



Office of the Provost

Laura Perna
Vice Provost for Faculty

TO: Diversity Search Advisors
FROM: Laura Perna
RE: Diversity Search Advisor Updates and Guidelines
CC: Faculty Affairs Coordinators
Joann Mitchell, Senior Vice President for Institutional Affairs and
Chief Diversity Officer
Eve Higginbotham, Vice Dean for Penn Medicine Office of Inclusion,
Diversity, and Equity
Colleen McEntee, Associate Director of Faculty Affairs
DATE: January 16, 2024

At Penn, senior members of the Standing Faculty have long been asked to serve as Diversity Search Advisors (“DSAs”), with the goal of ensuring that faculty search processes are open, equitable, inclusive, and consistent with School and University policies and guidelines.

This document provides current guidelines and expectations for those who serve in this role. Additional resources are available on the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty [website](#). Please reach out to our Office (provost-fac@upenn.edu) with questions or concerns. We are grateful for your service.

Invitation to Discuss DSA Guidance and Expectations

On **February 14, 2024, 9:30 am – 11:00 am**, we will be holding a meeting (with refreshments provided) for DSAs. At this meeting, we will discuss expectations for faculty serving as DSAs and would also like to learn more about your experiences and how we can support you in this important role. We hope that you will be able to attend. **Please [RSVP here](#)**.

Role and Responsibilities of Diversity Search Advisors (DSAs)

DSAs are tenured members of the Standing Faculty and senior members (Associate Professor or Professor) of the Standing Faculty Clinician-Educator track who help ensure that faculty search processes are fair, open, and inclusive, and are conducted in compliance with University policies and guidelines. The University’s [Policy on Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action](#) and its [Confidentiality of Records Policy, which includes records retention](#), apply to faculty appointments, promotions, and terminations.

DSAs are appointed by Schools to serve for a two-year term. The Deans discuss the role of the DSA in their annual reporting to the Provost’s Office. Serving as a DSA supports Penn’s mission and should be included as part of the faculty member’s overall effort and reflected on their academic plan, if the School has such plans. In instances in which the responsibilities exceed the DSA’s usual faculty service duties, the School may provide additional compensation or teaching release time.

DSAs are expected to be knowledgeable about School and University search expectations. Those who serve as DSAs do not need to have had a formal prior role in their School's appointment and promotion processes. The [Penn Faculty Recruiting Guide](#) provides step-by-step guidance regarding the faculty hiring process for DSAs and search committee members. General questions regarding the search process may be directed to the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and School-specific questions should be directed to the School's [Faculty Affairs staff](#). In the Perelman School of Medicine, the [Office of Inclusion and Diversity](#) is a central point of contact for DSAs.

Pre-Search Work

In all cases, it is expected that the DSA will: (1) assist with the formation of search committees; (2) serve as a member of the search committee (or designate another faculty member who is knowledgeable about School and University search policies and guidelines to do so); (3) assess the needs and requirements of the available position; and (4) evaluate the pool of potential candidates for the position.

Wherever possible, search committees should have members with a range of backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences as well as individuals with clinical and research interests that align with those sought through the search. A DSA (or their designee) should serve as a member of the search committee and participate in committee deliberations.

Before approving a position description, the DSA should discuss it with the department chair. Consider whether the stated preferred academic fields are sufficiently broad to capture all individuals who could be well-qualified for the position, recognizing that different academic areas and sub-fields may attract different hiring pools. The DSA should also encourage discussion of qualifications related to advancing inclusive excellence that should be expressly included in the job description and advertisement. Related qualifications may include cultural competency, working with and mentorship of diverse populations and students, research interests that contribute unique and critical new perspectives and expertise, and research interests compatible with or complementary to the work of others in the School. Job-related qualifications based on the position description and other discussions should be used to generate a list of potential candidates to recruit and to evaluate candidates later in the process.

The DSA should also assess the effectiveness of outreach and recruitment efforts in generating a pool of applicants and finalists that is diverse by gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, veteran, and disability status. These data may be obtained from the search committee chair or through the School's Dean's or Faculty Affairs Offices.

