Hiring Through the Lens of Diversity: Strategies to Create Diverse Departments

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INTRODUCTION

There is increasing scrutiny of the lack of diversity in the radiology workforce as well as the lack of significant progress in increasing the proportion of women and underrepresented minorities (URM) in radiology training programs (1,2). For over a decade, our radiology societies and journals have urged us to increase the diversity of radiology teams to better reflect the demographics of our patients and our society in the United States (3-7). It is argued that this is the right thing from a moral and social justice perspective, from a public health perspective, and from a business perspective (5,8,9). These "calls to action" are not being ignored. Many departments (including our own) have made concerted efforts to enhance our diversity. Despite limited success at some institutions, a frequent and recurrent concern that emerges from these efforts is that the pool must be enlarged from the ground up—high school, college. But as we work on enlarging the pool, we also must look at the hiring process.

Increasing diversity is more difficult to achieve without gaining some understanding of not only why we hire people, but also why we choose not to hire people. It is also important to understand how a recruitment process might attract, exclude or ignore individuals who could enhance our diversity and thereby, inadvertently, deprive us of a potential pool of talent. A review of each step in the recruitment process provides an opportunity to explore unforeseen barriers that derail the best of intentions. That is, we must seek to uncover the inherent biases in the recruitment process that form these barriers. It is only by recognizing, acknowledging, and then finding ways to minimize the inherent institutional and process biases in recruitment that we can hope to change our radiology demographics (10-12). By creating intentional change to the recruitment process, we might broaden our applicant pools and make our hiring process more principle-driven.

In view of the need for intentional change, we have instituted several recent modifications to our recruitment process in the Department of Radiology & Biomedical Imaging at the University of California, San Francisco. Some are instituted by University requirements but most by the department. Our Vice Chair for Academic Affairs oversees each recruitment. We describe those changes here and invite a dialogue regarding effective and innovative practices by others. Our intention is to introduce increased structure and consistency to our search process with the hope that we will be successful in enhancing our diversity in many regards—not just gender and URM but also background features that include economic, culture, ethnicity, disability, appearance, geographic, educational, and nonmedical experience. While ours is a relatively large academic radiology department, this process is potentially generalizable, with adaptation, to nonacademic medical practices including large teleradiology groups.

INTENTIONAL PROCESS CHANGES

Recruitment Advertisement

In posting the position in journals and online, there may be limitations in phrasing and detail of the job description that are institution-dependent and limit verbosity. Our institution's recruitment notices must conform to set verbiage resulting in a somewhat bland overall job description. At first evaluation such notices may not appear inviting, there is value in a proforma, albeit bland, job description. All departments seeking to hire should consider carefully the terminology that is used to attract applicants, or in the case of URM and women to inadvertently deter them from applying. In the past, overtly specified preference for male applicants deterred women from applying (13). But even the use in advertisements of "masculine" words associated with gender stereotypes leads to less anticipated belongingness and interest in the position among women (14). Job advertisements that discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, and religion have been unconstitutional in the United States since 1964 (15).

An often quoted statement coming from an internal report at Hewlett-Packard reviewing who applied for senior positions is that women applied only when they believe they meet 100% of the qualifications listed for the job (16,17). Men were happy to apply when they thought they could meet 60% of the job requirements. Other business articles have proposed that this might be due to an inherent difference between men and women regarding confidence. Or that women assume that it would be a waste of time and energy, or that it would lead to failure if they applied (18,19). While the Hewlett-Packard statement appears not to have come from hard data, employers seeking a diverse applicant pool should omit any nonessential skills from advertisements. For example, when we recently posted a musculoskeletal radiologist position where musculoskeletal ultrasound experience was a desired but not essential skill, this was specifically *not* included in the recruitment advertisement. We want our job advertisements to attract a diverse audience so that we are able to consider applicants with skills or experiences that the team needs, and also those with skills that the team may not have considered.

It is also important to carefully consider where the recruitment ads are posted, so that as broad and deep an applicant pool is reached as possible. In addition to the radiology and subspecialty journals and websites, and department social media posting, we routinely post open positions with both the National Medical Association and the National Hispanic Medical Association. It is also important that a search committee actively searches for patients by calling associates across the country and eliciting the names of potential candidates, emphasizing that we are aiming to welcome diverse faculty to our department. Simply hoping for applicants to respond to advertisements is a self-limiting approach.

Diversity Statements

At our institution since July 2018, it has been mandatory for faculty candidates to submit a diversity statement as part of their application. Diversity statements are descriptions of a candidate's past, present, and planned contributions to furthering equity, diversity, and inclusion. Such statements have been shown to increase the hiring of faculty engaged in facilitating diversity, equity, and inclusion (20). The requirement of this statement signals to potential candidates the importance of diversity considerations at our institution. This appears to be a broadening expectation across academic institutions and there are resources for both writing and rubrics for evaluating such statements available within the University of California (21–23). This geographically large university system has been tasked with increasing the diversity of their faculty representation to better reflect and serve the diverse University of California student population (24,25).

