



Office of the Provost

*Vice Provost for Faculty*

TO: Diversity Search Advisors  
FROM: Laura Perna  
RE: Diversity Search Advisor Guidelines  
CC: Faculty Affairs Coordinators; Connie Chang  
DATE: November 11, 2021

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At Penn, Diversity Search Advisors (“DSAs”) are tasked with overseeing faculty searches and implementing policies and best practices relating to faculty searches. The following guidelines are intended to assist new DSAs and memorialize expectations for those continuing in the role. The DSA has been an important feature of the University’s efforts toward equity, diversity, and inclusion and we are grateful for your service. Please reach out to the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty ([provost-fac@upenn.edu](mailto:provost-fac@upenn.edu)) with feedback or questions.

We look forward to working with you. Thank you for everything you do for our community.

### **New Diversity Search Advisors**

Diversity Search Advisors are tenured members of the standing faculty tasked with ensuring that faculty search processes are broad, inclusive, and designed to bring outstanding professors to Penn. Penn’s broad definition of diversity is expressed in the [Faculty Diversity Action Plan](#) and its most recent [2019 update](#). The DSA role is also intended to ensure that Penn meets its federal regulatory affirmative action obligations. The University has a general [Affirmative Action Policy](#) and specific [Guidelines for Faculty Appointments, Promotions, and Terminations](#).

Diversity Search Advisors are appointed by Schools to serve a minimum two-year term. Schools discuss the role of the DSA in annual reporting to the Provost’s Office. In directly shaping the professoriate for years to come, DSA service is vital to Penn’s mission. Service as DSA should be included in a faculty member’s overall effort, or even stated on a faculty member’s academic plan, if the School has such plans. Where position expectations exceed normal faculty service duties, additional compensation or teaching release time may be appropriate.

Those who serve as Diversity Search Advisors do not need to have had a prior formal role in a School’s appointment and promotion processes. Penn’s appointments and promotions process are summarized in this [Penn Faculty Actions Reference Guide](#). The [Penn Faculty Recruiting Guide](#) covers the step-by-step process for faculty hires for DSAs and other search committee members.

New DSAs should become familiar with School expectations for the role. Questions about School-specific processes can be directed to your 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 a diversity search advisor will (1) assist with the formation of the search committee (2) serve on the search committee or task a designee to do so; (2) assess the needs and requirements of the position; and (3) evaluate the pool of potential candidates for the position.

Wherever possible, search committees should have members from groups underrepresented on the Penn faculty, proponents of diversity, and individuals with clinical and research interests compatible with those sought through the search. A DSA or DSA-designee should sit on the search committee and participate in committee deliberations. Any DSA-designee is also expected to understand and advance the guidelines in this memo.

The DSA should approve the position description. Prior to approval, the DSA should engage in dialogue with the department regarding the description. The department should be asked to consider whether the statement of preferred academic fields is sufficiently broad to capture all individuals who could be well-qualified for the position and recognize that different academic areas and sub-fields may attract different hiring pools. The DSA should also encourage discussion of qualifications related to diversity that should be expressly included in the job description and advertisement. Diversity-related qualifications may include cultural competency, working with diverse populations, mentorship of diverse students, and research interests compatible with work of others in the school. Job-related qualifications arising from the position description and other discussions can be used to generate a list of potential candidates and used to evaluate candidates later in the process.

The DSA should also assess the diversity of applicants and finalists, considering gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and disability status. These data may be obtained from the search committee chair or through the dean's or faculty affairs offices of the schools.

## **Outreach**

Faculty positions are advertised on Penn's website. The University provides [support for job postings](#) at several other locations. In addition, departments should post descriptions on job boards, listservs, conferences, and other forms of outreach specific to the field and sub-fields, including outlets targeted to underrepresented groups.

Personalized outreach and connections are essential in reaching and encouraging applications from excellent diverse faculty candidates, including those who are members of underrepresented groups. Diversity Search Advisors should make sure that search committees ask contacts at other institutions specifically for women and minority candidates, and that Schools and departments proactively identify and follow outstanding potential diverse faculty hires who can present opportunities for future appointments.

## **Evaluating and Selecting Candidates**

The DSA should review and approve the short list of candidates – before a finalist(s) is selected. If this initial list is not representative of the pool identified in the pre-search work, the DSA should

discuss with the committee whether qualified underrepresented candidates have been overlooked and whether further outreach should be conducted to expand the pool.

During the search committee's deliberations, the DSA should ensure that all candidates are evaluated in the same manner and using the same criteria. (For example, questions about ability to travel or weekend work should not be asked only of young women who may be potential mothers, or candidates of religions that may have specific hours of non-work.) The DSA should work with the committee to generate a list of relevant questions and encourage the committee to be clear on the criteria being used. Search committees are encouraged to look deeply at candidate qualifications. For example, search committee members should read publications and consider the content of letters of reference rather than relying only on a candidate's CV or being overly swayed by subjective or irrelevant content in candidate application letters.

Once a finalist is selected, the DSA will need to certify that a search was conducted in accordance with federal law and University policy.

DSAs should also participate in post-search follow up, ensuring that the committee stays in touch with other candidates while offers are outstanding, promotes an open and inclusive environment during recruitment, and addresses candidate needs such as family or school issues during the recruitment and transition process.

### **Diversity and Inclusion Training**

In addition to understanding the relevant policies, Diversity Search Advisors are expected to be familiar with research on implicit bias in hiring. Every year, the Office of the Provost offers latent bias sessions for those involved in faculty searches and is available to do additional training for Schools and departments. Faculty members involved in searches should have some form of bias education once every three years, at a minimum. The Perelman School of Medicine as well as some other Schools offer their own programming and trainings. The Provost's Office can also suggest outside vendors for customized or specific needs. Please contact Connie Chang at [conniech@upenn.edu](mailto:conniech@upenn.edu) with questions about diversity-related education and training.

### **Other Resources to Promote Faculty Diversity and Inclusion**

With the goal of helping to address the unique demands and implications of the pandemic for faculty work and search processes, in September 2020 our Office released a [Covid Inclusion Guide](#) for Faculty.

The University offers two longstanding sources of financial support for faculty hiring, a [Dual Career Fund](#) to support partners of faculty hires, and the [Faculty Opportunity Fund](#), which provides financial support for faculty recruitments that contribute to the excellence and diversity of Penn's faculty.

Other resources include:

[Equity and Inclusion Effective Practices and Responsive Strategies: A Guidebook for College and University Leaders](#)

[Perception Institute Best Practices for Faculty Hiring](#)

[Sample Candidate Evaluation Sheet](#) (for objectivity in hiring)

[Anti-Racism Reading List](#)

A bibliography of studies and books relating to diversity and inclusion considerations for faculty searches, as well as other academic topics, is available in the Guide.