Brandeis Search and Selection: Practices that Support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Brandeis University has made a commitment to hire and retain underrepresented populations to tenure-track and tenured positions in the faculty. The success of this endeavor rests on the ability of the faculty search committee to effectively engage the search process at every stage. Below are suggestions to assist search committees in their work:

To Consider Before the Search
- Setting DEI goals is not illegal, nor is it a quota. What would diversification of faculty look like in your department? Beyond the goals of the institution, what goals could you set for yourselves?
- Create a norm for the search committee where overt conversations about race, gender, and other social identities are ok.
- There are many benefits associated with having a diverse faculty. Be prepared to answer questions related to diversity from your candidates.
- Reflect on previous searches in your department and whether they included DEI strategies and practices. What were their respective outcomes?
- Reach out to colleagues at Brandeis and at other universities to share that you are beginning a search and are committed to diversifying your faculty. Ask your colleagues to share this information with their professional networks, including doctoral students. Remember, potentially excellent candidates who are comfortable in their positions may not be looking through job announcements.

Writing the Job Announcement
- Creating a broadly defined job description allows for the creation of a robust candidate pool. Avoid narrowing the pool unnecessarily by narrowing the parameters of the job.
- Write your job posting using inclusive, up-to-date language.
- Emphasize that diversity, equity, and inclusion and excellence are complementary pursuits. Avoid routine language such as: “women and minorities are encouraged to apply”.
- Consider articulating why diversity is key to departmental success, growth, and effectiveness within the job announcement.
- Describe the university’s commitment to DEI.
- Request a statement from candidates about their DEI work, values, and beliefs.
- If your department is one that values and integrates DEI practices via research and scholarship, pedagogy, or student support, share that.
- If your department credits work that reflects DEI, share that.

Posting the Position
- Consider contacting government, public service, research enterprises, non-peer universities to post.
- Contact organizations that cater to historically marginalized groups for their professional development.
- Contact publications that are written by, and for, members of historically marginalized groups of people.
• Send announcements to institutions that serve large numbers of Latinx, Black, Native American, other underrepresented people.
• Reflect on the purpose, use, impact, and cost (for the candidate) of asking for references up front. This creates an unnecessary socio-economic barrier to entry. Ask for references when you are serious about their candidacy.

The Search and Selection Committee
• Because diverse groups (social identities, disciplines) have better problem-solving and creative decision-making skills, having a diverse search committee is essential.
• Diverse committees are far less likely to engage in cloning behaviors—choosing a candidate who closely resembles the current department or outgoing faculty person.
• A non-exhaustive list of who could be involved:
  o A faculty member outside of the subfield
  o People of color
  o International faculty/staff/students
  o Both junior and senior faculty members (variety of age groups)
  o Students (both graduate and undergraduate)
  o Representation of individuals with LGBTQ+ identities
• If a department is fairly homogenous, it may be advisable to seek committee members from outside the unit to ensure appropriate representation and a wider perspective.
• Offer professional development about DEI practices and strategy to committee members that includes support for writing interview questions and working together as a committee.

The Interview Process
• Develop interview questions about candidates’ experiences with, or beliefs about, integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion into their teaching, research, and/or service.
• Be able to offer examples of the department’s DEI work and the ways it has been supported by the department and the institution.
• Consider allocating funds for inviting candidates with a background in social justice teaching, research, and/or service to campus for face-to-face interviews sooner rather than later.
• Use remote interview methods (video chat, etc.) for first-round interviews instead of conducting interviews at conferences, as conference attendance is costly.
• Ask candidates from underrepresented groups whether they would like to talk with Brandeis faculty from underrepresented groups as a part of their interview process.

The Selection
• Discuss the criteria that matter most and are most closely tied to the job description.
• Credit DEI work as part of the criteria for selection.
• Consider scholarship or research that is unconventional or non-traditional, especially when it challenges the foundations of the field. This is how disciplinary innovation happens.
• Many skills are transferable; they may be acquired through volunteer, non-academic, or alternative work experiences.
• Do not underestimate demands of community service and the impact on production.