INTERROGATING "MERIT," "FIT," AND "COMPLIANCE" DURING FACULTY APPLICATION REVIEWS & INTERVIEWS

SESSION OBJECTIVES AND OVERVIEW

This session is designed to raise questions about notions of "merit," "fit," and "compliance" during the application review and interview stages of the faculty hiring process. There are four objectives for this session:

Objective One: To interrogate bias in faculty hiring.

Objective Two: To reflect on how notions of "merit," "fit," and "compliance" play out on your own campuses;

Objective Three: To develop language and hiring rubrics that promote equity-minded notions of "merit," "fit," and "compliance."

Objective Four: To develop strategies to disrupt notions of "merit," "fit," and "compliance" that contribute to inequities in the interview process.

The activity proceeds in three parts.

Part 1 is an exercise for reflection on whether traditional or equity-minded notions of "merit," "fit," and "compliance" are enacted in your campus' hiring practices. It features examples of application review rubrics and interview rubrics—ones that emphasize traditional and equity-minded notions of "merit," "fit," and "compliance"—and guides asks participants to consider 'who shines?' depending on which rubric is used.

Part 2 is an exercise in "deconstructing" "traditional" notions of "merit," "fit," and "compliance" in hiring-related conversations. It features a fictionalized exchange between a search committee chair and member that takes place after the first round of interviews are completed. We will watch a video of the exchange, however, the transcript is also provided for reference. Discussion prompts follow the transcript.

Part 3 is about constructing equity-minded responses that challenge "traditional" notions of "merit," "fit," and "compliance."

PART ONE: INTERROGATING BIAS IN FACULTY HIRING

Bias can and often does have an impact on the faculty hiring process. This impact can negatively affect an institution's or department's efforts to diversify their faculty in terms of race and ethnicity. In this resource, we situate faculty hiring as a case of evaluation and decision-making, one that is prone to bias. We focus on two types of bias—implicit and institutional —and offer examples of how they can shape faculty hiring in ways that disproportionately impact candidates of color, particularly those from racially minoritized populations. Additionally, we propose specific actions selection committee members can take to minimize the effect of biases on the hiring process.

A MATTER OF EVALUATION AND DECISION-MAKING
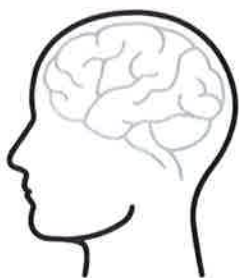
The faculty hiring process involves iterative cycles of evaluation and decision-making: selection committees evaluate candidates for specific criteria through job letters, interviews, and teaching (or research) demonstrations, and following each stage of review, make decisions about who to move forward from the long- to short-list, from the short-list to the finalists, and from the finalists to the person who will be offered the position.

Psychologists, behavioral economists, and organization scholars who study decision-making have identified a wide range of "cognitive" biases that can affect thinking and judgment, for example, "anchoring," which is to rely on one piece of information to justify a decision.[1] In faculty hiring, anchoring can manifest when a selection committee member bases the suitability of a candidate as a colleague on that candidate's membership in a specific professional community. Anchoring can also show up when a selection committee member excludes a candidate as unqualified for a position because that candidate completed their undergraduate degree at an institution unknown to the committee member. Important to note is that we in general are unaware when our decisions are influenced by a cognitive bias.
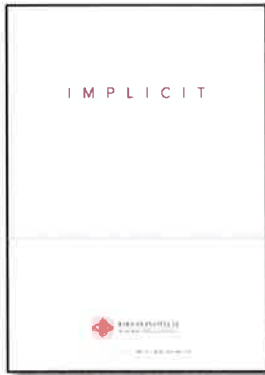
IMPLICIT BIAS

In recent years, researchers and practitioners have focused on "implicit" bias. Like cognitive

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[1] For a comprehensive discussion of cognitive biases, see Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011). The following studies do not examine faculty hiring, however, they do investigate other situations of routine, high-stakes evaluation and decision-making in academia: Michèle Lamont, *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment* (Harvard University Press, 2009); Julie R. Posselt, *Inside Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity, and Faculty Gatekeeping* (Harvard University Press, 2016); and Mitchell Stevens, *Creating a Class: College Admissions and the Education of Elites* (Harvard University Press, 2007).

biases, implicit biases operate without our awareness. They emerge from attitudes and stereotypes of people based on characteristics such as race or gender that automatically and unconsciously influence our behavior and decision-making. Everyone has implicit biases, even those of us who are committed to egalitarian values and who are members of racially minoritized groups.

