

## Interview Tool Kit

### Purpose

1. Assist faculty in improving merit-based hiring processes.
2. Address unconscious bias to improve reliability and validity of the interview process.

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# Scenarios

## *How would you respond to the following situations?*

### **ONE**

During one of the interview breaks, one of your colleagues gestures to the candidate's gold ring and asks, "Is your wife an academic, too? If so, we can ask our department head about spousal hiring opportunities before you leave."

### **TWO**

Your department is interviewing a young female candidate. You see the schedule for her campus visit and notice that she has been scheduled for dinner at one of the most romantic venues in Tucson with a male faculty member who enjoys his nickname as "The King of the One-Night Stand."

### **THREE**

You are taking a faculty candidate to one of your favorite restaurants that is located in an historic setting. When you approach the entrance, the candidate sees the stairs and says, "Sorry, but I can't do stairs. Is there an elevator?" This is a historic property and there isn't one.

### **FOUR**

During a candidate interview, a colleague sitting next to the candidate turns to her and says in an almost menacing way, "You may not know this, but Carlos Santucci and I are former college roommates and he told me all about the sexual harassment charges you manufactured against him. Might we expect more of your antics here?"

### **FIVE**

Rounding up a dinner group for tomorrow night was a big challenge given that the University of Arizona is scheduled to play in the Final Four. You are relieved when a colleague offers to take the candidate to dinner himself, but distressed when you learn that the plan is to dine at a local sports bar with multiple TVs. Earlier in the day, you observed the candidate point to a promotional sign and ask, "Final Four of what?" so, you're fairly confident he won't be glued to the game.

### **SIX**

When you called the candidate to ask if she had any special needs during her interview days on campus, she mentioned that she was still breastfeeding and would need extended breaks and a quiet room every three hours or so. She asked if you could "quietly" arrange that. You built extended breaks into the schedule and even identified a room for her, but the last two meetings went long and the 11:00-11:30 break you scheduled didn't occur. It's now 11:35 and the candidate is five minutes late for her hour-long seminar, which will be followed by lunch with the graduate students.

### **SEVEN**

Your department often takes job candidates to a steakhouse that is a local favorite. A candidate looks thoroughly through the menu and when the waitperson arrives, says, "I'm a vegan, could you prepare a special meal?" The response: "Hmmm... how about a big plate of fries and an iceberg and tomato salad?"

**EIGHT**

A colleague at another institution informed you that one of your female candidates is in a long-term relationship with a woman. During the interview process, one of your colleagues goes on at length about the fact that the University of Arizona's health insurance benefits for families are among the least expensive in the country. Should you say anything about the University's lack of domestic partner benefits?

**NINE**

You've heard through the grapevine that a job candidate is the primary caregiver for his elderly father. You are currently caring for your elderly mother and have some tips and University resources that might be helpful should the candidate move to Tucson. Is it okay to raise the eldercare issue with him?

# Overview of Research Conclusions

## *Related to the Interview and Evaluation*

- *Interview more than one woman candidate and they will be evaluated more fairly (Heilman & Stopeck, 1980; Sackett et al., 1991; Valian, 1998).*
  - DO deepen the applicant pool.
- *Allowing sufficient time for evaluations increases accuracy and reduces gender bias (Bauer & Baltes, 2002; Blair & Banaji, 1996; Martell, 1991).*
  - DO allow enough time to read candidate materials and write notes about each.
- *Structured criteria for decision-making result in more accurate evaluations (Martell & Guzzo, 1991).*
  - DO have specific job-related hiring criteria that correspond to the interview process.
  - DO have a set of interview questions prepared in advance that relate directly to the position.
  - DO be consistent – use the same set of interview questions for each candidate.
- *Structured processes for recording observations increase accuracy and reduce bias; writing both positive and negative comments on each candidate is beneficial (Bauer & Baltes, 2002).*
  - DO standardize evaluation forms and refer to them in discussions regarding candidates.
- *Increased accountability reduces the effects of gender schemas and increases the accuracy in evaluations (Foschi, 1996; 2000; Foschi et al. 1994).*
  - DO take good notes during the interview process and ask others to do the same.
  - DO collect information in a systematic manner from various constituencies during and after each interview.
  - Ways to use standardized forms include:
    - Summarize the data from separate evaluators.
    - Have evaluators fill out forms and bring them to committee meetings in order to ground the discussion.

