

Deliberations of a Search Committee

Faculty

Professor #1: Professor Christian Breaker

Professor #2: Professor Patricia Skye

Committee Chair: Professor John Danson

Scenario One

This is a meeting of the search committee. The chair of committee reports back what is expected of them after he has met with the Department Chair. This search committee is composed of three full professors of a Computer Science and Engineering department. Two are male, and one is female; the two males are European American and the woman is African American. They are considering over 200 CVs for one newly created tenure-track position in their department.

Professor John Danson (Committee chair): I met with the department chair yesterday. There is concern that this university isn't as diverse as the population in this state and search committees are attracting extra scrutiny. We followed the College of Engineering's handbook on successful recruiting techniques for hiring diversely. Now we have to proceed carefully in whittling these applications down to a short-list. I suggest we continue to follow the handbook we were given.

Professor Christian Breaker: I don't understand why our standards for intellectual merit are under attack. I'm here to hire the best person for the job, not help the administrators at this place with some kind of quota system.

Professor Patricia Skye: With enough time we might be able to follow this long laundry list of strategies. But we have to get offers out to the best folks before other schools snap them up!

Professor Christian Breaker: And besides that, we don't have the money that Stanford and Harvard have to woo diverse candidates!

Professor John Danson (Committee chair): We don't have a choice. The dean wants an unranked list of candidates before approving invitations to interview on campus.

Professor Patricia Skye: I agree we need to diversify this department. Our graduate students are concerned about this issue too – I hear about it all the time. However, I think we need to ask the dean for more money for resource support here. I don't have the time to implement all the recommendations here like arrange special meetings across campus for minority interviewees and call all references before even finalizing the short list. As the solo faculty of color in the department, I am overloaded as it is.

Professor John Danson (Committee chair): I understand you are busy. But I also know that we also are losing first year undergrads from the program and if we don't change the culture around here, attrition will continue. So why don't we start by developing selection criteria and then we can ask for help as we need it.

Professor Christian Breaker: Fine. Anything to move beyond this bleeding heart talk. I'll pick my favorite candidates and let you two pad the pool with women and minorities.

Questions:

1. What is this search committee doing well to insure that a broad selection of candidates will be considered fairly?
2. What is happening that may inhibit all candidates from being fairly considered?
3. Please list the concerns expressed by the professors and explain what you believe is motivating these concerns.
4. Toward what goals is the department chair guiding this faculty search? What other steps could be taken so that search committee members can achieve these goals?

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Professor #1: Professor Christian Breaker
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Final Candidates:

Angela
Raúl
Roger
Aaron

Scenario Two

This search committee is composed of three full professors of a Computer Science and Engineering department. Two are male, and one is female; the two males are European American and the woman is African American. They are considering four final candidates for a newly created tenure-track position in their department. Three of the candidates are male, one is female; two of the male candidates are European American, the other is Mexican American; the female candidate is European American.

Professor Christian Breaker: A couple of these candidates are really strong but I have reservations about Raúl and Alison or whatever her name is.

Professor John Danson (Committee chair): Angela. What are your reservations?

Professor Christian Breaker: Well Angela is the only one without a PhD from Carnegie Mellon or MIT. She seemed excessively nervous during her job talk too. Let's drop her and go with the best. Raúl has the right school on his CV but 2 of his 5 published papers are on social issues, not science and engineering.

Professor Patricia Skye: Those papers relate directly to CSE and discuss real conditions for underrepresented groups in computer science. I consider those papers an asset to his candidacy. And we decided that this meeting would focus on discussing all candidates' qualifications before making any decisions. Angela's alma mater has a strong program and she has received recognition for her teaching. Let's consider all angles.

Professor John Danson (Committee chair): I agree. Let's go through the criteria we came up with last meeting and rate each candidate. We need to give a report on our process at the faculty meeting next week. How will Aaron fit with our department's needs? Since Bruce retired, we have not really had a specialist in Graphics and Animation.

Professor Christian Breaker: Aaron's perfect. He taught a class on Graphics and Animation and I hear his work in that area is original! I know, because he trained with Jim Mayflower at Carnegie Mellon who is a good friend of mine. Plus, he got his start in the military like me. When I took him out to dinner during his visit, I could tell it gave him character.

Professor John Danson (Committee chair): Teaching a class does not make one a specialist. I do like that he has experience, though I find Roger's work to be more cutting-edge.

Professor Patricia Skye: Aaron was a programmer in the Gulf – so what? And you took him out to dinner and not any of the other candidates? Is this a meeting of the old boys club or are we trying to do what's best for the department?

Professor Christian Breaker: I don't know about you but I've worked hard for what I've got and I did it the old fashioned way. No one had to make excuses for me. I know the rules and I play to win. I like Roger too. MIT is my alma mater and I know he got a good solid start. Just look at all the money NSF threw at him. I think he will fit in easily here.

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Professor John Danson (Committee chair): Raúl received the ACM Doctoral Dissertation Award and Angela is co-PI of the collaborative grant with UC Berkley to broaden participation in computing. I keep hearing about that project.

Professor Patricia Skye: And Angela is the only one who has already published in the best journal in her field. Besides, we need another woman in this department. I've been the only one since Charlotte left four years ago. The last three new hires have been white men. It's time we moved into the 21st century.

Questions

1. Which of the committee's actions will contribute to candidates being fairly considered?
2. What is happening that may decrease the likelihood of candidates being fairly considered?
3. Please list the concerns you have about this deliberation process and explain what you, as a department chair, would do to improve the process going forward.