Hiring Practices in the Division of Academic Affairs (non-college units)
May 2014

Executive Summary

The Academic Affairs Climate and Diversity Committee (AACDC) convened three subcommittees in Fall 2013 to review existing hiring practices in use by division supervisors and how those relate to best practices the AACDC had been exploring. This review was done to address both AACDC's charge and as a follow-up to a recommendation in the division's 2012 Climate Survey report related to exploring best practices in recruitment, hiring and retention. The primary source of data was a representative sample of NOVs proportionally distributed across all units that hired new staff between March and September 2013. These three subcommittees reviewed notices of vacancy, interview questions, and hiring matrices used in 29 hiring situations that resulted in new hires for the division. The goal of the subcommittees was to review practices in use. There was no attempt to connect the processes to the results since each hiring situation and office diversity situation is different. Hiring supervisors are deemed the most knowledgeable about identifying the best candidate from the hiring pool to fit their office needs.

Generally, the subcommittees found that there are opportunities to consider whether notices of vacancy, interview questions and hiring matrices could better reflect the division's commitment to diversity and engage applicants in early discussions about their commitment to and experience with diversity.

Among the recommendations made by these three subcommittees are the following:

- Hiring managers should be encouraged to review, and include in position descriptions/postings, the language in an existing Texas A&M University Human Resources document entitled "Increasing Diversity in the Hiring Process."

- It would be useful to describe, during the hiring process, the different groups of people that the applicant might expect to have contact with in the course of the job and ask applicants to imagine what challenges they might have with each group as well as with what group(s) they might have most experience.

- Considering all positions in the Division involve interacting with the general public and/or colleagues from different walks of life, all matrices should address diversity experiences, as Texas A&M is an institution that strives to be inclusive, welcoming, and supportive of individuals from all groups, "encompassing the various characteristics of persons in our community. The characteristics can include, but are not limited to: age, background, citizenship, disability, education, ethnicity, family status, gender, gender identity/expression, geographical location, language, military experience, political views, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and work experience." Source: http://diversity.tamu.edu/WhatsDiversity/Definition.aspx.

Overview

The Academic Affairs Climate and Diversity Committee (AACDC) has, as one of its charges, researching best practices and strategies for continuous improvement related to recruitment, hiring, selection, retention and promotion of groups identified in the University Diversity Plan. In addition, this was a recommendation in the 2012 Academic Affairs Climate Survey. Division Diversity Accountability reports (available on the AACDC website) documenting the diversity in the division show that the Division excels in some areas, remains steady in others, and has some areas for which supervisors are actively seeking more diverse applicant pools, understanding that "diversity" may be defined differently across offices or workgroups. Therefore, AACDC's goal is to help identify ways to attract more diverse applicants.

The first step of this process is to gather information to identify actual practices in use as a way to identify what tools may be added to existing processes to enhance the diversity of applicant pools. The below assessment matrix identifies key concepts, specific questions to be explored, and the means to gather information related to these questions. Also under consideration is a supervisor survey that will be informed by these initial data reviews and potentially implemented in Spring 2014. Following this, in the summer of 2014, AACDC will host a meeting of division supervisors, a recommendation in the climate survey, to share this information and provide an opportunity for discussion about these issues across the division.

During Fall 2013, reviews led by AACDC members were conducted of existing hiring processes noted on the matrix below. Subcommittee members were invited to participate by these leaders from among Academic Affairs division staff members. The three subcommittee reports were submitted to the AACD Steering Committee in November and December 2013. Subcommittees did not look at the results of a hiring process; in all cases, AACDC is confident that hiring supervisors selected the best candidate for each position from their applicant pools.