# Best Practices

**Campus Visits** - See the *UA Guide to Successful Searches* for more information.

1. DO treat all candidates well – they *will* tell others about their experience with your department.
2. DO tell candidates in advance exactly what type of presentation, job talk, seminar, or other demonstration of abilities will be required during the visit. Include details regarding expected audience and time allotted for each activity. Ask for equipment needs in each case and be sure to follow up.
3. DO ask candidates in advance about food likes and dislikes before planning restaurant meals.
4. DO think about making candidates comfortable. Consider choosing a guide/escort who has some similarities to the candidate (for example, junior level, gender, interests).
5. Do be consistent in creating candidate visit schedules, e.g. give each candidate sufficient time with key decision-makers and others.
6. DO think about having some diversity in a group taking a candidate to dinner.
7. DO consider having a candidate meet with someone from another department if your department doesn't have anyone with particular similarities (for example, have a woman candidate meet with another woman from a different but related department if your department is all male).
8. DON'T schedule a faculty member *only* with candidates of the same gender or race.
9. DON'T schedule one-on-one time between candidates and department members whom you don't trust to represent the department and/or treat candidates well.
10. DON'T keep a candidate up late after a long flight and prior to early meetings the next day.

## **Questions for Candidates' References**

### **Research:**

1. To what extent does the candidate work independently? To what extent does s/he participate and work well in research collaborations? With diverse collaborators?
2. Discuss the candidate's strengths and weaknesses as a researcher, including potential impact in terms of advancement of theory and methodology.
3. Discuss the quantity and quality of articles published and/or submitted. How many were done in a support role to a major advisor who provided hypotheses and/or methodology?
4. To what extent is the candidate capable of attracting funding for research?

### *Teaching:*

1. This person selected for this position will teach \_\_\_ sections of \_\_\_ students. How would you rate the candidate's expertise and experience with this type of class and course load?
2. Did the candidate inherit standard courses/syllabi to use in teaching his/her courses? To what extent did the candidate generate new materials or teaching methods?
3. How well did the candidate ensure that his/her curriculum was relevant to students with varied experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, and abilities? Comment on the candidate's ability to relate with different types of students.

### *Interviews - See the UA Guide to Successful Searches for a list of suggested questions.*

1. DO be consistent – Use a core set of interview questions and use for all candidates. Have interviewers pose all to each candidate or select Qs from the list.
2. DO ask questions about past performance.
3. DO take good notes during the interview process and ask others to do the same.
4. DO collect information from various constituencies during and after each interview.
5. DO tell candidates about promotion and tenure policies and university family friendly policies.
6. DO tell candidate about mentoring opportunities.
7. DO focus on every candidate's scholarship, qualifications, and potential academic role in the department. Avoid any subtle or overt indications that an interviewee is being evaluated based on gender or race. Women and minority faculty candidates wish to be evaluated for academic positions on the basis of their scholarly credentials. They already realize that their gender or race may be a factor in your considerations (University of Michigan Search Handbook).
8. DON'T ask the following questions (UA Guide to Successful Searches), and avoid any question unrelated to the job, many of which may be illegal.
  - \* Are you married?
  - \* How many children do you have living at home?
  - \* Do you plan to have children? Or, do you plan to have more kids?
  - \* What work does your spouse/partner do?
  - \* Have you ever been arrested (an arrest is different than a conviction)?
  - \* When did you graduate from high school?
  - \* Where were you born? Are you a U.S. citizen?
  - \* Is Spanish your first language?
  - \* Do you have any disabilities?
  - \* Will you require days off for religious holidays that UA does not observe?

