

# A New Hybrid Model for Faculty Hiring Workshops

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## Abstract

This paper reports on a new model for faculty hiring workshops involving three components. The first part (Part 1) of the work is an asynchronous, self-guided course that includes video reflections and commentaries from some of our own colleagues about inclusive excellence, hiring legalities, and departmental culture. The second part (Part 2) is a virtual 90-minute interactive session with breakout room discussions overseen by a facilitator. The last part (Part 3) is a monthly offering of optional one-hour discussion sessions to answer additional questions, support university-wide conversations and allow participants to probe more deeply into diversity hiring opportunities and challenges. To evaluate the workshops, we administered a survey immediately following Part 2 and later conducted interviews with participants at the conclusion of their faculty search. Survey results show that nearly all elements of the workshops were well-received and participants reported feeling confident in their understanding of inclusive excellence, legal issues associated with hiring, and the potential for unintended bias in reviewing candidate files. The paper also provides an analysis of the interview and survey data as well as some conclusions about the impact of these new efforts on inclusive hiring.

## Introduction

This paper introduces a new model for faculty hiring workshops, designed to help address the lack of faculty diversity within the university ranks, which continues to be a persistent problem in higher education. The dramatically changing demographics in the United States underscore the need to increase racial and ethnic diversity among faculty, especially in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. Black/African Americans, Hispanic/Latinx Americans, and Native Americans constitute 33.8% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020), but only 13% of the faculty in American universities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). This sparsity is even

more acute in the STEM fields—only 10% at four-year institutions according to the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (2019).

Having diversity in the faculty ranks is well-recognized as being important in the academy as it aids in recruiting and retaining students of color. Research findings show a positive association between enrollment of Latinx and Black students and the number of Latinx and Black faculty at an institution (Cavanaugh & Green, 2020; Llamas et al., 2021). Moreover, Stout et al. (2018) found that “students’ graduation rates were most strongly related to the percentage of faculty at their institution of the same race/ethnicity.” Sharing similar characteristics and being able to identify with the faculty leading their courses and their training can help students of color succeed and thrive (Jayakumar et al., 2009; Llamas et al., 2021). Additionally, the exposure of White students to faculty of color can have a cultural benefit which, in turn, can help them better compete in a diverse workforce (Jayakumar, 2008). Having diverse faculty also contributes to further diversity in the faculty; women and underrepresented minority graduate students are more likely to continue in academic careers when they have advisors with shared demographics (Hofstra et al., 2022).

Despite the known benefit of a diverse faculty to all students, standard approaches to diversity (i.e., financial interventions) are unsustainable in the long term and need to be rethought. Institutions that address issues of faculty diversity by “throwing money at the problem” with salary incentives and/or additional slots for underrepresented and minoritized appointees have had some degree of success initially, but will have mixed results over time not only because financial incentives are unsustainable, but importantly, because they do not guarantee retention, promotion, or tenure (Taylor et al., 2010). For example, organizations eager to fund one-time, inspirational consciousness-raising events to address inequity have tended to be less likely to fund medium-to-long term interventions that change personnel structures including procedures for evaluation, promotion and conflict resolution (Zheng, 2022).

Diversity efforts over the years not surprisingly have not substantially increased hiring or retention of STEM faculty (York & Griffin, 2017). Structural issues in recruiting, hiring, and retention—as well as STEM graduates from underrepresented populations not choosing careers in academia (Hofstra et al., 2022)—may explain this lack of diversity (Eisen, 2020). Departments are often quick to point out that the number of minoritized candidates<sup>1</sup>, which are commonly postdocs in STEM, is relatively small, and this is clearly part of the challenge. According to the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (2019), only 8% of STEM PhD graduates that are U.S. citizens or permanent residents are Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, or Native American. The lack of diversity at the faculty level is not due simply to there not being enough candidates, however (Fleming et al., 2023). The paucity of Black and Hispanic tenure track and tenured faculty can be explained by institutional prestige biases, such as 80% of the U.S. professoriate being trained at 20% of institutions. (Wapman et al., (2022). Quantifying hierarchy and dynamics in US faculty hiring and retention. *Nature*, 610(7930), 120–127. Moreover, while Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) comprise less than 3% of postsecondary institutions in the United States, they grant 19% of Science and Engineering bachelor’s degrees to Black students (Gasman & Nguyen, 2014).

An equally important part of the challenge is the behavior of faculty search committees—their recruiting and decision-making practices in particular. Research shows the hiring process itself contributes to a less diverse faculty (O’Meara et al., 2020) and that “although many higher education institutions conduct faculty searches with a clear commitment to diversity and the best of intentions, personal biases and flawed recruitment practices undermine the probability for success” (Tuitt et al., 2007).

