DIVERSIFYING_APPLICANT_POOLS

As stated in the Appalachian State University Strategic Plan 2008-2012, “We accept our responsibility to be actively involved in addressing the educational, economic, cultural, and societal needs of the changing region, state, nation, and world.” To this end, Appalachian is motivated to work diligently to create an optimal living and learning environment that will better prepare students to be active citizens and leaders in a diverse and global society.

Beyond the characteristics of race, religion and culture, a preponderance of empirical research indicates that nearly all students learn best in educational environments in which all aspects of human diversity are represented. Notable dividends accrue on campuses where other defining aspects of diversity such as veteran status, sex, color, political affiliation, sexual orientation, disability, national origin, gender identity and expression, and creed are integral in both the academic and environmental contexts. These expansions of learning and consciousness include not only increased cultural awareness, but enhanced growth and development in the areas of leadership, creativity, critical thinking, ability to work and solve problems cooperatively, and interpersonal skills. (Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Milem, & Allen, 1999).

If the context of diversity is moved from an isolated goal to a learning outcome, one that is woven through all other learning outcomes, the positive results are then steeped throughout the fabric of the institution. Through the implementation of Appalachian State University’s 2008-2012 Strategic Plan and the General Education Curriculum, Appalachian actively promotes diversity among students and employees, and is committed to deepening its applicant pools by attracting diverse, qualified individuals.

A diverse faculty attracts a diverse student body. A diverse workforce, especially one supported by a solid equal opportunity policy and a commitment to diversity and inclusion by the institution, presents a multiplicity of views and experiences crucial to a premier education. Therefore, central to the depth and quality of intellectual life at Appalachian is recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty. Appalachian is committed to offering robust support in the form of institutional policies and various initiatives.

The following information, strategies and resources are provided to assist search committee members in taking affirmative steps during the hiring process to deepen applicant pools and enhance Appalachian’s ability to boost simultaneously the quality and diversity in the faculty.

Appalachian’s Commitment – Institutional and Departmental

As stated as a core value in the Appalachian State University Strategic Plan 2008-2012, the University supports a culture that promotes diversity, shared responsibility, and mutual respect.

The General Education “Local to Global Perspectives” theme enables students to:

- Demonstrate the ability to think critically and creatively about the relationship between local regions and global issues, processes, trends, and systems, and
- Employ appropriate and increasingly sophisticated means for communicating with people of other cultures.

Strategies

Many of the strategies listed below may be applied as written; however, departments and positions have varying unique characteristics, and the examples offered may be revised to fit individual circumstances and needs.

Ongoing Departmental Considerations

Effective recruitment is a year-round process. Affirmative outreach efforts are directed proactively toward cultivating the most talented and diverse applicant pool possible. The development of an amplified network of readily accessible and diverse contacts has proven to be valuable in the identification of a highly talented applicant pool. Constant networking and recruiting encourages a consistently deep pool of potential candidates.
To create an environment for successful recruiting:

- Develop a mission statement that clearly articulates a commitment to the educational value of diversity, and incorporate it visibly into your web pages and printed materials.
- Establish, encourage, and support proactive recruitment activities to assist search committee members in their search for diverse pools of qualified applicants and a competitive pool of finalists. Proactive recruitment activities include the following:
  - allow ample time for recruitment activities;
  - visit other institutions and network with colleagues to identify junior faculty from underrepresented groups at Appalachian; send them job announcements;
  - recruit while participating in conferences;
  - contact your alma mater to request names and contact information of potential candidates, both upcoming PhDs and others interested in moving laterally;
  - maintain an ongoing list of talented Appalachian graduates and keep in contact with them throughout their graduate school careers;
  - develop a list of individuals who can help you identify potential candidates such as recipients of fellowships and awards;
  - utilize professional contacts. The best candidate for the job may not be actively looking for a new position. A personal communication from a search committee member to inform a potentially highly qualified individual about the position, along with a personal invitation to consider submitting an application, can be most effective.
- Create and maintain a list of publications, journals, periodicals, list serves, institutions and other resources for outreach that target professionals from diverse populations. This eliminates the need for each search committee to regenerate such a list and creates a forum for sharing knowledge and resources. (http://edc.appstate.edu/recruitment-resources)
- Create a standard departmental presentation that faculty may use on visits to other institutions. A well-developed presentation that promotes Appalachian’s commitment to instilling diversity values in its students and employees will communicate a positive and consistent message to potential applicants.
- Maintain contact with candidates who chose not to accept positions at ASU, as they may provide superior connections if their on-campus experience was positive.