Assessment Matrix

Question	Measure	Lead AACDC subcommittee member
1. Do NOVs use language that encourages diverse candidates to apply?	Direct – pull sample of NOVs for analysis using a rubric	Rojo Del Busto
2. How long are NOVs open?	Direct – pull data from TAMU Jobs for X period of time	Rojo Del Busto
3. Are our applicant pools diverse before interviews begin?	Direct – review EEO data for the unit	Harper
4. Do interview questions address diversity experience or issues?	Direct – analyze sample hiring files	Harper
5. Do hiring matrices address diversity experience or issues?	Direct – analyze sample hiring files	Starnes
6. Do reference check questions address diversity experience or issues?	Direct – analyze sample hiring files	Starnes

Selection of Files for Review

Steering Committee Member Lee Starnes, from Academic Affairs Business Services (AABS) facilitated access to Academic Affairs Division NOVs, related posting data, and appropriate elements of hiring files. The review considered the previous six months of hiring records, from both the TAMU Jobs and PATH systems. Staff in Data and Research Services recommended a 45% sample size based on the type of data and scope of the project. Therefore, of 67 posted NOVs that were completed in the past six months in the Division of Academic Affairs, 29 were randomly selected for review (using the randomize feature in Excel), maintaining appropriate representation from those departments who posted at higher rates than others over the time period being observed, early March – September 2013 position closure dates. In all but two cases, the positions were filled. These two NOVs were cancelled. See details below:

Total Postings By Department:

Department Code	Number of Postings	Percentage of Total
AABS	1	1.49%
ADMI	20	29.85%
APDF	5	7.46%
APHU	1	1.49%
CARC	2	2.99%
IDIV	2	2.99%
ISS	2	2.99%
ITAS	11	16.42%
ODRS	2	2.99%
OGS	2	2.99%
OOIA	1	1.49%
REGI	7	10.45%
SABR	4	5.97%
SFAOP	6	8.96%
UWC	1	1.49%
TOTAL	**67**	

Sample Size:	45%
Sample Postings:	29
AABS	0
ADMI	9
APDF	2
APHU	0
CARC	1
IDIV	1
ISS	1
ITAS	5
ODRS	1
OGS	1
OOIA	0
REGI	3
SABR	2
SFAOP	3
UWC	0
Total	**29**

Subcommittee Report: Lead – Mario Rojo Del Busto

The charge of the subcommittee was to 1) see if the NOVs used language that encouraged diverse candidates to apply, and 2) what was the length of the posting. Subcommittee members were Mario Rojo Del-Busto, Mary-Kathryn Moss, Deb Warren, Frances Nelson, and Carolyn Sandoval.
The subcommittee met on two occasions. Lee Starnes, from AABS, provided the subcommittee with the NOVs to analyze, a rubric, and a chart reflecting the total number of days the NOVs had been posted. Each subcommittee member analyzed the language of a set of NOVs and provided comments.

1. **Findings: Do NOVs use language that encourages diverse candidates to apply?**

    The language that existed, for the most part, was that which is mandated to be included, i.e., equal employment opportunity language. It appears that any reference to diversity within a NOV was embedded in the type of position and field of work that was posted. Specific, intentional language tailored to attract diversity, was absent.

2. **Findings: How long are NOVs open?**

    Forty-five percent (45%) of the positions remained opened for 10 days or less. This data could signify that these postings may have been internal targeted hires. To determine if there is a correlation between a diverse pool of applicants and number of days the position was posted, it would be necessary to assess the composition of the applicant pool for some of these postings as they relate to the number of days the position was opened.

Recommendations:
- Hiring managers should be encouraged to review, and include in position descriptions/postings, the language in an existing Texas A&M University Human Resources document entitled "Increasing Diversity in the Hiring Process."

- Hiring managers should also be encouraged to ensure diversity language is included at the point of updating the position description before its posting.

- It may be prudent to consider providing a listing of resources from other institutions with helpful tips to increase diversity.

Subcommittee Report: Lead – Kristen Harper

The charge of the subcommittee was to 1) see how diverse applicant pools are before interviews begin and 2) determine whether interview questions address diversity experience or issues. The subcommittee members included Kristin Harper, Bari Brookins, Jamaica Pouncy, Margarette Goss, Candace Schaefer, Jonathan Kotinek, and Jess Junek.   All reviewers had experience with the hiring process. Each of the interview questions was reviewed by two staff members to ensure reliability.

