

# **AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**

## **Equitable and Inclusive Hiring of Faculty**

**A Guide for Full-Time Faculty Searches**

Simply put, we cannot be excellent without being truly inclusive. All of us—every faculty, staff member, student, alumnus, and board member—must recognize our personal stake in making it a reality.

*Plan for Inclusive Excellence, American University, p. 4*

American University is deeply committed to a diverse faculty. All faculty appointments must be consistent with the university's commitment to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and nondiscrimination. Teaching units and academic units must demonstrate that they have vigorously taken steps to fulfill those commitments.

*AU Faculty Manual, Sections 9 & 14*

MISSION: To advance knowledge, foster intellectual curiosity, build community, and empower lives of purpose, service, and leadership.

VALUES: » Integrity » Excellence » Human dignity » Community » Diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusive excellence » Free inquiry and seeking truth » Impact.

*Changemakers for a Changing World, AU's Strategic Plan, p. 4*

Goal 1, Action Step 3: Develop and launch recurring inclusive hiring training for senior leadership, staff managers, and faculty search committee chairs.

Goal 4, Action Step 4: Continue efforts to diversify faculty hiring and retention, especially for those from historically underrepresented groups, to advance excellence in intellectual engagement, scholarship, and research.

*Plan for Inclusive Excellence, Phase Two*



# INTRODUCTION

Building and sustaining a world-class faculty body at a university requires care and attention in inclusive excellence in multiple processes, from search and hiring to welcoming, onboarding, reappointment, tenure where relevant, and promotion. *Equitable and Inclusive Faculty Hiring: A Guide for Full-Time Faculty Searches* focuses specifically on the first steps in that chain—faculty search and hiring—while



# **MODULE 1: AUTHORITY TO SEARCH**

## **STEPS**

**1.1 Identify Needs for Faculty Lines**

**1.2 Submit Requests to Provost**

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# **Step 1.1 Identify Needs for Faculty Lines**

Each fall semester, your dean's office works with teaching unit chairs to request new or continued faculty positions ("lines"). As a first step in this process, teaching units need to articulate

## **Step 1.2 Submit Requests to Provost**

Final decisions about line allocations—including field, area, and rank—rest with the provost and DOF, who consult with academic units and consider overall university academic needs, including possible gaps or redundancies and potential collaborations among units.

Authorizations include both vacated positions (due to retirements or resignations) and new line requests. Vacated positions automatically revert to the provost for reauthorization, reallocation to another unit, or elimination.

In the case of previous tenure-line searches that were not successful, the search is typically







# **MODULE 2: THE SEARCH COMMITTEE**

## **STEPS**

**2.1 Form Search Committee(s)**

**2.2 Co-construct the Committee's Norms of  
Engagement**

**2.3 Develop Search Plan/Recruitment Plan and  
Submit for Approval**

## Step 2.1 Form a Search Committee

Your dean's office will work with relevant teaching unit heads to appoint a committee chair with strong leadership skills and a commitment to inclusive excellence and invite colleagues to serve on the search committee. Committees typically consist of 3-5 members.

A single committee may run multiple searches within the unit if those searches involve the same category of faculty (tenure-line or term). Different committee compositions are needed for tenure-line and term searches.

### *TASKS*

**Teaching unit head will:**

- D. Appoint a diversity advocate (DA)<sup>1</sup> on each search committee whose job is to:
  - Advise on cultivating broad sources for developing the applicant pool.
  - Facilitate conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion within the committee to build awareness and intentionality.
  - Help answer questions raised by training, etc.
- E. Some teaching unit guidelines call for student representation.

## *Thinking Ahead*

A growing practice in higher ed is the establishment of a single “standing search committee” (SSC) authorized

## **Step 2.2 Co-construct Search Committee Norms**

Initial meetings of the search committee offer opportunities to clarify goals and values and establish norms of working together.