For example, faculty hiring committees are often influenced by perceptions of how well a candidate will “fit” within the department. When “fit” is employed as a factor in selection, minoritized faculty candidates can be and often are disadvantaged. White-Lewis (2020) points out that using “fit” as a factor in candidate evaluations equates

<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this paper, minoritized candidates denote ethnic and racial groups that are underrepresented in STEM as PhDs, faculty job candidates, and faculty. We also note that there are intersecting and overlapping identities within these groups that create further disparities in representation within STEM (disability, gender, age, etc.).

to assessing “if candidates had the appropriate cultural capital, including language, presentation, and style of social interaction that were palatable to predominantly White search committees.” Similarity-attraction theory contends that individuals unconsciously prefer to interact with people similar to themselves (Kao et al., 2014). A reliance on “fit” impairs progress toward faculty diversity and risks that faculty will only “clone themselves” in making selections during faculty searches.

To address these biases and other hindrances to recruiting minoritized faculty, many universities have developed search committee workshops that inform search committees of best practices in recruiting and hiring a diverse faculty. Although some progress has been made, much work remains toward achieving parity (Fraser & Hunt, 2011; Onwuachi-Willig, 2009; Stout et al., 2018). Some researchers have recently suggested that achieving more diverse STEM professoriate requires addressing two primary foci: increasing the pool of credentialed candidates and critically examining the recruitment, hiring, and retention practices and policies (York & Griffin, 2017). Research on the effect faculty recruiting workshops has on faculty perceptions of the reality of bias and the value of equitable procedures has demonstrated favorable results: “Faculty had more favorable attitudes toward equitable strategies if they had attended a workshop of if they were in a department where more of their colleagues had” (Sekaquaptewa et al., 2019). Other research has revealed that the roles within search committees need critical examination. One study has found that faculty hierarchies often superseded the decision-making power of search chairs when the chairs were junior faculty, thereby undermining the junior faculty’s diversity advocacy in favor of the status quo (Hakkola & Dyer, 2022).

This paper explores a new hybrid faculty hiring workshop model for improving search committee practices leading to more inclusive hiring practices and more diverse applicant pools. The content is organized as follows: A description of how this work is situated within an alliance of research universities, each committed to sharing interventions and innovations in support of a common faculty diversity goal; a description of the new hybrid workshop model; and an evaluation of its effectiveness. The paper concludes with several observations and a discussion of future implementation plans among the collaborating universities.

## Background

The Research University Alliance (RUA) funded under the NSF AGEP program brought together UC Berkeley, UCLA, Stanford University, CalTech, the University of Washington, the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) in partnership with the goal of exploring faculty career pathways that increase faculty diversity in the fields of Mathematics, Physical Science, Environmental Science,

and Engineering (Smith et al., 2022). Recognizing that the faculty employment playing field is not level and that unconscious biases and entrenched university practices negatively impact the hiring of minoritized faculty (Liera & Ching, 2019; O’Meara et al., 2020; Reece et al., 2018; Sagaria, 2002; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017), the RUA Faculty Hiring Working Group (FHWG), led by UT Austin, was tasked with exploring inclusive practices for hiring faculty. The work detailed in this paper is part of a cooperative effort within RUA to advance faculty diversity within the STEM fields (Smith et al., 2022).

Prior to 2020, UT Austin offered special four-hour workshops for faculty search committee members, open to all departments and schools on campus. These workshops were developed from train-the-trainer sessions originally developed by the Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute at UW-Madison (WISELI), with later input and additions from the University of Washington ADVANCE program, Purdue ADVANCE (NSF 0811194) and the Big Ten AGEP “Professorial Advancement Initiative” (NSF 1309028, NSF 1309173). Consistent with the previous format and structure, UT Austin workshops were designed to be highly interactive and engaging, and faculty attendance was strongly encouraged—in some cases required—for those serving on search committees.

Facilitated by a team of faculty peer presenters, the workshops focused on the importance of educating students in an academic environment that is inclusive and empowers students to succeed in a diverse global workforce. Diversity is discussed from the perspectives of social justice, research and academic competitiveness, university mission, and contributions to the local economy. Participants heard perspectives from business leaders in industry, who elected to make employee diversity part of their competitive business plan, and about their desire for universities to produce graduates from diverse backgrounds to meet their employment needs. In addition, the workshops provided guidance on active recruiting and avoiding an over-reliance on passive job postings and ad placements. Specific attention was given to proven methods for attracting underrepresented talent; following this were discussions about selection practices that can disadvantage underrepresented candidates. To help engage participants in discussion and reflection on this topic, we used some of the Big Ten AGEP PAI short videos that depict problematic faculty search committee scenarios created to fine tune participant awareness regarding practices and behaviors that negatively impact underrepresented candidates (Big Ten Academic Alliance Professorial Advancement Initiative; Big Ten Academic Alliance Professorial Advancement Initiative). Also included was a presentation of legal issues and actions to avoid.