## **Evaluating Interviews**

1. *Structured processes for recording observations increase accuracy and reduce bias. Discipline to write both positive and negative comments on each candidate is beneficial (Bauer & Baltes, 2002).*
  - a. Create a standard evaluation form to record data from interviews.
2. *Allowing sufficient time for evaluations increases accuracy and reduces gender bias (Bauer & Baltes, 2002; Blair & Banaji, 1996; Martell, 1991).*
  - a. Ask everyone to incorporate the standard interview questions into their meeting with the candidate.
  - b. Take good notes during the interview process and ask others to do the same.
3. *Increased accountability reduces the effects of gender schemas and increases the accuracy in evaluations (Foschi, 1996; 2000; Foschi et al. 1994; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Tetlock, 1983; 1985).*
  - a. Collect information in a systematic manner from various constituencies during and after each interview.

## **Candidate Selection**

1. Encourage a discussion format that requires contributions from all members. Asking each member of the committee to comment on a candidate ensures that a vocal minority does not dominate the discussion. This format also provides an incentive for everyone to “do their homework” (Columbia Best Search Practices).
2. *Rater accountability has been shown to increase the accuracy and objectivity of ratings (Mero & Motowidlo, 1995)*
  - a. Determine the best way to use evaluation forms:
    - i. Summarize the data from separate evaluators, or
    - ii. Have evaluators fill out forms and bring them to committee meetings to ground the discussion of candidates.

## **Negotiation**

1. Consider providing all candidates with a list of negotiables during the interview process.
2. Consider dual career needs: Female scientists are much more likely to be partnered with other scientists than male scientists. For example, *about 50% of married female physicists are married to other physicists, while only about 7% of married male physicists are married to other physicists (McNeil & Sher, 1999).*

# Sample Interview Questions

## *Identified Need*

Experience teaching large courses

A commitment to a diverse student body

Ability to manage conflict

Willingness to collaborate

Commitment to a civil workplace

Willingness to work across "status"

## *Potential Interview Question*

The person selected for this position will teach two sections of 200+ undergraduates. What strategies have you used or would you use to ensure a positive learning experience for everyone on the roster?

Tell us about your experience in supporting a diverse student body. Why does this matter, and how does one demonstrate commitment? How do you ensure that your curriculum is relevant to students with varied experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, and abilities?

The ability to manage conflict is an essential competency for this position. Describe a serious professional conflict you have experienced; how did you resolve it, and in retrospect, what would you have done differently?

Tell us about your most successful research partnerships.

Tell us about a time when you witnessed someone intimidating or harassing another person, or using hostile humor. What did you do? In retrospect, what might you have done differently?

If a research technician challenged one of your lab protocols, how might you respond?

# Systematic Data Collection

Use a simple form like the one provided below to ask evaluators to organize their thoughts. The search committee could collect these from all stakeholders. While one way to use such a form would be to summarize the data from separate evaluators, that is not the only possibility. If search committee members themselves simply filled out forms and brought them to committee meetings, it could ground the discussion of candidates in helpful ways. Research shows that systematic note taking in and of itself increases accuracy and reduces bias.



# Candidate Evaluation Tool<sup>1</sup>

Evaluator (check one):

Department Faculty

Graduate Student

Staff

Other Faculty

Undergraduate Student

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate's Name

Please indicate which of these are informing your evaluation (check all that apply):

Read candidate's CV

Met with candidate

Read candidate's scholarship candidate

Attended lunch or dinner with

Read candidate's letters of recommendation

Attended candidate's job talk

Other (please explain)

Please comment on the candidate's **scholarship**:

Please comment on the candidate's **teaching ability**:

Please comment on each of the following criteria:

*Include both pros and cons of qualifications.*

1. Potential for/evidence of scholarly impact

2. Potential for/evidence of research productivity

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<sup>1</sup> Note: This is a template to modify for your department's needs. This form was adapted from a format created by the University of Michigan (<http://sitemaker.umich.edu/advance/stride>)

3. Potential for/evidence of research funding
  
4. Potential for/evidence of collaboration
  
5. Fits with department priorities
  
6. Ability to make positive contribution to department climate and working environment
  
7. Potential/demonstrated ability to attract and supervise graduate students
  
8. Potential/demonstrated ability to attract and supervise undergraduates
  
9. Potential/demonstrated ability to contribute to the department and university communities

Additional comments:

## Frequently Asked Questions

*Q: Who should be on the candidate's schedule?*

A: Schedule each candidate with a variety of faculty and students in different venues. Some one-on-one meetings are appropriate, as well as informal roundtable talks with graduate students for example. Ensure people with similar interests and backgrounds are on each candidate's schedule. At the same time, make the schedules as consistent as possible.

