Constructing Inclusive Job Advertisements in Faculty Hiring:

Literature Review

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
Faculty of Education

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Acknowledgements

The University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus is located on the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the xwməθkwəy'əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) and səl'ilwətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples, and the Okanagan campus situated on the unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Nation.

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Introduction

With the emergence of focus on faculty diversity, a growing area of scholarship on equity in faculty hiring practices has emerged. Underscored as a critical component of institutional efforts to increase faculty diversity, faculty hiring processes are an important area to analyse the effectiveness of translating institutional equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies into practice. The goal of this review is to survey a set of best practices that can inform writing inclusive job advertisements in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia.

This literature review focuses on extant reports and documents on practices and suggestions to promote inclusivity when constructing job advertisements in faculty hiring. Following the review of current literature, is a section on *good* and *bad* examples related to suggested practices in making job advertisements inclusive.

In keeping with the goal of identifying best practices, literature included in this review is limited to the last 5 years of scholarship. Much of the literature in this small, but growing, area of inquiry is based in the United States, which is a limitation of this literature review. However, given the similarities in the United States and Canadian faculty hiring contexts, many findings and recommendations within these studies may also be useful in our context at the University of British Columbia. There is a lack of peer-reviewed research articles on inclusive job ads. Therefore, most of the research cited in this literature review comes from analyzing documents published by academic institutions.

Project Background

The Faculty of Education (FoE) has completed the second year of a two-year pilot initiative to enhance Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in faculty hiring practices. This initiative was designed to align the faculty hiring practices in FoE with the goal of the UBC's Inclusion Action Plan (IAP) of "recruiting for EDI skills and competencies." As part of this initiative, each applicant was required to submit a diversity statement and to complete a mandatory Employment Equity Survey (EES). EES responses were monitored during the application period to ensure a balanced

representation of equity-deserving groups in the applicant pool. In addition, when a search committee was struck, unit Heads/Directors were asked to provide a rationale on how the search committee membership represented area expertise and EDI goals in the unit. Additionally, search committees received an orientation and were provided with an EDI evaluation rubric which was then embedded in the search criteria. These steps were designed to ensure that all applicants, including those from equity-deserving groups, are more fairly considered in all stages of the hiring process, therefore maximizing opportunities for members from these groups to be hired. EDI practices such as these benefit the FoE and UBC communities by diversifying the faculty complement and constitute a multifaceted response to incorporating EDI perspectives in faculty hiring that align with the strategic and inclusion plans of the FoE and UBC. Now that the pilot project has come to a close, this literature review is part of concluding efforts to further enhance the current EDI practices in hiring process through promoting inclusivity in the hiring process through job advertisements. This review is partially funded by the UBC Equity Enhancement Fund.

Considerations for Writing Inclusive Job Advertisements

Attracting Equity Deserving Groups

An ideal job advertisement should incorporate diverse language, requirements, and information throughout the ad to highlight the ways the department is committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, decolonization (EDID), and antiracism (Swarthmore, 2022). Job advertisements should articulate a meaningful and specific commitment to overcoming systemic violence that have historically excluded underrepresented communities from tenure-track academic positions (UBC, 2021). The job description is the primary component that candidates will review to determine if they are qualified for the position advertised (Brown University, 2022).

The language of the job description has the power to dissuade or attract applicants from diverse communities. Sensoy & DiAngelo (2017) explain that institutions often default to privileging general rather than specialist job descriptions because institutions assume it will allow for a more diverse

array of applicants (pp. 562). This sentiment assumes that generalists are neutral, even though everyone teaches from a specific disciplinary standpoint (pp. 562). Dominant groups are consistently overrepresented in "neutral" or generalist ideology, especially in disciplines perceived as "non-political" (pp. 563). The job description could correct this imbalance by seeking a specialist in a field that minority groups are often well-represented within. Columbia University (2016) and Brown University (2022) suggest asking how the job description may attract scholars who contribute to diverse research outside the dominant group.

