

## Interrupting Bias in the Academic Search Process

---

- Before the Search
  - Form a diverse search committee; consider an equity advocate
  - Develop a formal charge with details about the role, deadline for search, etc.
  - Decide on voting procedure (unanimous or majority? open or confidential?) and review process (rubrics, meeting norms, etc.)
- Sourcing Candidates
  - Review minimum requirements and decide which are genuinely required
  - Review the job description for gendered or non-inclusive language
  - Use the 2<sup>nd</sup> person to describe responsibilities: “You will be...” rather than “He/She will be...”
  - Ensure your job advertisement and the department website includes text and images that promote an inclusive environment
  - Develop lists of nominees (potential candidates) and nominators (potential sources for candidates). The larger and more diverse you make these lists, the better.
  - Expand posting locations to include minority-focused professional networks and publications (NSBE—National Society of Black Engineers, SHPE—Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, SWE-Society of Women Engineers)
  - Review the Ph.D. distribution in your field compared to your pool of applicants
- Reviewing Applications
  - Establish a list of criteria and their weights beforehand
  - Develop a standard rubric for review of applications
  - Have at least two people read each application, if possible
- Interviewing Candidates
  - Develop a standard list of questions for all candidates
    - Include space for interviewers to take verbatim notes
    - Avoid illegal and personal questions about identity/family/etc.
    - Use an applicant tracking system to gather information
  - Put together a standard packet of information for all candidates
  - Ensure a standard itinerary for all candidates on campus
  - Monitor interruptions in the job talk
- Committee Discussions
  - Avoid premature ranking of candidates; review each candidate systematically
  - Require evidence and specifics in discussions about candidates
  - Consider a majority and confidential voting process
  - Consider proposing an unranked list of candidates to the chair/dean

## Illegal Interview Questions

Subject	Permitted	Not Permitted	Notes
Disabilities	Accurately describe the job then ask the candidate if they can perform all of the functions.	Do you have a disability? Have you ever filed a worker's compensation claim? Have you ever suffered a workplace injury?	
Family Status	Do you have any commitments that might prevent you from working the assigned shifts?	Are you married? Are you single? Do you have any children?	Ask all candidates about outside commitments, not just women.
Financial Status	Do you own a car? (only if a requirement of the job)	Do you own your own home? Do you own a car?	
Marital Status	None	Are you married? Are you single? Do you have any children?	
Pregnancy	How long do you plan on staying with us? Do you have any leave planned?	Are you pregnant? Are you trying to have a family?	Even if a candidate is obviously pregnant, it is not acceptable to ask any questions about this subject. You can still describe the job and then ask if they can perform all functions.
Race or Ethnicity	Almost always not acceptable unless it is a bona fide occupational qualification.	All questions about color and race.	
Religion or Creed	None	What denomination are you? Who is your pastor?	
Sex, Orientation, or Gender Identity	None	None	

## Sample Academic Interview Questions

### About their research

- What research influences have you been exposed to? Who has influenced you the most?
- What do you consider to be your best paper/work and why? What did it change about the way people approach the field?

### General research questions

- What are your professional goals in the next five, and ten years and how does this job fit with them?
- What would you do on the first day of the job?
- What are the big issues in your research area?
- How would you bridge the gap from your research to research users?
- The university is keen to serve the wider community and economy. Does your planned research have any potential in these areas?

### About them and their capabilities

- How do you balance your time? If several challenges came up at the same time (grant deadline, pastoral care for a student, teaching commitments), how would you prioritize?
- If you were starting your project again today, what would you do differently?
- Describe a research problem you have faced. What did you learn?
- What has been the most productive period in your research career and why?

### About your ability to gain funding

- Where will you apply for grants? If your funding applications are unsuccessful, what alternatives do you have in mind? (looking for knowledge of the funding infrastructure)
- How would you convince a funding body that they should fund your research rather than one of the other hundreds of proposals they receive?

### About their proposed research

- What will you focus on and what gives you a competitive edge in this area?
- What is the overall importance of this project? How do you see this work impacting the field?
- What will you do if your hypothesis is proved wrong? Can you see any of your research proposal failing?
- If we gave you unlimited resources, what would you do with them?
- What resources will you need?

### About their role as supervisor/ teacher

- Describe your teaching experience. How do you feel about teaching? What is your teaching philosophy?
- What advice would you give to a new researcher about supervising undergraduate or masters students?
- How would you go about motivating a researcher who is going through a low point?
- How would you deal with any conflict/disagreement within the research group? Do you have an example of when you have had to deal with a disagreement?

### About 'fit' with the department

- What will you bring to the institution?
- We are keen to develop collaborations between departments. What opportunities for multi-disciplinary work does your research offer?
- What committee work have you done and what challenges has it presented?
- In what ways, other than research and teaching could you contribute to this department?

## Sample Applicant Evaluation Tool

*The following offers a method for department faculty to provide evaluations of job candidates. It is meant to be a template for departments that they can modify as necessary for their own uses. The proposed questions are designed for junior faculty candidates; however, alternate language is suggested in parentheses for senior faculty candidates.*

Candidate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate which of the following are true for you (check all that apply):

- Read applicant's CV
- Read applicant's statements (research, teaching, etc.)
- Read applicant's letters of recommendation
- Read applicant's scholarship (indicate what): \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate the applicant on each of the following:

	excellent	good	neutral	fair	poor	unable to judge
Evidence of research productivity						
Number of publications (Note any high-impact journals here)						
Potential for scholarly impact / tenurability						
Number of grants/funding awards procured (list any notables)						
Evidence of strong background in [relevant fields]						
Evidence of [particular] perspective on [particular area]						
Evidence of teaching experience and interest (including grad mentorship)						
Potential to teach courses in core curriculum						
Potential to teach the core curriculum on [particular area] (or create new courses)						

Other comments?

For more information or additional copies of this resource, please contact the  
ADVANCE Program at (734) 647-9359 or [advanceprogram@umich.edu](mailto:advanceprogram@umich.edu), or visit the ADVANCE Program's Web  
site at <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/advance>.

## Sample Candidate Evaluation Sheet

*The following offers a method for department faculty to provide evaluations of job candidates. It is meant to be a template for departments that they can modify as necessary for their own uses. The proposed questions are designed for junior faculty candidates; however, alternate language is suggested in parenthesis for senior faculty candidates.*

Candidate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate which of the following are true for you (check all that apply):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read applicant's CV<br><input type="checkbox"/> Read applicant's statements (research, teaching, etc.)<br><input type="checkbox"/> Read applicant's letters of recommendation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Read applicant's scholarship (indicate what):<br>_____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Attended Job Talk<br><input type="checkbox"/> Met with candidate<br><input type="checkbox"/> Attended meal with candidate<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other:<br>_____ |
|---|--|

Please comment on the candidate's scholarship as reflected in the job talk:

Please comment on the candidate's teaching ability as reflected in the job talk:

Please rate the candidate on each of the following:

excellent  
 good  
 neutral  
 fair  
 poor  
 unable to judge

Potential for (evidence of) scholarly impact							
Potential for (evidence of) research productivity							
Number of publications (Note any high-impact journals here)							
Potential for (evidence of) research funding							
Number of grants/funding awards procured (list any notables)							
Potential for (evidence of) collaboration							
Fit with department's priorities							
Ability to make positive contribution to department's climate							
Potential (demonstrated ability) to attract and supervise diverse graduate							
Potential (demonstrated ability) to teach and supervise diverse undergraduates							
Potential (demonstrated ability) to be a conscientious university community							
Potential (demonstrated ability) to mentor diverse students							

Other comments?