### ***TASKS***

5. Co-construct norms for collaborating and creating brave spaces to promote discussion and interactions. This includes:
  - Striving for intellectual humility.
  - Being willing to grapple with challenging ideas.
  - Differentiating between opinion—which everyone has—and informed knowledge, which comes from sustained experience, study, and practice: Hold your opinions lightly and with humility.
  - Letting go of personal anecdotal evidence and looking at broader group-level patterns.
  - Noticing your own defensive reactions and attempting to use these reactions as entry points for gaining deeper self-knowledge.
  - Recognizing how your own social positionality (e.g., race, class, gender, sexuality, ability) informs your perspectives and reactions.
  - Differentiating between safety and comfort: Accept discomfort as necessary for social justice growth.
  - Identifying where your learning edge is and pushing it: For example, whenever you think, “I already know this,” ask yourself, “How can I take this deeper?” ([Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2014](#))
6. Discuss and agree on “ground rules” and procedures in advance of reviewing files. These may include:
  - Expecting every committee member to explain their judgments thoroughly based on relevant information in the application file. The creation of bra-1 f-1 (o)2 (s)p( a)-nt am



- B. Priming helps nurture equity-mindedness, which engages the core questions of why inequities exist and how the racialization of institutional practices sustains these inequities (McNair, Bensimon, & Malcolm-Piqueux, 2020). Equity-mindedness, in turn, should inform the committee's discussions about norms of engagement and collaboration.
- C. The following questions (adapted from [Ross 2015](#)) can help surface biased thinking and spur intentional countervailing efforts. Each committee member can ask themselves:
  - Does this applicant's resume remind me in any way of myself, or someone I know, either positively or negatively?
  - Which elements of the application are most strongly influencing my overall impression? Are they relevant to the job, or tangential?
  - What have I already concluded about this application? Are these judgments grounded in solid information or are they more impressionistic?
- D. As a committee, think about how to involve as many relevant faculty in your unit as possible at various steps in the search process to build colleagues' engagement and investment in the search and to maximize input to candidate evaluations.
- E. Do not shy away from intra-committee discussions of implicit bias, but keep in mind that managing such internal discussions is challenging.
- F. Remember, also, that discussing DEI values with job candidates involves a separate skill set from intra-committee discussions.
- G. Watch for announcements of training opportunities for faculty search committees. New resources are being developed at the campus level.
- H. Building equity-mindedness and developing skills in bias interruption takes time and requires practice. Not surprisingly, results are stronger when all members of the search committee receive training and not just the chair.
- I. Note how use of a single standing search committee (SSC) affords greater opportunity for search committee members to develop these skills. See Step 2.1.

## *Research Insights*

Research findings confirm what many of us know intuitively: academic hierarchies exert powerful influence on behaviors in faculty settings (Cowin et al., 2012; Young et al., 2015). Within the context of established power dynamics and hierarchical structures, we can expect these dynamics to surface in search committees.

“In order for search committees and department members to effectively—and, more importantly, skillfully—lead proactive conversations about diversity and inclusion with candidates, they need preparation, practice, and support” (Harder and Taylor 2018, p. 14).

Search committee diversity is not a magic bullet for avoiding bias. Gender stereotypes, for example, are so pervasive throughout society that both men and women serving on faculty search committees have been found to commit cognitive errors based on unconscious biases in favor of male applicants ([Steinpreis, Anders, and Ritzke 1999](#)).



- B. Add items to your Search Plan as the process proceeds and new ideas emerge about how and where to proactively recruit. Adding ideas to the search plan in real time will make it a more useful document for informing future searches.
- C. Consider less orthodox sources of potential candidates. Examples include law firms, private firms, funding agencies, government entities, arts groups, NGOs, international bodies, etc., where experts with JDs, PhDs, MFAs, and other terminal degrees may be interested in moving from practice to academia on a tenure or non-tenure track.
- D. For term faculty searches: Recognize that tighter timeframes make active recruiting more difficult. To mitigate this problem, maintain candidate databases across term searches and reach out to people on those databases in subsequent searches.
- E. For both term and tenure-line searches: Develop intentional year-round recruitment and talent-spotting strategies for the long term.