Coded Language

The specific pronouns, adjectives, and nouns used in a job ad can encourage or discourage diverse applicants. Thomas et al. (2021) highlight that research suggests LGBTQ, Transgender, Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, and disabled communities are less likely to apply for jobs based on the language used in the advertisement. Job advertisements often contain gender-coded language and masculine-coded characteristics (Government of Canada, 2018). When referring to the applicant, use gender-neutral pronouns such as "they/them" or gender-neutral referents such as "scholars," "academics," or "candidates" (Government of Canada, 2018). Avoid prioritizing traits that could traditionally fall into masculine or feminine categories (Government of Canada, 2018). Thomas et al. (2021) and Vancouver Island University (2022) explain that masculine-coded characteristics such as driven, confident, assertive, ambitious, competitive, active, analytical, decisive, determined, dominant, independent, or objective could deter women, gender minority groups, and gender non-conforming groups from applying. In contrast, research shows that feminine-coded language has little effect on cisgender, heterosexual men who consider applying for a position (VIU, 2022). Many institutions suggest running the ad through a gender decoder, such as the gender decoder by social psychologists, Daniel Gaucher, Justin Friesen, and Aaron C. Kay, to prevent using gender-exclusive or masculine-coded language (UBC, 2020; Government of Canada, 2018; VIU, 2022). Furthermore, Sensoy & DiAngelo (2017) explain that other language, such as "urban," "inner city," or "disadvantaged," could signal an "uncritical ideological paradigm" to minority applicants (563).

Distinguish Between Preferred and Required Criteria

It is essential to limit the required criteria as much as possible in the job ad because marginalized groups are much less likely to apply for a job that they don't have 100% of the required skills or experience (The University of Texas San Antonio, 2021; Government of Canada, 2018; Swarthmore, 2022; VIU, 2022; Thomas et al., 2021; Brown University Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, 2022, pp. 1-2; University of Delaware Advance Institute, 2021, pp. 3). There are many reasons why applicants may lack experience or have gaps in their academic records, such as taking leave, systemic barriers, and unconscious bias (Government of Canada, 2018). Shifting experience requirements criteria necessitates developing a broad definition of the position, desired experience, and disciplinary background (University of Delaware Advance Institute, 2021, pp. 3). When developing criteria for applicants, be sure to use "preferred" or "should" instead of "required" or "must" whenever possible (University of Delaware Advance Institute, 2021, pp. 3). Avoid using language like "qualified" in conjunction with "experience" because it suggests that candidates are only qualified with experience (Government of Canada, 2018). Thomas et al. (2021) explain that you highlight your commitment to inclusion by limiting requirements. Many racialized and minority applicants have non-traditional experiences and career paths due to institutional barriers and systemic racism, therefore, changing requirements to include other lived experiences is important (Brown University Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, 2022, pp. 1). When defining the minimum education required, consider an equivalent combination of education and experience (VIU, 2022). Additionally, The Canada Research Chairs Program (2018) recommends focusing on more than just a strong publication record because this disqualifies oral and community-based engagement and community service. Relying too strongly on publications disqualifies many Indigenous scholars who base their research within Indigenous methodologies and ways of knowing (Government of Canada, 2018). Open the criteria to document the trajectory of experience outside of traditional academia to assess excellence that fully recognizes and rewards multiple areas of research and experience, such as community service, Indigenous knowledge systems, mentoring, and professional service (Government of Canada, 2018).

Highlighting Commitment to EDID

The University of British Columbia's Department of Psychology (2021) notes that their equity statement appeared uninspired, generic, and vague when reading over their job postings. To address this quandary, they recommend that the job ad shows rather than tells institutional and departmental commitments by mentioning initiatives that advance inclusion, diversity, anti-racism, and decolonization (UBC, 2021). Sensoy & DiAngelo (2017) similarly explain that the job ad should address departmental EDI actions and operations rather than just stating that the department "promotes diversity." The job ad should also include information on the institutional commitment to diversity, community resources, EDI policies, and accommodation/family resource policies (Government of Canada, 2018; Brown University Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, 2022, pp. 1). The job posting should acknowledge if the department lacks representation (Government of Canada, 2018). Before posting a job ad, an EDI expert and those with diverse expertise should review and approve it to assist in guaranteeing this commitment (Government of Canada, 2018; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

The department should regularly update the equity statement copied into job advertisements to ensure that it applies a comprehensive understanding of diversity (Government of Canada, 2018). When forming or editing the equity statement, check if the institution has recommended or required language and follow that, but you may want to include specific departmental language to convey departmental priorities (University of Delaware Advance Institute, 2021, pp. 3). It is important to include institution and departmental equity statements in the job ad; however, the advertisement should gesture more explicitly to the department's commitment to equity and diversity (University of Washington College of Environment, 2022; Case Western Reserve University, 2022; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, pp. 558). Case Western Reserve University (2022) explains that institutional EDI statements do not necessarily suggest inclusivity as they often include legal language (or "legalese"), which could deter diverse communities from applying. Legal language conveys that the institution does not authentically care about diversity by describing inclusivity as only a legal matter (Case Western Reserve University, n.d.). Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) explain job ads that "encourage" or "invite" marginalized groups to apply are ubiquitous because, in Canada, publicly

funded universities are legally obligated through the Employment Equity Act to include statements in their job advertisements that emphasize a commitment to equitable hiring practices. Therefore, it is necessary to form a statement in personable and operationalized language of the department's commitment to inclusion (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, pp. 558).

