the Faculty Affairs Dean for your School.

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The Office for Faculty Development and Diversity, led by the Senior Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity, serves as Harvard's central faculty affairs office. FD&D works closely with colleagues in Harvard's Schools to guide and coordinate policies and practices in all areas of faculty affairs, with the overall goal of recruiting and retaining outstanding scholars and teachers as we make increasing progress in diversifying our faculty. **In all of its activities, FD&D places a special emphasis on tenure-track faculty and on women and minorities at all academic ranks.**

To achieve these goals, FD&D:

- leads and coordinates efforts to strengthen Harvard's faculty,
- provides University-wide programs that improve faculty life and diversity,
- and collects, analyzes, and disseminates data on faculty appointments.

Working closely with the President and Provost, the Senior Vice Provost for FD&D is a key adviser in the tenure process, reviews tenure-track and senior non-ladder appointments in selected Schools, reviews School requests to appoint faculty to endowed chairs, and administers central funds that facilitate the appointment of outstanding faculty who simultaneously increase faculty excellence and faculty diversity.