Writing the Position Description/Job Advertisement

The preparation of a detailed job announcement that clearly articulates an interest in all qualified applicants is a significant first step in attracting a diverse applicant pool.

- Research demonstrates that if the position announcement contains language that directly encourages individuals from underrepresented groups to apply, the likelihood of a more diverse applicant pool increases.
- Use inclusive language throughout the ad to signal your department’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. Explain how diversity in the job being announced will enhance the mission of the University.
- Write position descriptions as broadly as feasible to expand the acceptable disciplines, fields or specialties of potential applicants.

Examples of inclusive language to use within the document:

- Appalachian State University has a strong commitment to the principles of diversity and inclusion, and to maintaining working and learning environments that are free from all forms of discrimination.
- In support of its commitment to inclusive excellence through diversity and equity, the
university strongly encourages applications from women, minorities, individuals with disabilities, veterans and members of other underrepresented groups.

• Appalachian State University seeks candidates who are interested in contributing to the diversity and excellence of the academic community through their research, teaching, and outreach.

• [Department Name] particularly encourages applications from candidates who have experience working with students from diverse backgrounds and a demonstrated commitment to improving access to higher education for students from populations underrepresented at Appalachian State.

• The University is committed to building a culturally diverse educational environment.

• Candidates with a commitment to working in a culturally competent environment are especially valued at Appalachian.

• Particularly encouraged to apply are:
  o Persons with life experiences unique to student and faculty populations underrepresented at Appalachian State University;
  o Individuals with experience in a variety of teaching methods and/or curricular perspectives;
  o Applicants with demonstrated success in working with diverse populations of students;
  o Individuals with an interest in developing and implementing curricula related to culturally diverse populations;
  o Applicants with a demonstrated ability to develop initiatives designed to foster a greater consciousness of diversity.

Include a statement in the position description that provides the opportunity for applicants to state their commitment to inclusion:

  o Applicants should describe how multicultural issues have influenced and/or been a part of their teaching, research, and/or outreach.

The Search Committee

To the extent that it is feasible and consistent with the criteria for membership in search committees and Departmental Personnel Committees (DPCs), hiring administrators should endeavor to include individuals from underrepresented groups, as well as individuals who are committed to and/or have experience with enhancing inclusion and diversity in the University community. At times it is advisable to include a member from a related or even unrelated department or unit, as committee members who are well versed in or sensitive to the importance of faculty and staff who have experience with diverse populations may play a constructive role in the search process. In addition, search committee members should:

  o recognize that all individuals have their own biases which may not be related to the quality of a candidate. The search committee member should consciously ensure that these biases do not impact the search and the review of applicants.
  o be proactive and consult with the Office of Equity, Diversity and Compliance (EDC) with any questions they may have.
  o consult their academic department’s Equal Opportunity Associate (EOA) when needed.

Develop a Recruitment Plan/Advertise the Position

Developing a recruitment plan is one of the most vital aspects of the search process. The inclusion of a broad spectrum of recruitment strategies in the plan will yield a more diverse pool of qualified applicants.


• Utilize department and college faculty availability data to increase recruitment to improve underutilization. (http://edc.appstate.edu/faculty-availability-data).

• EDC automatically posts all EPA job announcements in three (3) online locations - Appalachian State University HRS, The Chronicle of
Higher Education and the North Carolina Employment Security Commission. It is highly advisable for departments/units to post additional advertisements in journals, websites and/or list serves that are likely to reach significant numbers of applicants who are members of underrepresented groups in that academic discipline or area of professional expertise. If a review of previous applicant pools reveals a trend of low applications from one or more underrepresented groups, place an ad in publications that target those underrepresented groups.