Information for Disabled Communities

Including accommodation needs in the job ad signals a commitment to supporting disabled populations. The University of Washington (2022) suggests including health plans available and whether this insurance covers spouses, partners, or dependents. Swarthmore (2022) explains that the job ad should include a disability accommodation statement using the language normalized by your institution as well as information for applicants who need accommodation in the application process, which would consist of the name, unit name, and phone number of a person who can provide this accommodation. Vancouver Island University (2022) suggests adding a "physical requirements" section to the job ad, which would describe the physical needs of the position but not the employee's abilities, such as "remain in a stationary position, use a telephone, move around work site without an elevator." In this section, the position's physical requirements should be considered carefully.

Overview

- Though there is little literature on the importance of inclusive language in the job ad, these short articles provide important insights. The following points summarize this review's findings:

- Integrate language and actions of diversity throughout the job ad, rather than as a singular gesture.

- Use inclusive and ungendered pronouns and language such as "all genders," refer to the applicants as "scholars," or use the gender neutral "they/them."

- Limit applicant requirements and focus on preferences.

- Use inclusive preferences and requirements to account for the trajectory of experience outside of academia, such as community service, Indigenous knowledge systems, mentoring, and outreach.

- Require applicants to address their EDID experience in their application.

- Refrain from posting a job ad for a general hire which usually attracts dominant, white scholars. The committee should ask how the job description may attract scholars that contribute to diverse research.

- Operationalize commitment to diversity and inclusion in the job ad, rather than just stating that the department "promotes diversity."

- Add a "physical requirements" section to the job ad which would describe the physical needs of the position but not the scholar's abilities.

- Focus on abilities over experience in the job ad when at all possible.

- Include a specific and personal commitment to equity and diversity rather than the legal requirement of all publicly funded university job ads in Canada.

Best and Worst Practices

Much of the literature on constructing inclusive job advertisements include lists of best and worst practices for doing so. The following includes some of these examples:

- Attracting Equity Deserving Groups

  o Best Practice: Refrain from using a general job description, consider a call for a specialized hire: "We seek candidates whose research, teaching and/or service has prepared them to contribute to our commitment to engagement and inclusion

of culturally diverse audiences in higher education, and particularly in the anti-racist pedagogy" (University of Washington College of Environment, 2022)

- o Worst Practice: Encouraging X, Y, Z communities to apply without including diversity anywhere else in the ad: "Women, minorities, individuals with disabilities, and veterans are encouraged to apply...the University of X does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status" (University of Washington College of Environment, 2022).

- Coded Language

  - o Best Practice: Use "scholar," "applicant," or "they/them" pronouns: "The successful candidate must demonstrate their ability to work with and be sensitive to the educational needs of diverse populations" (University of Texas at San Antonio, 2021)

  - o Worst Practice: Attempting to encompass pronouns: "The successful candidate must demonstrate her/his ability to work with and be sensitive to the educational needs of diverse populations."

- Distinguish Between Preferred and Required Criteria

  - o Best Practice: Whenever possible, limit requirements: "MINIMUM REQUIRENTS: Demonstrated commitment to valuing diversity and contributing to an inclusive working and learning environment, Two years of experience in diversity related programs OR equivalent education/experience, High school graduation or equivalent" (University of Washington, 2022).

  - o Worst Practice: Too many "traditionally academic" requirements: "Applicants for a position as Assistant Professor should have a Ph.D. and/or M.D. degree, 3-5

years postdoctoral experience, and a strong record of scholarly activity. Candidates for more senior positions should be nationally recognized scholars and have a strong, externally funded research program" (Case Western Reserve University, 2022).

- Highlight Commitment to EDID

  o Best Practice: Require a diversity statement: "(To apply, send...) A diversity statement: a brief statement on how your teaching, research and/or service contribute to diversity through scholarship or by improving access to higher education for underrepresented individuals or groups" (University of Washington College of the Environment, 2022)

  o Worst Practice: A broad, impersonal statement with legalese: "The University of X is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status or sexual orientation" (University of Washington College of the Environment, 2022)

Information for Disabled Communities

Best Practice: Accommodate disabled communities by highlighting the physical requirements of the job: "work involves: Remaining in a stationary position in front of a computer, using aa keyboard, mouse, and telephone. Regularly operate a computer and other office equipment. Occasionally move about the work site to access file cabinets, office equipment, etc." (Vancouver Island University, 2022)

Worst Practice: Avoidance of disability when mentioning information that may be important for disabled populations: "The University offers partner benefits" (Case Western Reserve University, 2022)

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