These workshops were presented in the traditional in-person, facilitator-led model without the use of online coursework. This model often led to scheduling problems for both the facilitators and the workshop participants.

Finding four hours to attend a workshop in a centralized location was frequently difficult for faculty committee members who are spread across a large campus, leading to workshop no-shows or participants only attending part of the workshop.

## New Hybrid Workshop Model

UT Austin recognized the need to provide a new model for faculty search committee workshops during the pandemic. We recognized that faculty, like many others around the nation, were going through a period of deep reflection related to inclusion practices. We also recognized the need to emphasize community building and more interactions across faculty in the university to discuss common challenges and spread best practices that were working. Lastly, we reasoned that, given the additional time and mental stress of the pandemics in our country, four consecutive hours to absorb and process this volume of information was not effective. Like its predecessor, the new workshop model emphasizes inclusive hiring practices by addressing barriers like implicit bias in decision making. The new model is also designed to create added accountability among faculty and leadership by bringing search committees together from across campus to “create a common foundation of knowledge across the institution” (Fraser & Hunt, 2011).

The new hybrid workshop model consists of three parts. The first part (Part 1) is an asynchronous, self-guided course that includes video reflections and commentaries from respected UT Austin faculty about inclusive excellence, departmental culture, and hiring legalities. In previous offerings of workshops, we observed that the majority participants did not consume the pre-workshop materials; thus, to increase engagement, participants need to score at least 80% on a post-workshop comprehension quiz in order to register for the second part of the workshop. The topics covered in Part 1 and in the quiz include:

- Inclusive excellence
- Implicit biases
- Managing a search committee, including managing power dynamics among members and strategies to deal with discomfort when discussing diversity and making inclusion a priority
- How to conduct active recruiting
- Best practices for interviewing and evaluating candidates, examples of which include having a phone conversation with each candidate before their interview to discuss expectations, improving hiring ads, and using a rubric to evaluate candidates
- Legal dos and don’ts during a search
- Closing the deal

The second part (Part 2) of the workshop is a virtual 90-minute session with a facilitator, slides, and breakout

<p>In a search committee meeting about who to advance to campus interviews, the issue of gender parity comes up. A senior colleague points out that there are far more men than women in the department and says that until that evens out, there should only be women on the short list. A different senior colleague asks if the committee is even allowed to promote candidates to the short list solely on the basis of gender. A junior colleague who's serving on a hiring committee for the first time says she feels insulted that the committee is trying to solve a gender equity issue by "just hiring a woman." What would you do?</p>	<p>Your committee chair pivots away from a concern raised about a candidate's "vibe" because the concerns don't seem job-related. The concern is that the candidate was very dismissive, even rude to staff during their on-campus interview. A junior colleague who researches in the same field as the candidate has concerns about the quality of research. Meanwhile a senior colleague in an adjacent field thinks their publication profile is very impressive and also points out that "niceness" was never a criterion, and that in all their conversations, the candidate seemed quite pleasant. What do you do?</p>
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**Table 1. Example scenarios discussed in workshop Part 2.**

rooms for discussion. Unlike previous versions, the new sessions are restricted to members who (a) have fully completed Part 1 and (b) have signed up, as a group, to attend as part of a particular search committee. Search committees are encouraged to attend together, in part to be able to have more discipline-specific conversations about recruitment equity, while at the same time building bonds and common understanding among those who will soon be working together on committees. It is also helpful for committees to discuss hiring criteria together, in the abstract, in the absence of any references to real applicants. Participants are also provided with comparisons between national and university demographic data and shown how to access candidate pool demographic data using the University's applicant management system, Interfolio. A key aspect of these sessions that incentivizes committee group attendance is the highly interactive scenario-based breakout room discussions where members of specific committees work together to strategize ways to handle hypothetical hiring scenarios. Many of these scenarios have been collected from Search Committee Chairs to reflect real situations that arise in faculty search committees—that are not obvious in how they should be handled. Table 1 lists two scenarios we used.

The third part (Part 3) of the workshop is a monthly offering of optional one-hour discussion sessions to answer additional questions, support university-wide conversations and allow participants to probe more deeply into diversity hiring opportunities and challenges. These

monthly discussions are available for all faculty who have completed Parts 1 and 2. Faculty who attend these sessions often ask more detailed questions about best practices and processes in relation to their specific search. Faculty also use these sessions to support each other in sharing current challenges and successes.

The new hybrid model substantially increased participation. In fact, the new model has had more participants in one year than the original in-person model had in three years. Having the workshop online, with Part 1 completed asynchronously and having Part 2 delivered live 28 times across the fall and spring semesters, helped get more participants into the workshop. From May 2021 until May 2022, a total of 685 faculty, staff, students, administrators and external reviewers completed Parts 1 and 2. Prior to the new model, the workshop had a total of 582 participants between May 2018 and May 2021, an average of 194 per year. Of all attendees from 2021–22, there were 231 professors, 113 associate professors, 99 assistant professors, 88 professional track faculty, 55 administrative staff, 34 leadership, 31 graduate and undergraduate students, and 34 external reviewers. It is worth noting that some search committees include both faculty and students.