An effective recruitment plan utilizes multiple, simultaneous recruitment strategies, including the following:

- Place job announcements in national and regional publications, professional journals, newsletters, and email lists.
- Make contact with point persons at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), http://www.edonline.com/cq/hbcu/advdeg.htm of HBCUS.html, at the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), www.hacu.net, and with personnel from other institutions that serve groups who are underrepresented at Appalachian, as well as those from institutions that enroll significant numbers of doctoral and terminal degree students from underrepresented groups. For information on possible recruitment outlets, please review http://edc.appstate.edu/recruitment-resources.
- Send job announcements to: faculty members or graduate students at minority-serving institutions, organizations that work on minority issues, groups within organizations, such as minority caucuses in national scholarly associations, personal contacts in the field who are likely to know promising graduate students or other potential applicants.
- Request that colleagues and administrators on your search committee participate in the search process by sharing their alma maters’ contact information and identifying the most appropriate contacts there.
- Ask colleagues who support scholarships for outstanding diversity graduates and ABD candidates to refer talented candidates to the search committee.
- Target diverse candidates from “non-traditional” areas such as professionals with corporate backgrounds. Search non-academic journals and job sites for potential candidates. Many professional organizations maintain directories of minority professionals.

On Campus Visits

Campus visits provide a unique opportunity to showcase your departmental/unit commitment to diversifying the faculty and workforce. Committee members have an opportunity to provide insight into departmental research and teaching that is of particular interest to the candidate. A well-organized, well-hosted, candidate-centered campus visit puts the candidate in a position to make a well informed decision on whether Appalachian State is the right place for her/him.

Elements to support a successful campus visit:

- Send an itinerary and an information packet about Appalachian and the High Country to the candidates as far in advance of their visit as possible.
- Establish procedures and selection criteria for screening and interviewing candidates. Be cognizant of varying cultural perspectives that applicants and candidates may have, and remember to be aware and sensitive to any cultural biases you may have.
- Afford candidates time to discuss any circumstances, special requirements, or needs such as information about partner/spouse benefits with a person not involved in the selection process.
- Prior to on-campus visits, ask candidates if there are individuals or a particular group they would like to meet with during their visit in order to better familiarize themselves with the campus and community climate. Provide opportunities
for all candidates to meet with diverse Appalachian faculty and staff.

- Contact EDC at 828-262-2144 for a list of individuals who are well versed in diversity matters. The EDC director will gladly assist search committees by meeting with candidates and/or by facilitating a meeting with particular members of the community who share experiences and/or characteristics of note with candidates.

- Schedule opportunities for the candidate to consult with faculty with similar scholarly and/or professional, interdisciplinary interests. Highlight Appalachian’s many strengths and upcoming initiatives.

- With all candidates, discuss Appalachian’s diversity resources. Share information about diversity efforts, such as the many cultural events offered through the Lee H. McCaskey Center for Student Involvement and Leadership (CSIL), the Office of Multicultural Student Development, the Arts at Appalachian, the annual Diversity Celebration, the work of EDC and the Office of Disability Services, and cultural resources offered throughout our local and broader communities. (http://edc.appstate.edu/recruitment-resources).
  - Speak Respectfully and yet with candor about Appalachian’s weaknesses or areas that need improvement and efforts that are underway to address such matters.

- Schedule meals and other social time with a variety of Appalachian administrators, faculty, staff and students. Provide all attendees with information about the candidates - candidates notice the attention to personalized detail.

- Distribute evaluation forms to everyone involved in the campus visit, and consider the responses provided during the search committee’s discussion to select a final candidate.

- Select the candidate whose overall qualifications and experience will best meet the needs and goals of the department/unit.

- Reimburse candidates for all expenses associated with the campus visit as soon as possible after the on-campus visit.

References


UCLA Faculty Diversity & Development, Faculty Search Committee Toolkit, 2008-2009.