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity's *State of the Science: Implicit Bias Review 2015* summarized the key characteristics of implicit bias from empirical research.[2] Implicit biases:

- *Are pervasive and robust*
- *Are not necessarily aligned with declared beliefs*
- *Tend to work in favor of one's in-group*
- *Have effects on one's behavior*
- *Are malleable*

Studies of hiring generally show that implicit biases can creep in as early as resume review and result in racial inequalities. In their 2004 field experiment, "Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination," behavioral economists Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan found that regardless of perceived resume quality, candidates with White-sounding names received a higher percentage of call backs (Figure 1).
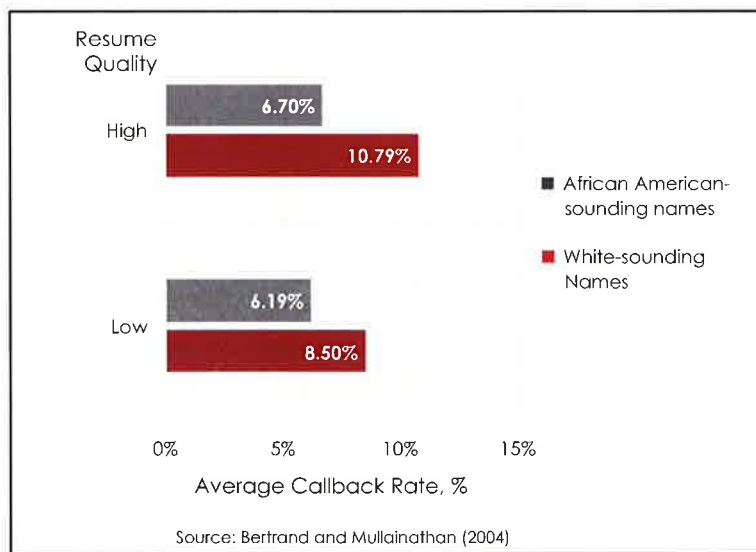
More recently, organization scholar Katherine Milkman and her colleagues conducted a related decision-making experiment in which professors received requests via email from prospective out-of-town students for advice about the faculty members' doctoral programs.[3] The emails were identical, except for the names of the fictional students sending the

Figure 1. Racism in a resume.

[2] Available at http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015-kirwan-implicit-bias.pdf. Additional resources available at http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias/

[3] For a more in-depth description of the study and links to the two papers reporting the results of their analyses, see "Professors are prejudiced, too" at https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/11/opinion/sunday/professors-are-prejudiced-too.html

message, which varied along racial/ethnic and gender lines. In total, the experiment included 20 names like Meredith Roberts (White female), Lamar Washington (Black male), Juanita Martinez (Latina), and Raj Singh (Indian male). The researchers found that two-thirds of the faculty responded to the emails (good news), however, White men received the highest response rates, regardless of professors' race/ethnicity and gender.

In contrast to "explicit" bias (i.e., biases that are known to us even if we do not wish to admit to them), implicit bias cannot be diagnosed and/or remediated through introspection alone. Furthermore, implicit bias is more likely to occur when we have to make decisions **(a) based on limited information, (b) alongside competing tasks, and (c) under time pressure**. For these reasons, it is important to understand how implicit biases might manifest during the faculty hiring process and how these biases especially affect efforts to hire more faculty of color. Having an awareness of how implicit bias operates is the first step to implementing strategies to mitigate their influence in faculty hiring.

WHY IS FACULTY HIRING PRONE TO IMPLICIT BIAS?

Selection committees have limited information to make a decision about candidates.

Selection committee members have to juggle other commitments, beyond hiring.

Selection committees face high numbers of applications that need to be evaluated in a short period of time.

EXAMPLES OF IMPLICIT BIAS DURING FACULTY HIRING

1. Qualified candidates from institutions that are *not* commonly known among selection committee members may be undervalued and more easily excluded from consideration.

2. Candidates with degrees from institutions known among selection committee members may be assumed to be qualified without additional evidence.

3. Candidates who have a PhD or other doctoral degree may be assumed to be more qualified than candidates who have a master's degree without additional evidence.

4. Candidates with the minimum level of content or disciplinary expertise may be assumed to be qualified to teach without additional evidence.

5. Candidates with experience teaching in a community college may be more valued than candidates with experience teaching in a four-year institution, even if the student population of the latter mirrors the former.

6. Internal candidates (i.e., part-time instructors who are already working at the community college) may be more valued than external candidates with similar qualifications.

7. Negative assumptions about whether faculty of color will "fit in" to the existing institutional and/or departmental environment can lead to those candidates being excluded from consideration.

8. Teaching using critical frameworks, culturally relevant, responsive, and/or sustaining pedagogies, non-traditional methodologies, and/or focusing on issues related to, or that seek to empower marginalized populations may be undervalued.[4]

9. A color-blind approach to faculty hiring (i.e., not attending to candidates' racial/ethnic backgrounds) is assumed to be more "objective" and will presumably yield the "best" candidates.

10. A color-blind approach to faculty hiring is assumed to yield candidates who are prepared to teach in racially/ethnically diverse classrooms.

11. Professional experience that faculty of color acquired through non-academic career paths may be undervalued.

12. Selection committees may fall into a "group think" pattern based on an initial response (whether positive, negative, or neutral) to a candidate.

STRATEGIES TO MINIMIZE IMPLICIT BIAS DURING FACULTY HIRING

1. Recognize and accept that you are susceptible to the influence of bias and assumptions.

2. Increase the diversity of your selection committee. There is some empirical evidence that suggests the mere presence of people of color on the committee may motivate whites not to exhibit bias.