In terms of committee attendance, a notable indicator of whether faculty serving on a search committee participated was whether search committee's chair participated. We tracked 76 tenure/tenure-track search committees during the 2021–2022 academic year, with the average

committee size being seven people. When the search committee chair attended, the average participation rate for the committee was 87%; when the search committee chair did not attend, the average participation rate dropped to 20%.

## Evaluation Methods

The authors who completed the evaluation were unaffiliated with the development or implementation of the workshop. To assess the workshop's impact, we developed a multi-method design in which we surveyed workshop participants immediately following the workshop and interviewed a subset of participants after the conclusion of their faculty search process. We sought to answer the following evaluation questions:

1. Immediately following the workshop, what do participants remember as the most useful aspects?
2. Which aspects of the workshop are actually applied in faculty searches?

Table 2 overviews our evaluation design and maps specific activities to Kirkpatrick's (1975) four levels of training evaluation.

### Post-Workshop Survey

Directly following Part 2 of the workshop, participants were sent a survey including questions about accessing workshop content and navigating technology, comfort with discussions about diversity and bias, usefulness of workshop content, and confidence in conducting a successful faculty search. No incentives were offered for survey participation. The 13 questions are included in Appendix A and were a variety of multiple choice, Likert scale, and open response items. This survey was created by the workshop developers, primarily for the purpose of improving future offerings, and as such was not informed by any published scales. Qualtrics survey software estimates that the survey takes 12 minutes or less to complete. Three hundred twenty-four participants responded, with a total response rate of 47%. We analyzed the data by reporting frequencies of responses, calculating means and standard deviations of Likert scale responses and thematically coding a subset of the open responses. The results of this survey show participants' immediate takeaways from the workshop.

### Search Committee Interviews

To assess the longer-term effects of the workshop, two authors who were not involved with designing or offering the workshops interviewed seven search committee chairs and four search committee members from 10 departments in the colleges of engineering and natural sciences following the conclusion of their faculty search process. Interviews lasted 45–60 minutes, and participants were incentivized to participate with a \$25 gift card. When

Level	Description	Data Sources for Current Workshop Evaluation
1. Reaction	Whether participants find workshop engaging and relevant	Post-workshop survey
2. Learning	Whether participants acquire knowledge, skills, or aptitudes	Post-workshop survey & Search committee interviews
3. Behavior	Whether participants apply workshop principles at work	Search committee interviews
4. Results	Whether targeted organizational outcomes are achieved	Pool diversity and other search statistics (not included)

**Table 2. Evaluation Design**



possible, we interviewed a junior (assistant professor) faculty member to gain insight into the interpersonal dynamics and potential power imbalances on the committee, a topic covered in the workshop. In these semi-structured interviews, we asked search committee chairs/members, “Are there any specific parts from this training that were applied to this search process?” and “What other strategies did you apply during the search process?” The interviewers worked collaboratively to code the portions of interview transcripts addressing these two questions according to the list of workshop topics provided by the organizers.

Credibility was established in a number of ways (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We provide thick description of the institutional context and the workshop for readers to assess transferability of the findings. We addressed confirmability through meetings of three evaluators unaffiliated with the workshop to develop an audit trail. For dependability, we provide detailed methods and protocols to assist with replication of our findings.

### Limitations

A limitation of the survey portion of this study is that it was originally developed solely for internal purposes to document and improve the workshop. At that time, we did not plan on conducting interviews and did not think about how the survey instrument might be related to a later interview protocol. We controlled as well as we could for the training content evolving over time, even though the survey stayed the same. Another limitation of the survey is that we did not collect any demographic information from respondents (e.g., department, role as faculty/ staff student). The length of the survey may have introduced bias into who was willing to take the time to complete it. Another limitation is that the interviews were only conducted with science and engineering faculty, which may have different disciplinary norms than other fields. Additionally, the interviews were conducted solely at one institution and may not be transferrable to other institutional contexts.

## Results

### Findings from the Post-Workshop Survey

Overall, 46% of survey respondents rated the workshop as excellent and 38% as very good. Table 3 lists the means and standard deviations of several items about attitudes toward the workshop and conducting an equitable faculty hiring process. All means are in the range between agree (6) and strongly agree (7).