Recruit postdoctoral researchers from diverse backgrounds and encourage them to apply for tenure-line openings.

Invite outside faculty to be guest speakers (virtually or in person) and be sure to consider individuals from historically marginalized groups.

Actively encourage teaching unit colleagues to:

- Make connections at conferences with potential future candidates, including individuals who identify as members of historically underrepresented groups;
- Maintain their own diverse lists of impressive grad students, faculty at other institutions, and practitioners with academic ties; and
- Share these lists with search committees.

Generate lists of potential recruits from multiple backgrounds based on authors found on course syllabi in the relevant teaching programs.

Actively encourage teaching unit colleagues to diversify and center equity in their own research/creative/professional networks as a step toward improving their own work while also contributing to AU's inclusive search and hiring goals.

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# **MODULE 3: RECRUITMENT**

## **STEPS**

**3.1 Establish Criteria for Assessing Candidates**

**3.2 Develop and Submit Position Announcement**

**3.3 Actively Recruit to Generate a Diverse  
Applicant Pool**

(Note benefits of undertaking Steps 3.1 and 3.2 concurrently.)



strengths and weaknesses. Instead, they redefined the criteria for success at the job as requiring the specific credentials that a candidate of the desired gender happened to have” (p. 474). While the participants expressed confidence in the process and “felt that they had chosen the right man for the job, ... in fact they had chosen the right job criteria for the man” (p. 479).

The same study also found that when evaluators committed

## 3.2 Develop and Submit Position Announcement

Drafting the position announcement (sometimes called the “job ad” or “ad copy”) provides an opportunity not only to describe the position and its requirements factually, but also to proactively “market” the opportunity in a way that is likely to reach and attract the widest array of qualified candidates.

### *TASKS*

#### **Full search committee will:**

1. Draft the position announcement/job ad, which should include:
  - Date when applications will begin to be reviewed
  - EEO statement (included automatically in the online posting).

#### **Search administrator will:**

2. Send the position announcement, with the search plan/recruitment plan (see Step 2.3), via your dean’s office to the DOF for review.
3. Record the date the search plan/recruitment plan and position announcement receive DOF approval. Use the *Faculty Applicant Data Report* form.

### *TIPS*

- A. Define the position as broadly as possible, consistent with the program’s needs, to expand the number of candidates from diverse backgrounds and perspectives who apply.
  - Breadth can apply to rank, field specialization, courses to be taught, and previous experience preferred or required.
- B.







## Step 3.3 Actively Recruit to Generate a Diverse Applicant Pool

Once the DOF has approved both the Search Plan/Recruitment Plan and the position description, it is time to implement the plan.

At the beginning of each Fall semester the DOF places a university-wide (omnibus) advertisement listing all AU tenure-line vacancies in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, and *Hispanic Outlook*. Costs of these ads are split among the units. These ads do not replace individual ads, but rather serve to showcase the range of tenure-line faculty positions available at the University. The DOF coordinates the compilation of the ads early in the Fall. Units must be prepared to answer queries about all advertised positions by the time the omnibus ads appear in print.

### *TASKS*

**Full search committee will:**

1. Begin to im3(a)6(ITT0 1 Tf1.Tj/y/TT0 1 Tf.001 Tc-.001 Tw001 Tw5.6mlc)1(o)es01 Tw(Dodmlc)1(1.)Tj(o)10aT

9. Do the “retail” work: Reach out to individuals as their names are suggested, and if they express no interest, ask them for further suggestions.