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[4] For a discussion of these pedagogical approaches, see Django Paris (2016), "On educating culturally sustaining teachers." Available at: http://www.teachingworks.org/images/files/TeachingWorks_Paris.pdf. For causal evidence that culturally relevant pedagogies improve outcomes of students of color (e.g., GPA, attendance, earned credits), see Dee and Penner (2016), "The causal effects of cultural relevance: Evidence from an ethnic studies curriculum." Available at: https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/wp16-01-v201601.pdf. For additional evidence on the efficacy of culturally relevant curricula, see Cabrera, Milem, Jaquette, and Marx (2014), "Missing the (student achievement) forest for all the (political) trees: Empiricism and the Mexican American studies controversy in Tucson." Available at https://works.bepress.com/nolan_l_cabrera/24/
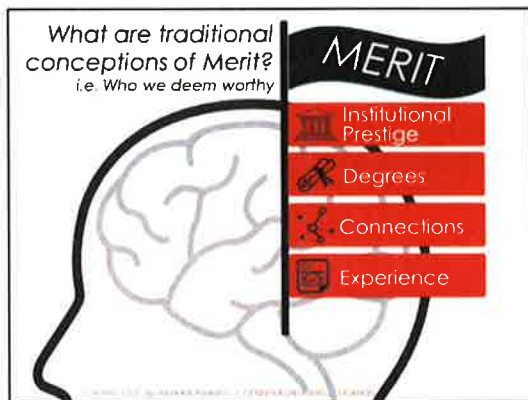
3. Build an applicant pool in which African Americans, Latinx, and other faculty of color are well represented. Selection committee members may be less likely to be influenced by racial/ethnic stereotypes when evaluating candidates if a significant fraction (>25%) of the pool is made up of scholars of color.

4. Develop well-defined evaluation criteria prior to reviewing applications. Vague terms like "excellence in teaching" may increase the possibility of biased evaluation. The committee should develop consensus around the multiple measures that define excellence in teaching (e.g., teaching evaluations, use of innovative teaching practices and/or culturally relevant/responsive/sustaining pedagogies).

5. Prioritize the relative importance of the multiple measures before reviewing applications. Doing so prevents selection committee members from unintentionally placing greater value on the qualities a "favored" applicant possesses and less value on credentials he/she lacks.

6. Engage in counter-stereotyping; that is, committee members should take time to consciously think about successful, highly competent, well-regarded faculty of color in their department, institution or discipline.

7. Spend sufficient time evaluating each applicant and minimize distractions while reviewing applications. Unconscious bias is a mental shortcut we sometimes take particularly when we cannot devote sufficient time and attention to evaluation. Develop a process that allows for a systematic, and at the same time, efficient, review of each applicant. If the pool is unusually large, the committee may opt to divide applications among selection committee members so that while all members briefly review all applications, each committee member is responsible for conducting a thorough review of a subset of applications.

8. Focus on each applicant as an individual and evaluate their entire application package.

9. Following each stage of review (i.e., paper applications, interviews, teaching demonstration), committee members should write their notes on applicants or complete an evaluation rubric *before* debriefing with other committee members. Doing so helps prevent biases that emerge from groupthink.

10. Use *inclusion* rather than *exclusion* strategies when deciding which candidates to move forward in the process. That is, instead of eliminating applicants that are deemed unqualified, identify those applicants who the committee views as qualified.

11. Throughout the process, committee members should re-evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of the selection criteria for addressing bias.

12. Be able to defend every decision to accept or reject a candidate. The reasons provided should be based on evidence in the applicant's professional and/or academic record and the criteria for the position.
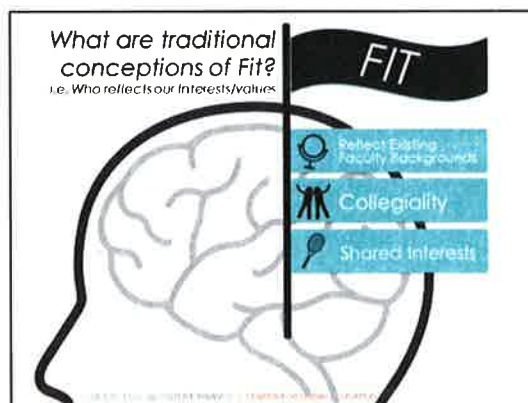
INSTITUTIONAL BIAS

Faculty hiring is also subject to "institutional" bias, which is not a property of individuals, but of the assumptions, customs, norms, preferences, routines, and rules that we take for granted as "this is how things are" or "this is how things work."[5] Institutional bias exists when policies, practices, and ways of thinking have prejudicial or discriminatory effects that result in unequal treatment, opportunities, and outcomes across social groups. Institutional racism is a particular form of institutional bias.