Among participants who took the time to complete the post-workshop survey, nearly all elements of the workshops were well-received, specifically institutional demographic data, legal considerations, and practical strategies for conducting an equitable search. Fewer participants mentioned learning about the importance of diversity and inclusion; more stated that they already understood this. Specifically, participants were asked “What was the most helpful thing you learned at this workshop or memorable take-away?” This was the first open-ended item on the survey, which resulted in a variety of reactions to the training that addressed the question to varying degrees. The following themes emerged:

- Scenarios, including videos (Part 1) and breakout-room discussion (Part 2): 73 respondents
- Better understanding of data: 26 respondents
- Practical tips for the hiring process: 13 respondents
- Hearing different perspectives of facilitators and participants from other departments: 13 respondents
- Knowledge of legalities around faculty hiring: 12 respondents
- Knowledge of the available resources to navigate gray areas: 11 respondents
- Importance of diversity and inclusivity: 11 respondents
- Importance of avoiding unintentional biases: five respondents
- University supplemental funding for increasing the diversity of faculty search pools: three respondents
- The importance of universal accommodations, i.e., any accommodations for an individual candidate become standard for all candidates: two respondents

Table 4, which lists the workshop’s learning outcomes, includes a column indicating which of the workshop topics were mentioned in survey responses as particularly useful to at least some participants. In terms of engagement with the workshop format, participants particularly liked breakout discussions of scenarios (where groups of 4-8 faculty were formed) and requested that more time be used for these in future offerings. The scenarios seemed to be well-designed and well-facilitated overall. One respondent felt that the most engaging aspect of the workshop was the discussion about creating a search process that would demonstrate inclusion at every level:

When thinking about how to create a search process that would demonstrate inclusion at every level: how we craft the job description and recruit for applicants; how we create a schedule that honors diverse experiences and needs; and how to offer connections on campus that highlights diverse pathways and memberships in communities on campus. (respondent)

Some respondents commented that the workshop materials were not specific enough to their discipline or department. Most of these comments focused on demographic data, but scenarios and examples were also mentioned as not specific enough to STEM norms and issues.

### Findings from Search Committee Interviews

A limitation of the interviews is that they were conducted 6-9 months after committee members attended the workshop. As such, when asked, “What do you remember from the workshop?” and “Are there any specific parts from this training that were applied to this search process?” participants often could not recall specific items covered in the workshop. However, when more broadly asked, “What other strategies did you apply during the search process?” participants listed a number of strategies that included many of the topics covered in the workshop, as shown in Table 4. The following sections present quotations from the interviews that address each of the main workshop topics.

**Inclusive Excellence:** In response to the interview question of what was remembered from the training, Search Chair A mentioned:

I guess the emphasis was diversity in excellence, excellence in diversity, is that the phraseology they used? Yeah, I understand this, the general sentiment, and I support it. The presentation is sort of dancing around some delicate subjects without addressing them head on, sometimes, but yeah.

Some search committee members recalled the emphasis on inclusive excellence but had difficulty describing how it was integrated into search procedures.

**Managing a Search Committee:** Search chairs employed various strategies to manage the dynamics

<b>Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about this workshop.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
I think that what we learned in this workshop is important.	6.46	1.02
I think that what we learned in this workshop is useful for me to know.	6.45	1.00
The content of this workshop was personally meaningful.	6.21	1.24
I am able to articulate the role and importance of inclusive excellence in hiring.	6.44	0.79
I am confident about the legalities of hiring as they relate to diversity	6.05	0.97
I am confident about my role in forming and managing a successful search committee.	6.11	0.86
I have an understanding of the potential for unintended bias in the hiring process.	6.48	0.65
I am excited to participate in a search that prioritizes innovation, diversity, and inclusive excellence.	6.58	0.78

7-point Likert scale: 1=Strongly Disagree to 6=Agree and 7=Strongly Agree

**Table 3.** Mean and standard deviation (SD) of responses about attitudes toward the workshop and equitable faculty search processes.

Workshop Topic	Mentioned on Survey?	Remembered? (Interviews)	Implemented? (Interviews)
Inclusive excellence	Y	Y	Y
Demographic data*	Y	Y	N/A
Application management system	Y	-	-
Implicit biases	Y	Y	Y
Managing a search committee	-	-	Y
How to conduct active recruiting	-	-	Y
Best practices to conduct an interview process	Y	Y	Y
Legal dos and don'ts during a search	Y	-	-
Closing the deal	-	-	-

\*Demographic data includes national PhD graduates, UT Austin faculty, job applicants to UT Austin, and UT Austin students

**Table 4. Workshop topics mentioned in the post-workshop survey, remembered after the search, and implemented during the search.**

of their committees and ensure all members had input. Multiple search chairs commented similarly to chair B, who said:

Because there were different committee members that had reviewed them [in the prior round], I kind of tried to kind of rotate between who was leading the discussion or who was kind of starting it off for each one. And once we got going as a committee, I didn't—at least from my perspective—I didn't see issues with power dynamics or certain people talking over others or like the junior faculty members not feeling free to speak up.