Once the pool is complete, the **chair of the search committee or designee will:**

10. Work with relevant administrators to record the demographic information required in 7c

# **MODULE 4: INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS**

## **STEPS**

**4.1 Develop a Scoring Rubric**

**4.2 Review Applications**

**4.3 Select Short List and Submit for Approval**

**4.4 Select Interview List and Submit for Approval**

# 4.1 Develop a Scoring Rubric

A rubric is not a magic solution, but, if used carefully and equity-mindedly alongside other promising practices, it can help evaluators focus on relevant attributes and reduce opportunities for ad hoc, idiosyncratic, and biased judgments. Rubrics can also make evaluation processes more efficient. Rubrics should capture the criteria identified in Step 3.1 and reflected in the position description (Step 3.2).

## *TASKS*

**Full search committee will:**

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- Candidates with aggregate scores above the committee's threshold and those with scores above the threshold on specific rubric items merit detailed discussion.
- E. Be sure to apply the same criteria to every candidate and use the agreed weights consistently.

## *Research Insights*

## **4.2 Review Applications**

The hallmarks of a fair review process are consistency and germaneness. This step requires discipline on the part of search committee members to stay focused on the criteria developed

## 4.3 Select Short List and Submit for Approval

A short list of candidates is the first product of the careful, focused work from Step 4.2 followed by a holistic and open-minded discussion of applications within the search committee as laid out in this step. The dean and DOF must approve the short list.

### *TASKS*

#### **Full search committee will:**

1. Share all results of the scoring exercise from Step 4.2.  
If criteria are assigned weights, corresponding scores should be weighted accordingly in any overall summation and in the holistic discussion.
- 2.



D. If the committee struggles to agree on the shortlist:

Try to determine if committee members are implicitly weighting component scores differently. If so, revisit the weighting scheme and seek consensus on whether to confirm it, modify it, or (worst-case scenario) drop it.

Consider engaging an outside facilitator (from CTRL or elsewhere in the University) to help members work through disagreements.

## *Research Insights*

Researchers have consistently demonstrated a tendency for search committee members to insert their own idiosyncratic preferences into their evaluations of candidates (White-Lewis 2020).

Nonetheless, strategies are available to check biases

## 4.4 Select Campus Interview List and Submit for Approval

The search committee recommends candidates (usually 3 or 4) to the dean for interviews. Following approval of the dean, the DOF must approve each candidate on the list before any interviews or visits are scheduled.

### *TASKS*

#### **Full search committee will:**

1. Gather additional information to inform assessment of the candidates on Step 4.3's short list.  
If this includes preliminary ("airport-type") interviews, please look carefully at Step 5.1.
2. Again, use a "wide-angle lens" and a holistic perspective to assess candidates on the short list.
3. Agree on 3-5 candidates to be invited for campus interviews.

#### **Chair of search committee will:**

4. Work with relevant administrators to record the demographic information required in Table (C) "Campus Interview List" of *Faculty Applicant Data Report* form.

#### **Search administrator will:**

5. Submit --

# **MODULE 5: INTERVIEWS and CAMPUS VISITS**

## **STEPS**

**5.1 Plan and Conduct Equitable and Inclusive  
Interviews**

**5.2 Plan and Conduct Equitable and Inclusive  
Campus Visits**  
(where campus visits are applicable)

**5.3 Follow Up**

## 5.1 Plan and Conduct Equitable and Inclusive Interviews

Interviews enable search committees to gather further information relevant to making a strong hiring decision. Well-planned and well-run interviews also provide candidates with a favorable experience that may affect their later decision to accept an offer from AU, if one is extended.

Preliminary interviews may be used to move from the official, approved “Short List” to the shorter “Campus Interview List.” Campus interviews are more extensive than preliminary interviews. Please note that both types of interviews should follow the inclusive practices listed below.

When interviews are due to occur during a campus visit, also see best practices for campus visits (Step 5.2).

### *TASKS*

Throughout the process, the chair of the search committee should meet with each candidate

During the interviews, **full search committee will:**

6. Consistently follow procedures laid out above in each interview. Don't let biases creep into processes.
7. Provide candidates with a realistic timeline for follow-up and clear next steps.

