Unconscious Bias, Inclusion, and Challenges to Fair Assessment

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(with thanks to Maydianne Andrade, Sarah Brough, Cathy Foley, Lisa Harvey-Smith, Judith Irwin, Virginia MacLaren, Sarah Maddison, Joan Schmelz, Amanda Weltman and Gillian Whitehouse)
How To Respond: Personal

- Recognise & compensate for bias in yourself & in your organisation
  - do the implicit association test
  - get into habit of scrutinising who’s in the room, who’s speaking, who’s being quiet, and who’s being interrupted
  - make decisions based on objective criteria
  - keep careful notes; avoid general statements (“strong application”) or comparisons (“not as good as Jones”)
  - beware of elite school biases
  - use (and ask for) specific examples to support assertions
  - ensure sufficient time for careful decision-making (rushing = stronger biases), minimise distractions
How To Respond: Committees

- Recognise and compensate for bias in yourself and in your committee
  - ensure committee has at least two members of designated groups
  - get everyone on the committee to do the implicit association test
  - articulate in advance: conflicts of interest, use of external information
  - establish selection criteria and **basis for assessment** beforehand
  - scrutinise use of “excellence” in job description
  - make decisions based on objective and consistent criteria; use & ask for specific examples to support assertions (no “reading between the lines”)
  - avoid numerical rankings (cf. yes/no/maybe) and do not rank finalists
  - ask department members to articulate level of interaction (read CV, attended lunch/dinner, attended job talk, read scholarship, etc)
  - interview people on your shortlist using identical questions and format
How To Respond: Bias Interrupters

› Directly seek input from those who have been quiet

› Focus on accomplishments & record, rather than inferences or personality descriptions

› Encourage thorough discussion of strengths as demonstrated in the record for all candidates

› Redirect focus of committee to specifications in the job ad / criteria

› Be vigilant for reconstruction of merit criteria or for unspecified “fit”: the criteria seen as key can shift between men and women

› Ask for specific examples from the record in support of assertions

› Explicitly remind committee that personal information is not under consideration

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How To Respond: Recommendation Letters

› Be aware of common patterns in reference letters and in your discussion

- Letters for men and for white applicants are longer and use more superlatives
- Men are dynamic and innately talented, while women are cheerful and hard-working; differing use of names and titles: “Sarah is a caring and compassionate supervisor” vs “Dr Gray has been very successful with his students”
- Prove It Again / Benefit of the Doubt: “he’ll go far” vs “she’s not ready”
- Attribution of Success: “he is talented” vs “she’s been lucky”
- Tightrope: “he knows his own worth” vs “she’s a primadonna”
- Maternal Wall: “her priorities lie elsewhere”
- Irrelevant personal info: “her health is stable, for now”, “she likes to keep in shape”, “she’s close to my wife”
- Doubt raisers: “although problems in her group resulted in relatively slow progress, the results were impressive” vs “he has overcome personnel challenges to produce impressive results

› Read everything but the reference letters, then form your impression

- now read the letters; if your impression changes, document the reasons
“We Must Not Compromise on Excellence!”

- Seek out applications deeply and broadly
- Define excellence and basis for assessment before reading any applications
- Discuss if definition of excellence has evolved in response to specific candidates
- There are many paths to excellence: definition needs to reflect that

University of Michigan candidate evaluation tool:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate’s Name:</th>
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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 lunch or dinner with candidate
- [ ] Other (please explain):

Please rate the candidate on each of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential for (Evidence of) scholarly impact</th>
<th>excellent</th>
<th>good</th>
<th>neutral</th>
<th>fair</th>
<th>poor</th>
<th>unable to judge</th>
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<tr>
<td>Potential for (Evidence of) research productivity</td>
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<td>Potential for (Evidence of) research funding</td>
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<td>Potential for (Evidence of) collaboration</td>
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<td>Fit with department’s priorities</td>
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<td>Ability to make positive contribution to department’s climate</td>
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<td>Potential (Demonstrated ability) to attract and supervise graduate students</td>
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<td>Potential (Demonstrated ability) to teach and supervise undergraduates</td>
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<td>Potential (Demonstrated ability) to be a conscientious university community member</td>
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Equality is Not Equity
(“I Don’t See Colour”)

Craig Froehle / 9gag.com
Dunlap Institute: Recruitment

- Explicit selection criteria and basis for assessment (listed in job ad)
- Minimise “excellence” in job description
- Anonymous diversity survey as part of application
- Selection committees contain at least two members of designated groups
- Articulate in advance: conflicts of interest, use of external information
- Interview questions must be submitted and approved in advance
- Postdoc hires: blind longlist selection using anonymous 300-word summary
- Selection of shortlist using yes/maybe/no grading (no numerical rankings)
- Reference letters scrutinised for bias
- Report on equity practices must be submitted before shortlist approved
- Postdoc hires: standard non-negotiable pay scale to avoid salary gaps
- Postdoc hires: all positions advertised and offered with part-time option
- Postdoc hires: exit interviews conducted by external party
Dunlap Institute: Practices & Programs

- Colloquium invitation list must reflect community make-up
- Gender neutral bathrooms
- Recognise PINK tasks; ensure workload is shared equitably
- Regular “DiversiTeas”
  - unconscious bias, neurosexism, intersectionality, imposter syndrome, speed mentoring, mental health, microaggressions, LGBTQ2 allyship
- Family-friendly practices
  - work from home; extension of contract after mat leave
  - travel & visitor funding for dependents / carers / childcare
  - all core meetings 10am-3pm
  - “Return to Work” fellowships
  - preferential parking for parents / carers / part-timers
- Inclusive workshops and conferences
  - Code of Conduct
  - advance inspection of venues for accessibility
  - (free) childcare; spillover room; remote participation
  - equity reporting as condition of sponsorship/funding
  - “Save That Spot”
  - Astronomy Allies (http://www.astronomyallies.com)
Dunlap Institute: Outcomes

• Current complement: 88 people
  - faculty & associate faculty: 11% → 25% women
  - fellows, postdocs & researchers: 27% → 54%
  - professional staff: 33% → 46%
  - students: 31% → 54%