3. **Findings: Are our applicant pools diverse before interviews begin?**
Within the applicant pools for the 29 positions reviewed, there was an overrepresentation of White applicants (364). Race and ethnicity data for all positions in these pools are summarized below.

Race and Ethnicity Breakdown for 29 Reviewed Positions	
	Total
Hispanic/Latino	114
White	364
Black or African American	69
Asian	45
American Indian or Alaska Native	4

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0
Two or More	13
Not Disclosed	121

Within this applicant pool, there was also an overrepresentation of 404 female applicants compared with 218 male applicants. Significantly, there were 88 applicants who chose not to disclose their gender.

Gender Breakdown	
Women	404
Men	218
Not Disclosed	88

A further breakdown of ethnicity by gender also indicated an overrepresentation of White women (239), followed by a total of 113 White male applicants, as compared with smaller numbers of all other ethnicities, delineated in the chart below. Significantly, there were 82 applicants who chose not to disclose their race/ethnicity and gender.

Race and Ethnicity Breakdown By Gender for 29 Reviewed Positions			
	Women	Men	Not Disclosed
Hispanic/Latino	66	42	2
White	239	113	3
Black or African American	45	22	0
Asian	21	22	0
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	0	0
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0	0
Two or More	9	2	1
Not Disclosed	20	17	82

4.   Findings: Do interview questions address diversity experience or issues?

A total of 29 positions were reviewed, 10 of which included questions regarding diversity. Overall, 12 different diversity questions were asked. Below are examples of the questions asked, along with explanations about how the question addresses diversity.

Questions Which Address Diversity	How does Question Address Diversity
Describe a current event that has occurred within the last month and discuss its impact on student's planning to go abroad?	Forces applicant to consider how cultures may clash.
How has living or working abroad impacted your life? How do you use your experiences to inspire students to go abroad?	Applicant must discuss impact of another culture on their life.

What do you believe are the main obstacles facing first-generation, low-income students on their path to college?	Addresses diversity of student population that candidate could/would be working within which 1st generation/low-income.
What experiences do you have working with young people and/or diverse populations?	Directly addresses experience in working with diverse student populations.
What barriers do you see to recruiting an underrepresented student population at TAMU- with consideration to the area this position services?	Asking the candidate about skills/challenges in recruiting underrepresented populations indicates ability to work with diverse student populations.
How would you convince an underrepresented or first-generation college student about to [apply for higher education, to attend] college at TAMU?	Speaks to the ability of candidate to communicate with diverse applicant pool.
Talk about your ability to work with and for diverse groups of people.	Asks applicant to rate self on ability to work with or for diverse groups of people.
What kind of experience have you had working with others with different backgrounds than your own?	Has applicant considered their own culture; compare it against others.

Recommendations:

- Ask hiring committees to take a look at not only the diversity in their own staff, but also consider diversity in the populations they serve. It might be appropriate to ask all of our candidates (both permanent staff and student worker staff) to talk about their experiences in working with diverse populations, since our clients are incredibly diverse.
- Encourage hiring committees to remember that hiring diversity internally doesn't quid pro quo translate into a passion for serving diverse populations.
- It would be useful to describe, during the hiring process, the different groups of people that the applicant might expect to have contact with in the course of the job and ask applicants to imagine what challenges they might have with each group as well as with what group(s) they might have most experience.
- Consider whether there should be a minimum of at least one or more generalized questions, relating to diversity, during the interview with an applicant, such as; "Tell us about a working environment you experienced that is diverse in nature"

Subcommittee Report: Lead – Lee Starnes

The charge of the subcommittee was to 1) see if the hiring matrices for NOVs addressed diversity experience or issues, and 2) see if the reference check questions addressed diversity experience or issues. The subcommittee members included Lee Starnes, Melony Ponzio, Lindsay Gasek, and Irene Scott. Each of the sets of hiring matrices and reference check questions was reviewed by three staff members to ensure reliability.