After each interview, **full search committee members will:**

## 5.2 Plan and Conduct Equitable and Inclusive Campus Visits

(where campus visits are applicable)

The campus visit offers an important opportunity for two-way information exchange between the candidate and the campus community beyond the search committee. It is a required step for hiring in tenure-track and tenured positions.

### *TASKS*

Before the campus visit, **chair of search committee or designee will:**

1. Assign a point person to handle logistics and shepherd candidates through the visits.
2. Work with the point person to arrange full schedule, including breaks, and confirm all meetings with expected AU attendees, including meals.
  - Candidates for tenure-track positions must
    - o Meet with the search committee, students, all faculty in the teaching unit or academic unit, the teaching chair or program director, the dean, and the DOF. (In addition, consider whether your unit-level DEI leader should also meet with candidates)
    - o Make a public presentation on their scholarly work. (Be sure to advertise these talks widely to faculty and students.)
  - In addition to the above points, candidates for positions with tenure must meet with the provost. (Note: please plan to schedule meetings with the DOF and Provost through their administrative assistants as soon as possible to avoid scheduling challenges.)
3. Send the schedule to the candidate as early as possible.
4. Communicate to candidates that spouses, partners, and significant others are invited to join the visit.
5. Ensure that the flow of communication with each candidate is prompt, informative, and welcoming as the visit is being planned. This includes asking candidates:
  - What they might need for a successful visit (such as time alone before a job talk, time between meetings to check in with family, etc.)
  - If there are people they would like to meet, facilities they would like to visit, or resources they would like to learn more about during the visit.
8. Monitor consistency in treatment of candidates by committee members and other faculty and staff.
9. Establish a system for members of the community to provide input based on their interactions with candidates.
  - Candidates' talks should be evaluated in writing by all attendees, including students, staff, and faculty.

During the visit, **full search committee will:**

10. Create a welcoming environment for each candidate and their significant others.

11. Consistently follow all agreed procedures with each candidate.
- 12.

## 5.3 Follow Up

Keeping candidates engaged throughout the search and hiring process is critical for maintaining equitable processes and producing a successful outcome. Ongoing communication with candidates should be coordinated to hit the sweet spot—not too much and not too little.

### *TASKS*

After interviews and campus visits, the **chair of the search committee or designee will:**

1. Follow up with the candidate.  
Try to answer any questions that emerged after the interview/visit. Where applicable, put the candidate in touch with others at AU who might have additional answers or insights for the candidate. The DOF is an important resource for answering a wide array of questions. Ask about the candidate's experience at AU. Elaborate on positives and address any negative reactions without defensiveness.
2. Send follow-up communication to keep candidates engaged as final decision-making steps proceed.

### *TIPS*

- A. Thank the candidate for frank input and emphasize AU's commitment to continuous improvement.
- B. Individual search committee members should not communicate with candidates privately before offers are extended. All communication with candidates should be shared with the committee.

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# **MODULE 6: FINAL SELECTIONS and OFFERS**

## **STEPS**

**6.1 Evaluate and Make Final Selections**

**6.2 Obtain Final Approvals**

**6.3 Develop, Extend, and Negotiate Offers**

# 6.1 Evaluate and Make Final Selections

This is where all your hard work in modules 1-5 comes together.

## *TASKS*

### **Full search committee will:**

1. Perform reference checks for all candidates who receive offers.  
At least 3 references are needed for each candidate. References should address:
  - Academic work and future promise
  - Teaching experience
  - Character and working relationships with colleagues.If candidates are being considered for appointment with tenure, there should also be at least 3 off-list reference checks that probe the same issues. Before any off-list calls are made, search committees must notify the candidate and obtain authorization. In unusual cases, when the teaching unit requests, the DOF may waive the requirement for off-list reference calls.
2. Assemble all available information from the process and discuss each candidate based on the evidence record.
3. Select one finalist and identify other candidates who may be elevated to that position if the finalist either is not approved or declines an offer.
4. Take minutes of meetings to document the decision-making process and rationales for decisions (as always).