COMMON NOTIONS OF MERIT AND FIT IN FACULTY HIRING

What are traditional conceptions of Merit?
i.e. Who we deem worthy

MERIT
- Institutional Prestige
- Degrees
- Connections
- Experience

Tricky but not impossible to detect, institutional bias manifests in faculty hiring in the ways "merit" and "fit" are commonly understood and used. In general, merit refers to "the quality of being particularly good or worthy, especially as to deserve praise or reward," while fit is defined as "of suitable quality, standard, or type to meet the required purpose."[6]

What are traditional conceptions of Fit?
i.e. Who reflects our interests/values

FIT
- Reflect Existing Faculty Backgrounds
- Collegiality
- Shared Interests

Traditional conceptions of merit and fit can impede efforts to ensure hiring processes equitably serve candidates (and students) from racially minoritized groups. While we assume our conceptions of merit and fit are colorblind and objective, they are often the opposite, likely to disproportionately correlate to race / ethnicity regardless of a presumed colorblindness, and tend to have little to do with whether or not the candidate can effectively teach and support the success of racially minoritized students.

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[5] For a discussion of institutional bias, see P. J. Henry, "Institutional Bias," in *The Sage Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping and Discrimination* (Sage Publications, 2010).

[6] Definitions from *Oxford Living Dictionaries* (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com).

	Traditional conceptions of 'Merit' and 'Fit' when hiring include...	Why does this approach challenge efforts to diversify the faculty?
MERIT	Institutional Prestige Degrees Connections Experience	Minoritized racial groups have had inequitable access and have been disproportionately impacted in each of the categories related to traditional notions of merit.
FIT	Reflect Existing Faculty Backgrounds Collegiality Shared Interests	Cognitive biases such as in-group bias and out-group homogeneity bias[7] mean hiring committees will tend toward homophily; in other words, individuals will prefer candidates that are similar to themselves in categories like race, gender, status, and experience and perceive similar candidates to themselves more positively than non-similar candidates.

AN ACTIVITY TO TRY ON YOUR CAMPUS: WHAT DO 'MERIT' AND 'FIT' IN FACULTY HIRING MEAN AT YOUR INSTITUTION?

These common notions of merit and fit beg the question, how did these notions become common? How did they normalize such that this is the way we think about merit and fit? The existence of unexamined yet shared notions of merit and fit also suggest that such conceptions are socially constructed, developed over time, and reflective of the ideas and preferences of those who are involved in their construction. Because these ideas around merit and fit are socially constructed, they can change and no longer serve as tools of institutional bias and institutional racism.

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[7] Ingroup bias is an individual's tendency to evaluate people they have categorized as being part of their own group as better and in a more positive way. Related, outgroup bias refers to the negative categorizations, feelings, or ideas about people who are not part of an individual's ingroup. For more on ingroup and outgroup bias see Hewstone, M., Rubin, M., & Willis, H.

(2002). Intergroup bias. *Annual Review of Psychology, 53*(1), 575-604. Available at
http://www2.psych.ubc.ca/~schaller/Psyc591Readings/HewstoneRubinWillis2002.pdf

ACTIVITY 1:
WHAT DO 'MERIT' AND 'FIT' IN FACULTY HIRING MEAN AT YOUR INSTITUTION?

Before changing a conception, it is important to reflect on how that conception is currently defined and implemented in a particular context. The following activity is provided to help selection committees interrogate notions of "merit" and "fit" *before* the faculty hiring process begins and to identify how these conceptions may undermine candidates of color.

Step One: Ask all committee members to complete the sentences below and write their responses on post-it notes, one color for "merit" and another for "fit."

- When considering a candidate's **"merit"** I think about the following qualities / skills:
- When considering a candidate's **"fit"** I think about the following qualities / skills:

Step Two: Have the committee members place their post-its on corresponding posters (2), one for "merit" and another for "fit."

Step Three: When all committee members have placed their post-its on the posters, take a minute or two to review them and, as a group, discuss the following questions:

- What do these responses suggest about what "merit" in faculty hiring means at our institution?
- What do these responses suggest about what "fit" in faculty hiring means at our institution?
- How do these conceptions of "merit" and "fit" influence the manner in which we conduct faculty hiring?
- How might these conceptions of "merit" and "fit" impact *candidates from minoritized racial/ethnic groups*?
- How might these conceptions of "merit" and "fit" impact racially minoritized *students* who the successful candidate will teach?

Towards equity-minded notions of merit and fit in faculty hiring
Re-conceptualizing merit and fit in equity-minded ways means inflecting these concepts with race consciousness, the understanding that racial inequity is an outcome of institutional racism. It also means acknowledging practitioner responsibility for achieving racial equity.
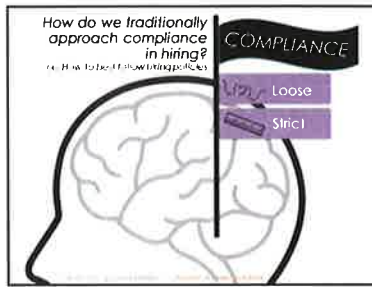
EQUITY-MINDED CONCEPTIONS OF MERIT

Experience teaching racially minoritized students	*Example:* The candidate mentions having taught minoritized racial ethnic groups in a positive sense.
Expertise with culturally relevant pedagogy	*Example:* The candidate shows evidence that they incorporate authors of color into their curriculum.
Educated in social justice and equity	*Example:* The candidate indicates they have an understanding of the history of systemic, structural and institutional racism, and how different minoritized groups have experienced racism in education.
Experience acting as an equity advocate	*Example:* The candidate gives examples of equity work individually or in a group, and/or gives narratives of how they have advocated for students from minoritized backgrounds.
Experience with self-reflection and willingness to reflect on racialized outcomes of practice	*Example:* The candidate indicates they have thought about their pedagogy and/or used disaggregated data to inform their practice.