5. Findings: Do hiring matrices address diversity experience or issues?

The number of postings in which no subcommittee member found any reference to a hiring matrix item that addressed diversity was 14 of the 29. The number of postings in which at least one subcommittee member identified an item that addressed diversity was 15 of the 29. However, because each matrix was reviewed three times, there were some differences in the number of postings in which a majority of subcommittee members identified an item that addressed diversity: 13 of 29. Therefore, overall, the findings, based on percentage of hiring matrices that addressed diversity experiences or issues are as follows:

Diverse Items in Hiring Matrices Identified by Subcommittee Members	Total Matrices Reviewed with this Characteristic
No findings identified by any subcommittee member	48.28%
At least one finding identified by one subcommittee member	51.72%
Findings identified by a majority of subcommittee members	44.83%

From the postings in which at least one subcommittee member identified an item that addressed diversity experiences or issues, the majority of the 24 items were related to speaking another language, with Spanish identified 5 of the 8 times. All items identified are listed in the table below.

Item that Addressed Diversity Experiences or Issues	Number of Postings in which this Item Appeared
Bilingual (some specifying Spanish)	8
International experience/international travel, work or living experience	3
Veterans Preference	2
Provide services for people of diverse backgrounds	2
Diverse groups/population experience	2
Former Foster Child Preference claimed	2
Customer service experience, particularly with graduate/international students	1
Knowledge of African diaspora	1
Experience developing international programs outside a study abroad context	1
Multicultural and/or international experience	1
Understanding of diversity-related issues	1

6. Findings: Do reference check questions address diversity experience or issues?

A total of 29 positions were reviewed; only one included a question regarding diversity. This question was "Describe [applicant's] effectiveness in working with diverse groups of individuals." It is significant

that virtually all reference checks reviewed used the standard Texas A&M Human Resources reference check form.

Recommendations:

- Considering all positions in the Division involve interacting with the general public and/or colleagues from different walks of life, all matrices should address diversity experiences, as Texas A&M is an institution that strives to be inclusive, welcoming, and supportive of individuals from all groups, "encompassing the various characteristics of persons in our community. The characteristics can include, but are not limited to: age, background, citizenship, disability, education, ethnicity, family status, gender, gender identity/expression, geographical location, language, military experience, political views, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and work experience." Source: http://diversity.tamu.edu/WhatsDiversity/Definition.aspx.

- While the level of diversity-based criteria may be influenced by the department and position there is room for some generic observation of diversity experience in all positions under the umbrella of Academic Affairs; therefore, there should be hiring matrix items and reference questions that ask about diversity. This could be a bank of questions from which supervisors choose and weight items that best fit positions. In addition, there may be several fixed questions that could provide a degree of consistency among applicants. For example, an item such as "Experience working with a diverse group or team of coworkers or customers". Such questions could be provided in Human Resource standard materials supporting these processes.

- Suggestions for Hiring Matrix items that would address diversity experiences and issues could include items like the following:

  a. Multicultural and/or International Experience
  b. Experience providing services for people of diverse backgrounds
  c. Ability to speak another language
  d. Understanding of diversity-related issues

- The subcommittee was divided in its suggestions for Reference Questions. One member indicated it may not be the correct forum to address diversity issues owing that the purpose of a reference check is to determine whether someone is a good worker and eligible for rehire. Others felt that there should be items added that would address diversity experiences and could include items like the following:

  a. Describe your company's mission and values related to diversity
  b. Describe ways in which the Applicant has furthered his/her knowledge about diversity
  c. Describe ways in which the applicant has contributed to efforts to create an inclusive environment for diverse groups/individuals different from his/her background.
  d. Describe how the Applicant has handled a situation in working with or serving diverse individuals.

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