**How to Conduct Active Recruiting:** Search committees employed a variety of active recruitment strategies while remaining cognizant of potential legal issues. Search Chair C explained their strategies in detail as:

A lot of diverse candidates would not consider applying to UT Austin for the reasons I gave earlier [about voting and reproductive rights], and also because maybe some just weren't considering it. . . . You go through every single person who attended [an emerging leaders future faculty workshop in my field] and you email them and you say, hey, we're looking for candidates in your area and you should consider applying, here is the link . . . And then, of course, reaching out to colleagues and asking them to encourage their students to apply. You have to be a little bit careful. Of course, you don't want to say nor are we only looking for diverse candidates but say that this is an emphasis for us, that we're trying to build a more diverse faculty. . . . And then the other way I think that's been really effective for us is that, and I think it's a good hiring strategy anyway, is to look at diverse candidates who may be under-placed in their initial faculty search. So, first or second year faculty who may be under-placed or are in a school where they can't reach their sort of full potential as scholars and sort of asking them if they would consider applying to the position.

**Demographic Data:** Search committee chairs who mentioned the data portions of the training felt that too much time was spent presenting the data, either because it "wasn't specific for our department" [Search Chair D] or because what it actually measures or represents could not be critically debated or translated directly into actions for search committees [Search Chair E, who declined to be recorded]. Search committee members did not mention demographic data.

**Implicit Biases:** Search committee members were conscious of their biases, and potentially more so than in prior searches. Member B said,

What resonated with me was a lot of talking about our biases when we evaluate candidates and reacknowledging those and talking about ways to work around those biases. But I think the most important thing is just that self-awareness that we do bring those implicit assumptions into the search committee process and what those can look like.

Other participants spoke about recognizing institutional bias and trying to be open to candidates outside of the top-ranked programs in their field. Chair F, who had also been a chair six years ago, said that search committee members are now more willing to discuss candidates from a wider range of institutions than they were in the past. In some cases, he explicitly called out committee members who suggested candidates should advance simply on the basis of their dissertation advisors' reputation.

**Best practices to conduct an interview process:** Search committee members used a number of best practices for conducting interviews mentioned in the workshop. Search Chair G said,

Even at the initial phase, the drafting of the ad, we've tried to make sure that—One of the reasons we've gone to more open calls rather than specific subfields are that research says people self-select out sometimes if you make something too specific. And so, you're missing important and very good applicants

that you don't want to miss... I think that's been useful. We've gotten broader applicant pools that way.

Member C spoke about the value of rubrics, noting that it was the first time their committee was using one.

I think [the search] wouldn't have been possible without [the rubric]. . . . There are so many biases in the discussions we had had before establishing the rubric. [They] shifted quite a bit after we evaluated candidates against this rubric because you realize the other assets some candidates have beyond traditional metrics that a lot of people like to evaluate, which is mostly publications and grant money.

Participants did not speak about the application management system (other than mentioning that it was used to manage candidates' applications) or about legal aspects of the search process. They also did not speak about "closing the deal;" it seemed that once the search committees made their recommendations, the process was handed off to the department chairs, who then completed the search process by extending and negotiating offers. Participants were able to report on the final outcome of their searches in terms of whether anyone was hired, and if not, where their top candidates went instead.

## Discussion

We presented the details and evaluation evidence of a new hybrid workshop model for increasing diversity in faculty recruiting. On surveys immediately following the workshop, participants described the useful aspects of the workshop as the scenarios in which gray areas were discussed in groups. When search committees attended together, they were placed in the same breakout room. This mode of training was particularly well-received and engaging, and it was designed to bring together and apply several content elements from part one of the workshop, including legalities, implicit bias, procedural diversity, and closing the deal.

In follow-up interviews with search committee members at the end of the recruiting cycle, many workshop strategies were described, although participants had difficulty attributing strategies from their search processes directly to the workshop. Some search chairs were proactive in encouraging members of underrepresented racial/ethnic and gender identity groups to apply. Several committees, even when they identified priority areas, had a mechanism for considering promising candidates in any research area. Some committees reported using rubrics to guide screening and discussion of candidates, and chairs were intentional in asking different members to lead or kick off discussion of various candidates. Sources of bias such as using candidates' institutions and advisors as proxies for their research potential were curbed. Most committees required candidates to submit statements

about diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) skills and accomplishments, using them to varying degrees in their assessment of candidates. Less than half of the search committees interviewed reported using rubrics, although most members and chairs were able to articulate criteria that could have been used to create a rubric.

We identify a number of challenges to address in our revisions to the workshop for future and potentially expanded offerings.