EQUITY-MINDED CONCEPTIONS OF FIT

Reflects students' racial/ethnic identities	*i.e.* It is important for students to be able to see themselves reflected in their instructors.
Holds high expectations for racially minoritized students	*Example:* The candidate communicates that they believe racial/ethnic minoritized student groups are capable of succeeding.
Can connect with students through multiple identities	*i.e.* Students from minoritized racial backgrounds come to the classroom with intersectional identities that shape their experience of the educational system.
Can support and further campus equity efforts	*Example:* Candidates have shown that they are invested in equity efforts and willing to contribute (with an understanding that the campus will support and protect those doing equity work).

IMPLEMENTATION AND COMPLIANCE

Even as equity-minded notions of merit and fit are embedded in hiring evaluation rubrics and interview protocols, bias can still emerge. Having equity-minded artifacts is not sufficient to curb biases that challenge efforts to diversify the faculty; how those artifacts are implemented and how those involved in the hiring process comply with rules and policies matters.

When committees prioritize *arbitrary, uncritical* compliance to rules and policies over the outcome of diversifying the faculty, then common conceptions of merit and fit are likely to be upheld. Conversely, when rules and policies that are meant to ensure equity in hiring and mitigate bias are not abided by or are *loosely* followed, then decisions are subject to biases that tend to disadvantage candidates of color.

EQUITY-MINDED CONCEPTIONS OF COMPLIANCE

Candidates are ensured similar experiences	*Example:* Candidates are asked similar questions.
Evaluation rubrics ensure equitable consideration	*Example:* The rubric metrics do not disproportionately impact candidates of color
Equity-minded conceptions of merit and fit guide the hiring process	*Example:* The rubric reflects qualifications such as having been an institutional agent for minoritized racial/ethnic groups
Steps are evaluated for inequitable impact on candidates of color	*Example:* Answer questions such as: Does the rubric for looking at paper applications yield a representative and diverse pool of short-list candidates?

ACTIVITY 2a

ASSESSING SCREENING FORMS USED TO EVALUATE CANDIDATES' APPLICATION MATERIALS

Position Title: _____
Candidate: _____

Criteria

Credential
- MA or higher degree from an accredited institution (doctorate preferred)

Experience
- Previous faculty experience
- Experience in community colleges

Leadership talent
- Commitment to academic excellence
- Strong vision
- Personal qualities/skills needed to develop & promote the college and its programs
- Energy and stamina
- Sense of humor

Governance skills
- Commitment to shared governance
- Skills needed to develop and promote effective governance

Sensitivity
- Sensitive to diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of students, staff, and community

Paper Screening Form
Example #1

Does this screening form support...

traditional conceptions
or
equity-minded conceptions

of merit and fit? *(circle one)*

Additional Comments....

ACTIVITY 2b

ASSESSING SCREENING FORMS USED TO EVALUATE CANDIDATE'S APPLICATION MATERIALS

Criteria

Cultural competence
- Shares common experiences with students at the institution.

Engages in self-reflection
- Uses disaggregated data to assess equity
- Reflects on whether or not practices support equitable success for minoritized populations.

Focuses on instructor responsibility
- Changes classroom practices (and/or institutional processes) based on analysis of disaggregated data.
- Seeks to identify and eliminate barriers.

Uses position & knowledge To support student success
- Uses institutional knowledge and authority to support the success of populations experiencing gaps
- Acts as an advocate to ensure equity is at the forefront during department and college service

Views students as capable, uses student knowledge as an asset.
- Classroom practices are designed to use students' funds of knowledge, particularly for minoritized groups experiencing gaps.

Additional Comments....

Paper Screening Form
Example #2

Does this screening form support...

traditional conceptions
or
equity-minded conceptions

of merit and fit? *(circle one)*

ACTIVITY 2c

ASSESSING SCREENING FORMS USED TO EVALUATE CANDIDATE'S APPLICATION MATERIALS

Table Discussion

Looking at your own applicant screening form...

1) What applicant qualities does this screening form prioritize?

2) Does this screening form support

traditional conceptions
or
equity-minded conceptions

of merit and fit? (circle one)

ACTIVITY 3a
Who Shines?

