

**Year 2 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

Utah State University

**Conducting a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Informed Search –
Training for Search Committees**

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

- Embedding the values of diversity, inclusion, and respect into recruitment, hiring, admissions, retention, promotion, and advancement – practices for diversifying applicant pools and mitigating bias in recruitment efforts

Description of Work:

In summer 2020, Utah State University’s Office of Equity prevention team created and started implementing an optional, 60-minute “live” training for search committees that focuses on how to conduct a diversity, equity, and inclusion informed search. Prior to the creation of the training, search committees whose positions had been identified as “underutilized for women and/or minorities” were sent a document that listed “best practices for hiring” and a document that detailed “strategies of questioning to avoid possible discriminatory inquiries” during the interview process. Although not widely advertised, search committees could also request a “live” Q&A with an Office of Equity staff member related to strategies for increasing the diversity of the applicant pool.

The purpose of creating the “live” training was to give search committees the opportunity to have conversations with each other and an Office of Equity “expert” about how to conduct a diversity, equity, and inclusion informed search that goes beyond the content included in the handouts. USU’s employee racial/ethnic demographics are largely homogenous (majority white), so the micro-goals of the training are to give search committee members the skills to notice when biases are coming up during the hiring process and to give them strategies for mitigating those biases. The macro-goals are to increase the diversity of applicant pools and to ultimately increase the diversity of employees at USU.

The “conducting a diversity, equity, and inclusion informed search” training was primarily created through researching best practices related to incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion into hiring practices and training search committees on diversity, equity, and inclusion and bias topics. Key stakeholders, such as the hiring specialists in Human Resources and the Office of Equity’s Executive Director and investigation team, were also consulted during the content creation process.

The training includes the following topics: an overview of diversity, equity, and inclusion terms; an introduction to implicit/unconscious biases; and sections on how to incorporate

Year 2 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into all aspects of the hiring process (search committee operating procedures, creating the position description, developing an evaluation rubric for application materials, recruitment and advertising, interviewing candidates, and evaluating candidate interviews). Search committees are encouraged to participate in the training before they begin any of the aspects of the hiring process, but the training content can be modified based on the parts of the process that still remain for the search committee. Search committee chairs are encouraged to send the prevention team a copy of the position description and advertising plan for review in advance of the training.

Once the training was created, it was added to the web-based list of trainings that employees could request from the Office of Equity. The availability of the training was also discussed in the fall 2020 department heads retreat, emailed to VPs and Deans, added to HR's "hiring right" supervisor training, and incorporated into HR's resources that are shared with search committee chairs at the start of the hiring process.

Fifteen search committees participated in the training during the 2020-21 academic year. Search committees were hiring for positions in the library, College of Science (one position was a Dean), math department, special education and rehabilitation counseling department, and a USU Statewide Campus. Supervisors at USU's Eastern campus in Price also participated in a general version of the training.

A post-survey was created to evaluate the search committee training, but it did not end up being sent out to the 2020-21 training participants due to capacity issues. The future evaluation plan includes sending a survey in summer or fall 2021 to the previous training participants so that applicable revisions to the training content can be incorporated before groups start to participate in the training again in fall 2021. Starting in fall 2021, a post-survey is expected to be sent to all participants within one week of their attendance at the training.

Immediate next steps include continuing to inform search committee chairs about the availability of the "live" training, making content revisions to stay current with best practices and hiring trends, and doing a more thorough evaluation of the training's success, effectiveness, and impact. Long-term next steps include consulting with Human Resources and university executive administrators about the possibility of requiring search committees to participate in the training and potentially creating a "pool" of USU employees who have been trained in-depth on diversity, equity, inclusion, and bias topics that could serve on search committees to intentionally incorporate those lenses into the process.

The search committee training is consistent with the recommendations found in the "prevention" section of the 2021 Rubric on Areas of Work for Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education because it is an example of a practice for diversifying applicant pools and mitigating bias in recruitment efforts. It specifically educates search committees about bias and also addresses how to continuously identify promising candidates from underrepresented

Year 2 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

groups and expand the networks from which candidates are drawn, develop evaluation criteria for each job in advance of beginning the hiring process, write job descriptions to appeal to a broad range of applicants, and conduct structured interviews.

Website for further information (if applicable): equity.usu.edu/trainings/employee-prevention

Point of Contact Name: Emmalee Fishburn

Email Address for Point of Contact: emmalee.fishburn@usu.edu