*Q: Can we ask questions about the candidate's personal life?*

A: No. Even when your intention is simply to make small talk, this is not the right thing to do. The purpose of the job interview is to assess the candidate's professional capabilities and fit for your department. By discussing personal issues you may indicate that the answers are important and might influence your decision.

*Q: Do candidate schedules need to be identical?*

A: Candidates schedules should be very similar, and definitely equitable. This does not mean that the same faculty must take candidates to lunch or dinner. However, people of similar rank or status should host candidate meals. (For example, it would be inappropriate to send one candidate to dinner with two senior faculty members and the next candidate out with only graduate students.)

*Q: Isn't an interview a good time to assess how a candidate handles stress?*

A: Perhaps, but this does not mean it is useful to induce stress. Interviews are also a time to present your own department in the best possible light. You can safely assume the candidate is under stress through interviewing and giving a job talk. Your goal is to present the department in a positive light by striving to make the candidate comfortable.

*Q: Why should I bother about a candidate to whom I'm sure we won't make an offer?*

A: First, you don't have a crystal ball. Perhaps the rest of your department will see the candidate more positively than you do. However, even if you are right, you should strive to give the candidate the best possible experience with your department. Perhaps this year's candidate who isn't up to snuff is best friends and colleagues with next year's job market superstar. We all have heard horror stories about candidates being treated poorly. Don't make your department the subject of such a story.

*Q: Why should I tell everyone about family friendly policies, when I know a candidate is single with no kids?*

A: First, telling everyone ensures consistency of treatment for the candidates. In addition, you don't know whether or not this information is important to a candidate based on future plans (nor should you ask). Even a candidate who doesn't see a need for family friendly policies may care about this as part of the overall climate.

*Q: How are we supposed to get faculty to fill out the kind of rubric that has them roll their eyes when it is recommended for evaluating student performance?*

A: You may try referring to the relevant social psychological research that shows that structured processes increase accuracy in assessment and reduce bias. Depending on your department, you may be able to persuade based on an appreciation for the scientific method and data analysis.

Q: *Is there anything we can actively do to eliminate subtle bias?*

A: Yes.

- Familiarity with relevant research is a good start (Moskowitz et al., 1999).
- But, trying to suppress unconscious *activation* of stereotypes by NOT thinking about them does NOT work, and results in stereotype rebound effects (Devine, 1989).
- However, stereotype *application* to decision-making can be attenuated (Bargh, 1994; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Moskowitz et al., 1996).
  - a. Having the intention to evaluate fairly and accurately can reverse the effects of stereotypes when cognitive constraints are low (Blair et al., 2001; Blair & Banaji, 1996).
  - b. A strong commitment to egalitarian goals can be activated and used preconsciously to prevent stereotype activation (Moskowitz et al., 1999).

## Resources (links)

**The Inappropriate Question:** [http://www.ade.org/cgi-shl/docstudio/docs.pl?bulletin\\_120036](http://www.ade.org/cgi-shl/docstudio/docs.pl?bulletin_120036)

**Legal Issues for Faculty by Ann D. Springer (American Association of University Professors):**  
<http://www.aaup.org/Legal/info%20outlines/04issues.htm>

**What We Waste When Faculty Hiring Goes Wrong, by Kevin J.H. Dettmar:**  
<http://chronicle.com/free/v51/i17/17b00601.htm>

**UA Guide to Successful Searches – Candidate Visits:**  
[http://www.hr.arizona.edu/01\\_rec/searches/searchguide\\_visits.php](http://www.hr.arizona.edu/01_rec/searches/searchguide_visits.php)

**UA Guide to Successful Searches – Applicant Screening:**  
[http://www.hr.arizona.edu/01\\_rec/searches/searchguide\\_appscren.php](http://www.hr.arizona.edu/01_rec/searches/searchguide_appscren.php)

**Rice University ADVANCE Women Faculty Database:**  
Database of Senior Graduate Students and Post-doctorates in STEM fields:  
<http://www.advance.rice.edu/database> (username: facultysearch. password: women07)