

Results not Rhetoric

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Winston Churchill once said, “It is no use saying “We are doing our best.” You have to succeed in doing what is necessary.” This is the attitude we need to adopt when it comes to diversifying our campus staff, student body, and faculty. There is a very strong correlation between how diverse an organization is and how innovative it is. The conditions that allow innovation to thrive – transparency, openness to new ideas, and a willingness to look at issues from many perspectives also support inclusion. A diverse campus is the key to our achieving all of our goals¹.

Changing our demographics will need actions at many levels

- Identify/Encourage
 - How do we start as early as we can to find individuals who with our help can develop into members of our community?
- Recruit/Select
 - How do we get them to apply and how do we make sure when they do that they make it through our processes?
- Support/Promote
 - Once here how do we provide an inclusive, welcoming environment that allows them to succeed and move up?

I want to focus in on renewing our efforts to increase the percentage of women faculty in the sciences as one example of the work we need to do. I want to ensure that our process enables us to get the best candidates possible – and that means we need to get all the best candidates into our hiring pool and identify them. So let me briefly provide some research based suggestions and some observations.

Recent research that shows that if the only available information about a candidate is their gender then men are statistically twice as likely to be hired to perform a mathematical task than women (Reuben, 2013). The same study argues that differences in how men and women tend to talk about their accomplishments (we are talking group norms here, not individual behaviors) mean that while providing information on past performance improves the probability of women being hired it doesn't completely level the playing field. On the other hand, a study that modelled academic hiring in STEM found that if two candidates are presented to a hiring committee with the exact same credentials that it is more likely the woman will be hired (Williams and Ceci,2014).

Neither of these studies represents reality. We begin our assessment with some information and we rarely end up with two candidates with identical qualifications (anecdotally, I have been told that it was just such a situation that led to my hiring). What we can conclude though is that gender influences the selection process and that while it may work in favor of hiring a woman at the end of the process it makes it less likely that women will reach that final pool.

¹ This is more than a matter of having diverse perspectives at the table – they must feel able to freely comment and disagree if they wish to.

Another research study looks at how the number of women in a pool impacts the likelihood of selection (Johnson et al, 2016). This shows that the odds of selection are lower than predicted if a single woman is in the pool and higher than predicted when multiple women are in the pool.

Finally, I hear a lot of discussions about how when we deal with small numbers (and hiring pools in STEM often have low numbers of women candidates) we can get a downward fluctuation to zero. As a recent article looking at the number of American Physical Society fellows points out though (Nordstrom, 2017) while if women are $1/6^{\text{th}}$ of a pool you are not going to always get one woman in the final pool of 6 candidates, you actually expect more groups with multiple women in than zero women. Suppose you are told a coin is unbiased and every time you throw it - it comes up heads. It could be an unbiased coin based on the non-zero probability of throwing a sequence of heads. Sooner or later though, you are going to want to check the coin is unbiased or switch coins. I am arguing the time has come, metaphorically speaking, to switch coins in many of our units.

So what are my specific recommendations.

- Make search pools large enough that they will contain a reasonable number of members of under-represented groups – so do broad searches rather than focus on narrow sub-disciplines.
- Work to have at least two members of under-represented groups on any shortlist.
- Require search committee members take a training to learn about unconscious bias and also bystander training (so they can respond effectively if any issue arises during an interview).
- Require that any proposed search produces a list of desired qualifications and a checklist to be used in candidate review before it is approved.
- Set up a campus process to review these checklists before candidates are invited to come to campus.

There are certainly ways we could enhance this process. Focusing on process though helps disrupt the impact of unconscious biases (Bohnet, 2016).

I am proposing that we look for ways to perturb the standard hiring process rather than use special opportunity or targeted hiring to improve the representation of women. I see more advantages and fewer disadvantages to this approach. Hiring women through “special opportunity slots” says that our regular culture and values are not such that we see hiring women as part of normal operations. Moreover, women who have “special opportunity” positions report that students treat them as less qualified.

To help build our chances of success I also want us to put more effort into building the pool. Let’s look for ways to bring more potential candidates to our campus before we begin a search so that we can establish relationships - I think that these relationships will be key to making our selection pools larger.

I would recommend that we work to identify a list of up and coming women in a range of disciplines and

- Look for ways to invite them to Boulder early on for a visiting fellowship (few weeks) so they can get to know us and we can start to influence them to join us (and set aside funds to do this that units can apply for)
- Set up a “Research Bootcamp” on our campus open to postdocs in fields we will be likely to recruit in over the next year (so we need to plan ahead). These bootcamps will help postdocs

build their portfolios and understand the hiring process. It will help is identify candidates. We can use the LEAP workshops for junior faculty as a basis for these.

All searches should follow these guidelines – any interim appointment should not become final unless a search is conducted.

Moreover, if we want to ensure women apply and come here we need to work on having a collegial, innovative, encouraging, accepting culture accompanied by a clear statement about our values and future expectations. When I came to CU the Chancellors Committee on Women made an annual presentation and wrote a yearly report. I would like to see this practice restarted. What isn't measured cannot be tracked so I would like us to commit to monitoring and releasing data on hiring percentages, salary equity, issues with students of concern, harassment complaints, and promotion rates. An important component of LEAP was research based interventions – such as developing the Associate Professor grant program in response to data showing women where lagging at the Associate Professor level. We should review LEAP's efficacy and ensure timely adoption of the latest research.

We have learned a lot about the issues that make it hard to diversify the Science and Engineering fields. Over the years we have moved from developing role models, to supporting women faculty by building their skills, and to a recognition of structural issues that impact the advancement of women. (Rankin and Caccamise, 2017). Leadership can play a key role – either by taking a passive attitude that the situation is caused by issues outside of our control (there are not enough women with the right qualifications to recruit) or by proactively working to remove barriers (How many committees do our faculty serve on and are women doing a larger share of service work? If so, how do we change this?). I want us to be more action oriented.

I would like us to commit to addressing micro-aggressions (like women faculty being called “Mrs” by students while men are called “Professor”) and macro-aggressions. When it comes to micro-aggressions this could be part of a renewed emphasis on civil behaviors for the campus – we could monitor this by looking at the compliance levels in the campus dismount zones. The task force on sexual harassment should commit to producing recommendations this academic year. There should not just be guidelines on how to report harassment but also on the penalties applied (maybe a separate group should asses these rather than an individual's supervisor?). One way the campus can show its commitment to change is by pledging it will not enable problem faculty moving between institutions. We need to shift the focus from dealing with harassment when it occurs to reducing the incidence through stressing professional behaviors and teaching bystander intervention techniques to more of our community. Let's get CU ahead of the curve!

Bohnet, 2016 “What Works: Gender Equality by Design” Iris Bohnet, Harvard University Press

Johnson et al, 2016 <https://hbr.org/2016/04/if-theres-only-one-woman-in-your-candidate-pool-theres-statistically-no-chance-shell-be-hired>

Nordstrom,2017 <https://scienceprose.wordpress.com/2017/10/15/american-physical-society-fellers/>

Rankin, P. and Caccamise, D. (2017) *Why Women Aren't Where They Are Needed in the Workforce: Putting the Pieces Together*. The Sasakawa Peace Foundation Expert Reviews Series on Advancing Women's Empowerment.

Reuben, 2013 <http://www.pnas.org/content/111/12/4403.abstract>

Williams and Ceci, 2014 <http://www.pnas.org/content/112/17/5360.abstract>