- There is a challenge of not making the training process tedious to our faculty who serve on search committees year after year and who hold important institutional knowledge about best practices. We need to avoid as much as possible alienating our strongest supporters.
- In many of our large STEM departments, search committees had extensive interaction with research area experts who were faculty members not on the committee (and therefore not encouraged or required to complete the workshop). In at least a few cases, search chairs expressed frustration that DEI perspectives shared on the search committee were not honored by other colleagues who could perhaps benefit from the workshop.
- There are discrepancies in faculty understanding of diversity and familiarity with diversification strategies that cannot be bridged in a single workshop. Some faculty want a more prescriptive approach (“just tell us what to do”) while others want more descriptions and examples to choose from.
- We suspect that search committees are overthinking rubrics or have something elaborate in mind, when it can be as simple as giving candidates a separate score for DEI and teaching in addition to research.
- We have observed confusion related to the different practices (i.e. rubrics, interpretation of a DEI statement) that are adopted by different search committees.
- There is risk in each session that faculty will experience microaggressions. One faculty, in a recorded conversation following the workshop, talked about how the scenario about a faculty candidate from an HBCU was true and needed to be discussed, but also how it was hurtful to witness her non-Black colleagues minimizing the scenario as if that would never happen here. (Note: here is a snippet from the scenario that was being referred to: “While a faculty search committee is reviewing the long list of applicants, someone flags an applicant who received their undergraduate and graduate degrees from an HBCU as a top competitor for the position. A colleague responds that the department has never recruited from an HBCU because these schools don’t tend to house the top scholars in the field.”)

## Next Steps

In response to these challenges, we are developing new practices for this coming year. First, we will invite faculty to contribute content to revised workshop

curricula, including for panels about best practices. This will engage our most dedicated faculty while potentially addressing concerns that workshop content is not tailored specifically enough to STEM. Second, we are developing an option for faculty to test out of part or all of Part 1 of the workshop by correctly answering the pre-test questions. If they do not correctly answer pre-test questions, they will be returned to Part 1 to complete the materials prior to completing the post-test questions. A one-page refresher will be circulated to all those who test out so that the most critical aspects covered in Part 1 are readily available for reference. Finally, we are continuing to develop more scenarios created by a variety of faculty to address a broad range of challenges and strategies related to inclusive recruiting. Future work will also include long-term tracking and comparison of diversity in recruiting pools, faculty hiring and retention. We are considering expanding the workshop beyond search committees so that all faculty, whether serving on a committee or not, receive the training.

Finally, it is worth mentioning two broad concerns raised by the new hybrid model and the expectation that all faculty serving on a committee attend. First is the concern that the workshop was possibly suggesting practices that are not legal. Some specific areas of concern included the workshop’s recommendation that committee members and departments actively recruit people on the basis of protected categories to the applicant pool in order to demographically diversify the pool. This practice felt confusing to some and was sometimes confused with the University of Texas System’s so-called “Rooney Rule” mandate (University of Texas System, 2016) that states that for all senior administrative positions, the committee must “Conduct a search process that delivers a pool for interview by the final decisionmaker that includes female, male, and underrepresented group candidates.” For faculty hires, it is not permitted to include or exclude a qualified person from an interview on the basis of a protected status (age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran status). At the point where a faculty candidate can win or lose something (e.g., a first-round interview, a place on the short list, a job offer), demographics protected by law cannot be discussed or considered. For senior leadership positions, however, these protected categories must be used to create the short list of candidates to be interviewed. To help resolve this tension, faculty have asked for clarification about when a faculty search pool begins and ends. In response to these questions, the Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity has been meeting monthly with the Vice President for Legal Affairs and the Office of Equity and Inclusion to further develop materials for the workshops to best guide faculty search committees with the legalities.

Second, a concern emerged about the broader university efforts around faculty diversity, equity and inclusion. Some participants commented on the

institutional inconsistency between the stated diversity goals and the reality at the administrative level. There was a feeling amongst faculty that the University was putting diversification efforts solely on the shoulders of its faculty, as one participant commented in the post-workshop survey:

The lack of responsibility taken by senior administration in addressing the systemic racism and sexism that structures UT Austin. Diversity has become this piecemeal process individual faculty are supposed to take on, while the senior administration does whatever it wants to do, hires whomever it wants to hire, and pays these individuals whatever ridiculous wages they think is best.

This tension remains unresolved. We will continue to engage faculty in discussions about best practices combined with data about the success of these practices over time. There needs to be more conversations about expectations, especially around the idea that a lack of diversity can or should be solved entirely at the level of search committees (who also cannot address pay inequities or diversity in leadership). These two concerns—that the workshops are not clear enough about tensions between diversification strategies and legal parameters, and that the responsibility of diversification is expected of faculty search committees and not of upper administration—raise important moral questions concerning responsibility that will continue to shape this work over time.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Our development and evaluation of the new hybrid workshop model provides an opportunity for other institutions, including our partners in the Research University Alliance, to consider the new approaches reported in this paper and adopt elements of the model that might enhance their hiring processes. We encourage institutions to examine the demographics of their applicant pools and those who receive offers. The racial/ethnic demographics within our faculty applicant pools mirror the (small) percentages of PhDs awarded to US citizens and/or permanent residents that identify as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx or Native Americans in STEM in the United States. This indicates the need to build relationships with prospective faculty to increase their interest in higher education within STEM fields and ultimately in faculty careers within the academy. However, we have seen the percentages of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx candidates who have received faculty offers in Engineering within our institution increase (from 18% in 2017 to 30% in 2021), suggesting that training, university wide conversations, and other efforts to reduce bias are having a positive influence and that committees are assessing candidate talent through a broader lens<sup>2</sup>. Going forward, we will track the demographics of



