



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH
OFFICE OF EQUITY & DIVERSITY

Interrupting Bias in Hiring Committees and the Workplace

Rushing or speeding up a recruitment process may lead to biased assessments in evaluating candidates. Below are some common shortcuts that may lead to erroneous conclusions that a candidate may be “unqualified” or “a bad fit.” A strong hiring manager or search committee will be cognizant that implicit bias occurs in every search and will openly discuss, identify, and self-correct when bias occurs. This self-awareness is called “interrupting unconscious bias in hiring practices” which serves as a best practice for diversity leadership on University campuses.

Examples of Common Shortcuts:

- **“Cloning:” Replicating oneself by hiring someone with similar attributes or background.** Also refers to undervaluing a candidate’s research because it is not familiar, as well as expecting candidates to resemble someone whom the search committee is replacing. Cloning limits the scope and breadth of *approaches* and *perspectives* in research, teaching and service.
- **“Snap Judgements:” Making judgements about the candidate with insufficient evidence.** Dismissing a candidate for minor reasons or labeling a candidate “the best” and ignoring positive attributes of the other candidates. Having a covert agenda furthered by stressing something trivial or focusing on a few negatives rather than the overall qualifications. Often occurs when the hiring process feels rushed.
- **“Good Fit/Bad Fit:”** While it may be about whether the person can meet the programmatic needs for the position, it often is about **how comfortable and culturally at ease one feels.**
- **“Negative Stereotypes:” Characterized by presumptions of incompetence.** The work of women and historically underrepresented minorities is scrutinized much more than majority faculty, at all stages of academic career.

Adapted from Joann Moody, “Rising Above Cognitive Errors: Guidelines to Improve Faculty Search Evaluations and Decision Making”

- **“Positive Stereotypes:” Dominant group members are automatically presumed to be competent.** Such a member receives the benefit of the doubt, negative attributes are glossed over and success is assumed. Also called the “original affirmative action” because the dominant group members are automatically presumed qualified and thereby given an unearned advantage.
- **Raising the Bar: Also known as “Elitist Behavior” is increasing qualifications** for women and minority candidates because their competency doesn’t strike committee members as trustworthy. Downgrading the qualifications of women and minorities, based on accent, dress, and demeanor. In short, uneven expectations based on a candidate’s social identity.
- **Wishful Thinking: Insisting racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice no longer exists.**
- **Euphemized Bias:**

Visionary: Members of dominant groups are evaluated based on their potential whereas underrepresented groups are judged on their accomplishments and their track record only. For example: “He has vision” or “She lacks vision.”

Star: Used when the speaker is an infatuated fan of the candidate under consideration. When you hear it, ask the speaker to explain their use of the term and support it with evidence. For example: “She’s not a star” or “It’s clear he’s a rock star.”

Committed, single-minded focus or hard-worker: These terms could be cloaking a bias against care-givers, those faculty members who cannot depend on what Williams (2000) calls a “flow of family work” which allows ideal workers to log long hours in the office while still having their material needs met.

Additional Resources:

What is implicit bias? (Short educational video from American Bar Association, produced for the UC System):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmAt789dB9w>

For more information, see Harvard’s Study: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>

Additional Articles:

Interrupting the Usual: Successful Strategies for Hiring Diverse Faculty
 Daryl G. Smith, Caroline S. Turner, Nana Osei-Kofi, Sandra Richards
Journal of Higher Education, 75.2 (2004) 133-160. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/52771>

How to Diversify the Faculty
 Daryl G. Smith
Academe, Vol. 86, No. 5 (Sept. – Oct., 2000), pp. 48-52 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40251921>

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