Outreach

Faculty positions are advertised on Penn's [faculty job board](#) and the University provides funding for advertising open positions on several job boards through its relationship with [JobElephant](#). In addition, departments should post descriptions on job boards, listservs, conferences, and engage in other forms of outreach specific to the relevant field/sub-fields, including outlets targeted to potential candidates with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and expertise.

Personalized and proactive outreach is essential to reaching and encouraging an inclusive pool of candidates with diverse perspectives and expertise. DSAs should encourage and advise search committees on strategies that ensure a fair, open, and inclusive process.

Evaluating and Selecting Candidates

During the search committee's deliberations, the DSA should ensure that all candidates are evaluated in the same manner and using the same criteria. The DSA should work with the committee to generate a list of relevant questions based on the position description and encourage committee members to discuss and agree upon the criteria that are important for success in the position -- before the committee begins a review of applications. Search committees are encouraged to look deeply at individual candidate qualifications. For example, search committee members should read publications rather than relying only on a candidate's CV or being overly swayed by candidate application letters. To help minimize unconscious bias (e.g., viewing letters from references from close friends/colleagues more favorably than letters from others), we recommend that letters of reference be used only to inform understanding of the qualifications of finalists.

The DSA should discuss with the committee -- at each stage when the pool is narrowed (e.g., when candidates are selected for interviews, job talks, etc.) -- whether there are qualified candidates with diverse backgrounds, perspectives and expertise who should have been advanced, as well as whether further outreach should be conducted to expand the pool. The DSA should review and approve the shortlist of candidates -- before a finalist(s) is selected.

Once a finalist is selected, the DSA is asked to certify that a search was conducted in accordance with University policies and guidelines. A completed [Faculty Search Report Form](#) must be uploaded into Interfolio for any search that results in an offer of employment at Penn. Information regarding the name and title of the person making the hiring decision/recommendation, as well as the names/titles of members of the search committee, must also be retained as part of the search record.

DSAs should also participate in post-search follow up. It is important that all candidates, particularly finalists and others who are interviewed, have confidence that the selection resulted from a fair and equitable search. Questions about family and other personal transition issues should be directed to the School's Faculty Affairs staff.

Bias Training

In addition to understanding the relevant policies, DSAs and faculty members involved in searches are expected to participate in some form of bias education at least once every three years. To meet this requirement, DSAs and search committee members may complete bias training provided by the Provost's Office, Schools, departments, and other organizations.

The Provost's Office currently offers an asynchronous Faculty Bias Training course through Workday Learning. The evidence-based training was developed by faculty at the University of New Hampshire with funding from the National Science Foundation (read more about the training [here](#)). This interactive course focuses on how bias occurs in faculty search and other aspects of faculty work, and strategies to intervene when bias is observed. To start the course, [please click here](#).

Please contact Colleen McEntee at cmcentee@upenn.edu with questions about bias training requirements.

Other Resources for Faculty Hiring

The University continues to offer two sources of financial support to Schools to assist with faculty hiring. The [Dual Career Fund](#) provides funds to departments/Schools to encourage the employment of partners of Standing Faculty. The [Faculty Opportunity Fund](#) provides financial support to departments/Schools to aid in the hiring and competitive retention of Standing Faculty who have a demonstrated commitment to inclusive excellence through their scholarship, mentorship, sponsorship, and service.

Other resources include:

- [10 Tips for Achieving A More Diverse Faculty](#) (from Penn GSE's Damani White-Lewis)
- [Resources for Search Committees](#) (from University of Maryland, NSF-funded ADVANCE project)
- [Equity and Inclusion Effective Practices and Responsive Strategies: A Guidebook for College and University Leaders](#) (by Ruth Enid Zambrana, Anita Allen, Eve Higginbotham, Joann Mitchell, Debra Pérez, Antonia Villarruel)
- [Candidate Evaluation Sheet](#) (example/sample)

Please see more resources on our website [here](#).

Thank you and Next Steps

We are grateful for your service as a DSA. If you have questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact our office and we will be happy to assist you.

We look forward to seeing you at the DSA meeting on February 14th.