applicant pools and those who receive and accept offers to understand longitudinally the effects the workshop can have on the diversity of our faculty.

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<sup>2</sup> While the university has demographic personnel data, we were unable to obtain permission to share those tables at this time.

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## Faculty Search Committee Workshop on Diversity Evaluation

Please answer the following questions as honestly as you can. These results will be used for our efforts to continually improve this workshop.

Q1 Overall, this workshop was... [Excellent, Very good, Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, Very unsatisfactory]

Q1a You said that this workshop was unsatisfactory. In a sentence or two, could you please tell us why?

Q2 Rate your satisfaction with each of the following [Very dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied, Very satisfied]

- The workshop leader's presentation
- The video presentations
- The Reflection and Discussion segments

Q3 Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about this workshop [Strongly disagree, Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neutral, Somewhat agree, Agree, Strongly agree].

- I think that what we learned in this workshop is important.
- I think that what we learned in this workshop is useful for me to know.
- The content of this workshop was personally meaningful.

Q4 Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about this workshop. [Strongly disagree, Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neutral, Somewhat agree, Agree, Strongly agree].

- I am able to articulate the role and importance of inclusive excellence in hiring.
- I am confident about the legalities of hiring as they relate to diversity.
- I am confident about my role in forming and managing a successful search committee.
- I have an understanding of the potential for unintended bias in the hiring process.
- I am excited to participate in a search that prioritizes innovation, diversity, and inclusive excellence.

Q5 What was most the helpful thing that you learned in this workshop?

Q6 Describe the time in the workshop when you were the most engaged.

Q7 What caused you the most difficulty in this workshop?

Q8 What suggestion(s) can you make that would enhance your experience in this workshop?

Q9 Do you think this workshop would be beneficial to your colleagues? [Definitely yes, Probably yes, Might or might not, Probably not, Definitely not]

Q9a You said that you think this workshop would be beneficial to your colleagues. What about this workshop would be beneficial to your colleagues?

Q9b You said you don't think this workshop would be beneficial to your colleagues. What would make this workshop more beneficial to your colleagues?

Q10 Overall, how difficult or easy was it for you to access and navigate the workshop via Zoom? [Extremely easy, Somewhat easy, Neither easy nor difficult, Somewhat difficult, Extremely difficulty]

Q11 To the best of your knowledge, how many faculty hiring searches is your department planning to conduct in the next two years? [None, 1-3, 4-6, 7 or more, Don't know]

Q12 If the material in this workshop were presented to your department, do you think the content needs to be tailored specifically for your department, and if so, how would you change it?

[I would not change the presentation of this material to my department,  
I would change the presentation of this material to my department by: [open response]]

Q13 Would you say that the content and discussions of this workshop made you uncomfortable? [Extremely uncomfortable, Moderately uncomfortable, Slightly uncomfortable, The content and discussion did not make me uncomfortable]

Q13a You said that the content and discussion of this workshop made you uncomfortable. In a sentence or two, can you please tell us why?

## Appendix B: Interview protocol

1. Please tell me about the search committee you participated on (committee members)/ lead (chairs). What was your role on the search committee?
2. Did you attend the Faculty Search Committee Workshop with your fellow search committee members? Please tell me about your experience during that training.
3. Are there any specific parts from this training that were applied to this search process?
4. What other strategies did you apply during the search process?
5. For chairs: did you utilize any particular strategies to ensure the search process was inclusive of all committee members? (What were they?)
6. Walk me through the search committee's process.
7. How many stages of interviews were there? How many candidates at each stage?
8. How did you decide which candidates advanced past the first round of interviews?
9. How did you decide which candidates to advance to the next round?
10. Tell me about how the committee discussed DEI throughout this process.
11. Did your committee consider applicants' DEI statements (are they required)?
12. What were some of the explicit discussions that the search committee had about diversity, equity and inclusion?
13. Do you ask candidates about contributions to DEI during the interview process?
14. What ended up being the most useful sources of information for evaluating candidates on DEI?
15. Please tell me about the process for deciding which candidate(s) received an offer?
16. What were the dynamics between members of the search committee throughout this process?
17. What didn't I ask you about this process or DEI at the University in general that you would like to share?