Search Committee Composition and Function

While diversity can be defined in many different ways, including personality, biology (gender, gender identity,

race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and physical ability), biography (marital status, gender expression, parenthood, leisure activities), and organization (educational and professional training), an ideal search committee might represent as diverse a group as possible (5). In smaller departments, this can be difficult to achieve. In the school of medicine at our institution, 50% of all search committees must be women and/or URM and this potentially creates a burden in departments with low numbers of URM/women (26). In our school of nursing where there is a predominance of women faculty there is a requirement for 25% men and minorities on all searches (27). In an effort to avoid possible bias in evaluation, and to address each candidate from a different perspective, one member of the committee must be from an affiliated department. For example, a neurologist might be included for a search for a neuroradiology faculty. All proposed search committees must be approved by the Faculty Equity Advisors who are part of the Office of Diversity Outreach.

All search committee members are encouraged to attend a university-created 1-hour course on unconscious bias training and/or a 1-day Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Champion training course. There is also an invitation to review a recorded lecture on unconscious bias before the search process begins, and to take the online Harvard implicit association test (28,29). The implicit association test is encouraged for all faculty and trainees involved in resident selection as well (30).

At the first meeting of the search committee, the department Chair describes the vision for the new position and the importance of diversity. Search committee members are urged to recognize inherent biases when we look for potential candidates, evaluate application packets, and conduct interviews. Each member is charged with a pledge of confidentiality regarding comments about candidate qualities. A sense of "safeness" for all committee members is intended to allow each one to articulate specific likes or concerns about candidates or the process, and to encourage all faculty to participate fully. It is key that all members' opinions are able to be expressed and considered.

Evaluation and Selection of Applicants

After the chair of the search committee has excluded from consideration all those applicants who have not submitted a complete packet including a diversity statement, or who do not meet required criteria for the position (eg, licensing), each committee member independently rates the remaining candidates. These ratings are anonymized and then presented for discussion at the second committee meeting. The committee develops a short list of applicants who are recommended to the department Chair for interview. After Chair approval, the Faculty Equity Advisors from Office of Diversity Outreach must approve the interview list with a consideration of adequate representation of women and URM applicants (26).

Faculty Candidate Interviews

Over the last year, we instituted an online interview for our first round. This allows two members of the committee to connect with candidates over a 1-hour discussion and to determine an initial impression. Since there is minimal cost and relatively little time involved in such an interview, it allows for the search committee to consider a larger initial pool of candidates and removes the pressure of having to hone in based on a CV or the recommendations of others. This potentially can lead to greater extension to outside candidates. A rubric is completed for scoring such interviews according to the academic pillars and mission of our institution, covering a range of areas including teaching, mentoring, academic contributions, research direction, professionalism, diversity, and service.

Those candidates who were scored most highly following the online interview are then invited for a 1- to 2-day structured interview visit on site. In addition to a formal research or teaching lecture, each candidate meets with the committee as a group and presents a short 10-minute talk on their goals for this position. Following this, a group interview is conducted with each committee member assigned a specific topic, again following the institution's stated academic pillars and mission. The group question and answer sessions allows everyone to hear the same answers. One-on-one individual 20-minute interviews are also scheduled with search committee members and with potential collaborators. It is recommended that interviewers use the same set of questions for each candidate, and avoid prolonged social conversation where we tend to veer to finding commonalities, and which leads to forming the "gut decisions" of whether we "like" a candidate. Each interviewer and committee member is asked to complete an online evaluation form of the candidate within 24 hours to minimize recall bias. This anonymized information leads the discussion of all candidates at the final search committee meeting. At this meeting, after review of confidentiality and bias, all candidates are discussed and a final committee recommendation is made to the department Chair.

Improving the Pipeline

Over the last 7 years from July 2014 to January 2020, our Radiology department has hired 52 physician faculty with two-thirds of them coming from our residency and/or fellowship programs. We expect this is not an unusual practice for academic institutions, with many capable candidates being trained and academic radiologists self-selecting for geographic/family reasons as well as wanting to maintain trusted academic colleagues and mentors. Training programs therefore should be viewed as a pipeline to faculty recruitment, a fact that necessitates careful consideration of how this pipeline is composed. To this end, our department has been investing in efforts to diversify our residency training programs, with our percentage of URM and women residents tracking above

the Association of American Colleges' benchmark (28). We have also been investing in medical school and high school outreach programs which aim to expose students to radiology earlier, and broaden the national pool of future radiologists and medical students (28).

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