Traditional conceptions:
- ○ Credentials
- ○ Experience
- ○ Leadership talent
- ○ Governance skills
- ○ Sensitivity

Equity-minded conceptions:
- ○ Cultural competence
- ○ Engages in self-reflection
- ○ Focuses on instructor responsibility
- ○ Uses position & knowledge to support student success
- ○ Views students as capable, uses student knowledge as an asset

Cover Letter #1:

"As you'll see in my resume, I have many years experience teaching in community colleges and serving on a community college academic senate. The first eight years of my teaching career were also spent in a school district with a high proportion of at-risk and free-and-reduced-lunch students."

Additional Comments….

ACTIVITY 3b

Who Shines?

Traditional conceptions:

○ Credentials
○ Experience
○ Leadership talent
○ Governance skills
○ Sensitivity

Equity-minded conceptions:

○ Cultural competence
○ Engages in self-reflection
○ Focuses on instructor responsibility
○ Uses position & knowledge to support student success
○ Views students as capable, uses student knowledge as an asset

Cover Letter #2:

"As a first-generation student and an African-American female studying mathematics, I always found that a friendly voice, a helpful piece of advice, or a teacher getting to know me for who I am as a person helped create a sense that I belonged, and I have aimed to do the same for my students in my two semesters as a graduate teaching assistant. Whether it is a simple hello at the beginning of the day, walking students to the tutoring center myself, or taking class time to advise students on their next math class, I feel it is important for me to provide the same environment my professors gave me as a way to pay it forward."

Additional Comments....

ACTIVITY 3c
Who Shines?

Traditional conceptions:

- ○ Credentials
- ○ Experience
- ○ Leadership talent
- ○ Governance skills
- ○ Sensitivity

Equity-minded conceptions:

- ○ Cultural competence
- ○ Engages in self-reflection
- ○ Focuses on instructor responsibility
- ○ Uses position & knowledge to support student success
- ○ Views students as capable, uses student knowledge as an asset

Cover Letter #3:

"…as a result of the study I conducted as a graduate student, the English Department came to see that Latinx students were receiving the college-level-placement approval from faculty at a much smaller rate than white students, even though they had the same placement score."

Additional Comments….

Example Cover Letter #1

Dear Search Committee,

I was very excited to see the recent posting for "Regular Math Faculty" on your website. I feel that my skills and experience are an excellent match for your college and its students.

Does this represent Cultural Competence? Was this done race-consciously?

As you'll see from my resume, I am a passionate, caring and disciplined professional with twenty-five years of experience that includes very diverse secondary and community college environments. Although I began my career as a software engineer in northern Colorado, a family move to California also brought a desire to live a more impactful life. Thus, I made the decision to enroll in a Master's program in Math Education at UC Irvine that was equal parts graduate level mathematics (24 credits) and education courses that included Teaching English Language Learners and Teaching in Urban Environments, allowing me to seamlessly blend the worlds of mathematics and education.

Conveys Belief Students are Capable, but race neutral

The first eight years of my teaching career were spent in a school district with a high proportion of at-risk and free-and-reduced-lunch students where I became skilled at creating an environment that breaks down the barriers to learning mathematics. My teaching philosophy is based on the idea that learning happens best when it happens between students. My classroom is active, focused on understanding mathematics rather than memorizing it, and is centered around questions rather than answers. You will never see me lecturing on the "right" algorithms. Instead, you will see me facilitating learning so that students develop their own understanding of mathematics.

Uses Position and Knowledge, but race neutral

Instructor Responsibility, but race neutral

For the past five years, I have taught evening courses at the college where I have taught just about every math class that is offered. I have developed my own materials as I have found that traditional text books fail to ask students to understand the foundational concepts behind the mathematics. Developing my own materials also allows me to design curriculum that is relevant to who is most important, the student. I believe that the traditional methods of teaching mathematics are the reason students are underprepared when they enter college. I have been very successful at helping my students see a more intrinsic way of viewing math, and the result has been watching my students overcome the ineffective pedagogies they have been subjected to.

Student Centered in Self-Reflection – race neutral

Deficit Minded in that it conveys a belief that students are 'flawed'

I thank you for the opportunity, and very much look forward to sharing ways I can fit in with your institution in person.

Regards,
Jordan Brown

Notes:
- *Strengths: Many years of experience working with students with similar background to our students. Practices are designed to empower student's sense of mathematical abilities.*
- *Areas for Growth: Departments mentoring program can help tie practices to disaggregated data. Mentoring could also help practices become race conscious.*
- *Follow-up questions: In what ways has the development of your materials been race-conscious?*
- *Would like a clearer idea of what "develop their own sense of understand means" (this is a potential teaching demo). How well does he work with colleagues who teach the "wrong way"?*

Example Cover Letter #2

Dear Search Committee,

Equity-Minded Cultural Competence – Shares background

It has been my goal to teach math at a community college since my own experience as a community college student where my trigonometry professor noticed I had an ability to explain math in a way that my classmates understood. That began my journey of tutoring in the school's mathematics help lab, being a teaching assistant my senior year at California State University Northridge, and teaching courses of my own as a graduate student. Every step I have taken has made me love working with students more and more. Every time I see the light-bulb go on, I am reminded of why I chose teaching as my profession.