## *TIPS*

- A. Avoid discussion detours that veer off toward attributes such as personality.
- B. Avoid common pitfalls in hiring selection processes, such as those in Table 1.



## 6.2 Obtain Final Approvals

Please remember that the DOF must give final approval before any offer, written or verbal, is made to the finalist. In cases where the new hire will come with tenure, the provost must give final approval.

Note: All checklists for new full-time faculty hires are available on the DOF's page on the MyAU portal. Log into the portal and go to: Academics > Dean of Faculty > Full-Time Faculty Searches.

### *TASKS*

**Chair of search committee will work with relevant administrators to obtain approvals as follows:**

1. Submit finalist's file to your dean for approval.
2. If the dean approves the finalist, recommend the finalist to the faculty of the hiring unit for a vote according to AU and unit voting procedures.
3. If faculty vote in favor of the finalist, send the candidatty01 Tw

## 6.3 Develop, Extend, and Negotiate Offers

Congratulations to the search committee on reaching this milestone. The center of gravity now shifts toward the teaching unit head and dean's office.

The DOF and dean should discuss the candidate's credentials and salary offer, as well as start-up funding where applicable.

### *TASKS*

When developing the offer:

1. Consider where the candidate's experience places them within the advertised salary range.
2. Consider current salaries of faculty similarly positioned.
3. Do not ask for the candidate's current or most recent salary, or their salary history. This can perpetuate systemic bias.
4. Decide in advance if there is room for negotiation.
5. Decide in advance whether relocation and or start-up funding will be offered. Please refer to the "[Spending Policy for Faculty Start-Up Funds and Institutional Support Funds](#)" as well as the "[Relocation Allowance Policy](#)".

When extending and discussing the offer:

6. Be sure to inform the candidate about AU benefits and provide a link to the relevant website.
7. If the candidate requests a written statement, the dean may provide a summary of the recommended offer. The summary must be accompanied by a statement of the University's policy that only the DOF or provost may approve final appointment terms.
8. According to federal law, all candidates offered positions must be asked whether they are authorized to work in the United States.
9. If the candidate does not respond promptly to the offer, give them a set deadline (such as number of days) to accept or decline.

Once the finalist has been offered the position:

10. They are now referred to as the "recruit" rather than the "finalist."
11. Congratulatory phone calls or messages from other faculty can communicate the enthusiasm of the teaching unit and help the recruit feel welcome, which may increase their likelihood of accepting the position.

### *TIPS*

Recruits may have a wide variety of topics on their minds beyond the expectations of the job. These include housing, family leave, childcare, school options, and spousal/partner employment. In addition, many recruits may have concerns about belonging and the potential for isolation, possible

excessive work burdens, or whether local communities offer accessible social/cultural activities of interest.

Because many recruits are reluctant to raise topics like these, the teaching unit and dean's office should signal broad openness and responsiveness. Questions raised by a recruit should be answered as quickly and completely as possible. The DOF is a resource for assistance in responding to such questions.

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# **MODULE 7: CLOSE OUT**

## **STEPS**

**7.1 Close Communication Loops**

**7.2 Manage Search Records**

**7.3 Conduct a Debriefing**

## 7.1 Close Communication Loops

This moment in the search process offers an opportunity to enhance AU's reputation in the higher education sector by treating all job candidates with the utmost care and respect, which includes keeping them informed about the search and hiring process.

### *TASKS*



## 7.2 Manage Search Records

American University's policy on "[Records Retention and Disposal](#)" requires originating units to comply with the following rules:

Academic search plans and statements are to be retained for three years after the search is completed.

Academic search records are to be retained permanently for the successful candidate.

9

## 7.3 Conduct a Debriefing

Please resist the temptation to move on immediately after the hire is secured (or the search is halted for any reason). This moment in the process offers enormous opportunities to document lessons learned and