



Office of the Provost

Laura Perna  
*Vice Provost for Faculty*

TO: Diversity Search Advisors  
FROM: Laura Perna  
RE: Diversity Search Advisor Guidelines  
CC: Faculty Affairs Coordinators; Connie Chang; Colleen McEntee  
DATE: September 29, 2022

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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 to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion and we are grateful for your service.

In addition to the following guidelines, please review the [resources for DSAs](#) on our website. 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.

### **Role and Responsibilities of 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 [Policy on Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action](#) and specific [Affirmative Action 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, and 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 processes 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; (3) assess the needs and requirements of the position; and (4) 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 [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 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. A forthcoming DSA certification form will be required for all faculty searches and uploaded into Interfolio (more information to follow, anticipated rollout date is early 2023).

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 and faculty members involved in searches are expected to participate in some form of bias education at least once every three years. We are working with the Interfolio team to modify "Interfolio Faculty Search" to require verification that DSAs and other search committee members have completed bias training. To meet this requirement, DSAs and search committee members may complete the asynchronous course or in-person workshop(s) provided by the Provost's office as well as bias training offered by Schools, departments, and other organizations.

This year, the Office of the Provost is offering **asynchronous bias training** through Canvas. 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. **To register for the course, [please click here](#).**

This fall, the Office of the Provost will also offer the following two in-person workshops to supplement the asynchronous training and continue engagement throughout the semester.

Advancing Equity and Excellence through Rubrics and Other Evaluation Tools

*Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, 10:15 am – 11:45 am, Houston Hall 223-Golkin Room*

Rubrics and other evaluation criteria are powerful tools that can act as guardrails in bias prevention throughout the faculty search process. In this interactive session, we will discuss and strategize best practices on how to utilize rubrics to promote equity and excellence.

Strategizing Beyond Individual Cases of Bias

*Wednesday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10:15 am – 11:45 am, Houston Hall 223-Golkin Room*

This workshop will review and discuss the cases presented in the asynchronous training and consider ways to more systematically address issues of bias in faculty search processes.

**To register for the in-person trainings, [please click here](#).**

If there are questions about bias training and requirements, please contact Connie Chang at [conniech@upenn.edu](mailto:conniech@upenn.edu).

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

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:

[Resources for Search Committees](#)

[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](#)

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