Nudging Toward Diversity
Applying Behavioral Design to Faculty Hiring

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Goals

Two vantage points:

• Researchers: Faculty hiring research from lens of behavioral economics on system 1 & 2 thinking, “nudges” and behavioral design

• Practitioners: Two year pilot with 77 search committees trying to embed inclusive hiring practices in faculty searches
Two Vantage Points

**Inclusive Hiring Pilot**
- UMD (2016-2018)
- 77 TTK search committees in 40 departments
- 38 workshops for over 400 search committee members

**Integrative & Narrative Literature Review**
- Narrative (Davies & Rizk, 2018) and Integrative (Baumeister & Leary, 1997)
- Reviewing literature using a specific theory/frame
- Reviewing across disciplines, methods
- Focus—inside higher ed/outside when drawn on (e.g., screens)
UMD Pilot Program Goals (2016-2018)

1. Enhance the use of evidence-based practices in faculty hiring
2. Enhance the diversity of candidate applicant pools, candidates deemed qualified, and faculty hired.
3. Facilitate organizational learning

Best Practices included....
- Inclusive Hiring Workshop for the Search Committee
- Marketing of Positions and Outreach to Diverse Networks (feedback on job ad & strategy session)
- Search Committee Review of Data on Candidate Pools in their field
- Tools for Development of a Diverse Short List
- Guidance for On-Campus Interviews
- Using Criteria-Based Assessment of Candidates
Outcomes (as report by search committee members and search chairs)

- Engaged department faculty in important conversations about implicit bias and how to mitigate it.
- Influenced search committees’ actions throughout the hiring process.
- Revised job adds (for inclusivity and job attractiveness)
- Signaled to the search committee the institution’s commitment to diversity.
- Enhanced the agency of search committee members with tools they could use to enact a stronger search.
- Increased our knowledge of where established search and selection processes are weak and could be improved.
Framework: Behavioral Economics & Choice Architecture

Two Kinds of Thinking

• System 1: Intuitive, Automatic
• System 2: Conscious, Deliberative

Choice Architecture

• We can change the context in which people make decisions.
• We can use “nudges” to disrupt System 1 thinking.

Common Behavioral Nudges

• Changing the default rule or settings
• Simplification and reduction of alternatives
• Anchoring
• Social norming and peer pressure
• Reminders

Application in Higher Ed Settings

• Reducing summer melt
• Financial aid and persistence
• Retirement Savings
• Faculty Workload (FWRP)
• Work-life Integration (default parental leave)

System 1 Thinking in Faculty Hiring

Examples
• Pipeline myths (there are not enough candidates)
• Cloning (seeking out others like us) & trust networks
• Anchoring (relying heavily on one piece of information)
• Confirmation (seeking out data that aligns with one’s beliefs)
• Group-think

Key Phases in Hiring

I. Framing the Position & Search Committee Composition
II. Marketing, Outreach & Recruitment
III. Evaluating Candidates
IV. Shortlists, Interviews & Final Hiring Decisions
1. Framing the Position & Search Committee Composition

**System 1 Thinking**
- Job descriptions that clone prior faculty.
- One individual on a committee is in charge of inclusive hiring.

**System 2 Interventions**
- Job descriptions cast a wider net
- Equity advocate, Entire committee trained
2. Marketing, Outreach, and Recruitment

**System 1 thinking**
- Passive recruitment
- Assumptions about who is moveable and getable
  Assume the best applicants will apply

**System 2 Interventions**
- Use data to understand the field and benchmark
- Active recruitment
- Accountability—everyone signs off on use of inclusive practices
3. Evaluating Candidates

**System 1 thinking**
- Reliance on letters of recommendation
- "Fit"
- Networks or prestige
- Weigh some criteria more heavily than others

**System 2 Interventions**
- Decision-Support Tools – concrete criteria, rubrics.
- Leverage thinking of the full committee
4. Shortlists, Interviews, and Final Hires

System 1 thinking

- Unscripted interactions during on-campus interviews
- Bad signaling
- Tokenism

System 2 Interventions

- Qualitative assessments and second looks
- Turning back shortlists that are not diverse (The Rooney Rule)
- Job talk facilitator
- Adding sunshine to interviews
Key Observations: Literature Review

- More empirical evidence on gender than race bias in higher education studies
- More research proving the presence of bias in faculty hiring (and hiring overall) than research testing interventions to mitigate it
- Multiple methods used, including 8-10 RCTs but # participants often small, hard to truly isolate individual interventions, few longitudinal studies, many experiments strip out real-life search conditions
- No easy way to test specific interventions in different back-drops (#women and URMs, disciplinary paradigm, institutional types)
More/Less Resistance from Searches…

**More Resistance**
- Taking the implicit bias test
- “Debunking” the pipeline myth
- Inputting criteria into a decision-support tool

**Less Resistance**
- Focusing on strategies
- Reviewing data on diversity in dept. and field
- Discussing criteria prior to candidate evaluation
Key Observations from practical experience

Most promising “nudges” or changes to choice architecture from the perspective of changing system 1 to system 2 thinking

Use of data and active recruiting

Use of decision support tools, rubrics, criteria

Accountability enforced by hiring officials
Where Research and Reality Collide: Backdrop matters….

1. Ranking candidates versus threshold lists
2. Rooney Rule

1. Does the search committee trust the hiring official?
2. Does the equity admin have the power to turn back searches?
Research at the intersection of theory and practice

Practice-Research problems

• Search committee membership (diverse committee, equity advocate, full search training)
• Equity Advocates: effectiveness/compliance?
• Threshold/Ranking Candidates
• Cumulative advantage/Not
• Role of Independent Judgement

Research methods

• Natural experiments (going backwards using IPEDs, USNWR, ADVANCE)
• Hiring Experiments using CVs
• Ethnographic Approaches
• System lottery or as CA has-a large database of hiring practices and outcomes
Selected References

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