Self-Reflection, but race neutral

I have spent the past 18 months commuting between three different schools as part-time faculty. My job duties include teaching the content assigned by the department, developing lectures, in-class activities and homework assignments, keeping grades updated in a timely way, and holding office hours. I have also attended as many of the professional development sessions as possible, even when no additional pay was offered. I feel the combination of my experience and professional development have prepared me well to take on the role of full-time faculty.

Conveys Belief Students are Capable, but race neutral

As a student, I like having both lecture and group work as part of the class. Thus, I have begun using the "I do, we do, you do," teaching method in which students watch me model a solution, followed by students working a similar problem in groups, and finally working a problem on their own. I have also incorporated many helpful and free online resources, including Khan Academy videos, an online graphing tool called Desmos, and having students text me a picture of their work when they have a question. I believe it is important for teachers to include such resources as this type of technology aligns well with the learning style of younger students. These are also helpful for students who may not have the money to buy a graphing calculator or are too busy to spend several hours per week in the tutoring lab.

Instructor Responsibility.

Equity Minded Cultural Competence – shares background

It is important to me to create a class environment that is welcoming to students. As a first-generation student and an African-American female studying mathematics, I always found that a friendly voice, a helpful piece of advice, or a teacher getting to know me for who I am as a person helped create a sense that I belonged, and now I try to do the same for my students. Whether it is a simple hello at the beginning of the day, walking students to the tutoring center myself, or taking class time to advise students on their next math class, I feel it is important for me to provide the same environment my professors gave me as a way to pay it forward.

Equity Minded. Uses Position and Knowledge

Sincerely,
Jamie Evans

Notes:
- *Strengths: practices informed by background (AA Female/CC experience) – aligns with many of our students.*
- *Shows a willingness to act as an advocate for her students.*
- *Areas for Growth: Department's mentoring program can help tie practices to disaggregated data.*
- *Questions: In what ways have your practices been influenced by race conscious observations?*
- *What does her group work look like? (this is a potential teaching demo)*

ACTIVITY 4a
ASSESSING PROMPTS FOR PHONE INTERVIEWS

Prompts for Phone Interviews:

- Why do you want this position?

- Tell us more about your professional experiences, particularly those not mentioned in your resume/application.

- Describe your teaching philosophy.

- What is your approach to classroom management?

- How do you adjust your style to the less-motivated or under-prepared student?

Interview Questions
Example #1

Do these questions support...

traditional conceptions
or
equity-minded conceptions

of merit and fit? *(circle one)*

Additional Comments....

ACTIVITY 4b
ASSESSING PROMPTS FOR PHONE INTERVIEWS

Prompts for Phone Interviews:

- How has your background and experience prepared you to be effective in an environment that values diversity?

- How do you ensure that your classroom is equitably serving students from minoritized racial/ethnic groups?

- How have you used data and self-reflection to assess and improve your classroom practices?

- What does it mean for you to have a commitment to equity? How have you demonstrated that commitment, and how would you see yourself demonstrating it here?

Interview Questions
Example #2

Do these questions support...

traditional conceptions
or
equity-minded conceptions

of merit and fit? *(circle one)*

Additional Comments....

ACTIVITY 4c
ASSESSING PROMPTS FOR PHONE INTERVIEWS

Table Discussion

Looking at your own interview questions...

1) What applicant qualities do these interview questions prioritize?

2) Do these interview questions support

traditional conceptions
or
equity-minded conceptions

of merit and fit? (circle one)

ACTIVITY 5a
ASSESSING INTERVIEW RATING FORMS

Position Title: _____
Candidate: _____

Criteria

Communication
- Clarity in written, verbal, and non-verbal communication skills

Knowledge
- Verbal expression
- Depth of response
- Analytical thought process

Enthusiasm
- Animated, positive, spontaneous

Decisiveness & Assertiveness
- Gets to the point
- Emphasizes achievement
- Relevant response to interview objective
- Takes charge, forceful, convincing, persuasive

Maturity & Self-Presentation
- Poise, self confidence, dress, relaxed
- Responses are not canned and superficial

Interview Rating Form
Example

Does this rating form support...

traditional conceptions
or
equity-minded conceptions

of merit and fit? *(circle one)*

Additional Comments....

ACTIVITY 5b

ASSESSING INTERVIEW RATING FORMS

Looking at your own interview rating forms...

1) What applicant qualities do these rating forms prioritize?

2) Do these rating forms support

traditional conceptions
or
equity-minded conceptions
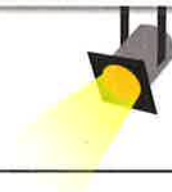
of merit and fit? (circle one)

ACTIVITY 6a
Who Shines?

Traditional conceptions:
- ○ Communication
- ○ Knowledge
- ○ Enthusiasm
- ○ Decisiveness & Assertiveness
- ○ Maturity & Self-Presentation

Equity-minded conceptions:
- ○ Cultural competence
- ○ Engages in self-reflection
- ○ Focuses on instructor responsibility
- ○ Uses position & knowledge to support student success
- ○ Views students as capable, uses student knowledge as an asset

Question: If you notice that your White students tend to speak more in class than your Black students, what would you do?

Candidate #1 Answer:

"Honestly, I've never noticed, but that's probably because in most of the places where I've taught, my students have been white. But if faced with that situation, I would provide all of the students with a series of online videos to help them develop skills like public speaking and videos that provide more help with the content we're covering at that time."

Additional Comments….

ACTIVITY 6b

Who Shines?

Traditional conceptions:

- ○ Communication
- ○ Knowledge
- ○ Enthusiasm
- ○ Decisiveness & Assertiveness
- ○ Maturity & Self-Presentation

Equity-minded conceptions:

- ○ Cultural competence
- ○ Engages in self-reflection
- ○ Focuses on instructor responsibility
- ○ Uses position & knowledge to support student success
- ○ Views students as capable, uses student knowledge as an asset

Question: If you notice that your White students tend to speak more in class than your Black students, what would you do?

Candidate #2 Answer:

"I noticed this while teaching and while I was a student. I've experimented with this and found that, depending on the class, I need to be more intentional with my facilitation. Maybe I make a point to ask black students what they think—do you think the answer on the board is right? Or, if I know they got the problem right, I'll ask them to demonstrate how they got the right answer on the board. Sometimes too, if white students are more likely to share, I create a classroom policy where 5-6 other students need to share before a student can share again."

Additional Comments....

SAMPLE EQUITY-MINDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following sample interview questions aim to provide candidates with the *opportunity* to demonstrate whether and how they exemplify the characteristics of equity-minded competence. We emphasize 'opportunity' because there is no guarantee that the question will elicit the intended response, only that it gives candidates a chance to speak to equity-minded characteristics.

POSSESSES CULTURAL COMPETENCE

1. How have your past experiences prepared you to be effective in an environment that values diversity and equity?

2. As an instructor, how do you create a classroom culture that intentionally welcomes and supports students from different racial/ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds?

3. Given all the candidates have similar interests in teaching, educations, and experience, what distinguishes you as a good fit for our students?

4. How do you draw upon your students' prior knowledge, backgrounds, and lived experiences?

ENGAGES IN CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION TO ENSURE ONGOING IMPROVEMENT

1. What do you feel are two or three teaching strategies that you use to ensure that your students have an enriching learning experience in your classes? How do you determine whether these strategies result in this outcome?

2. What strategies do you use to reflect on your teaching?

3. What criteria do you use to determine whether you are succeeding as a teacher? How do you determine whether and in what ways you are meeting these criteria?

4. Do you currently look at outcomes data for your students to identify inequities in outcomes by race and ethnicity? Please describe your process of doing so or how you could do it if you don't already.

FOCUSES ON INSTRUCTOR/INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

1. What strategies do you use to get to know your students?
2. How do you consider the varying experiences and identities of your students on a daily basis?

3. Recall a time when you noticed a student struggling in class and in jeopardy of failing. What did you do?

4. What does 'equity' mean to you? How do you enact your definition of equity in your classrooms?

5. If you notice patterns of racialized outcomes, what would you do? For example, if you notice that your white students tend to speak more than your black students, what would you do?

6. In your experience, what are the challenges faced by racially minoritized students in higher education? What strategies have you used to address these challenges, and how successful were those strategies?

7. Tell me about an instance where you adapted your teaching or mentoring approach in order to work effectively with a racially minoritized student.

8. What does it mean for you to have a commitment to diversity? How have you demonstrated that commitment? How would you see yourself demonstrating it here?

9. How are you prepared to meet the expectations of both teaching and out-of-the-classroom work, including the implementation of campus- or state-level reforms that impact the work of the department (e.g., developmental education redesign, online learning)?

POSITIVELY USES POSITION AND KNOWLEDGE TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

1. We are looking for candidates who are critically race conscious. How do you define that?

2. Tell me about a time when you provided students with an opportunity or resource that advanced their progress at the college? What motivated you to do so?

3. Tell me about a time when you helped a student connect their educational, professional, and/or life with the means (e.g., resources, actions) to achieve those goals. What motivated you to do so?

4. Tell me about a time when you helped change a department- or school-level policy that resulted in unequal outcomes for racially minoritized students. What motivated you to do so?

CONVEYS A BELIEF THAT STUDENTS ARE CAPABLE

1. Given a student population that is diverse in terms of gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and abilities, how do you ensure that each student feels they can succeed?

2. What techniques do you have for drawing on your students' funds of knowledge?

3. How do you communicate to students how to be successful in your class?

OTHER: WORKING WITH COLLEAGUES

1. Have you ever realized you had said or done something that may have been offensive to a colleague? How did you respond to that realization, and what was the outcome?

2. Tell me about a time when your values and beliefs impacted your relationships with your colleagues.

3. Can you recall a time when you gave feedback to a colleague who was not accepting of others?

4. Have you encountered concerns about "chilly climate" raised by colleagues from identity groups that have historically experienced discrimination? If so, how have you handled them?

5. Suppose as a course leader you discover an adjunct faculty member is teaching a concept in a manner you disagree with. How would you handle it?