Making Excellence Inclusive: A UCR Diversity Certificate Program

2015-16 Capstone Project

Religious Diversity in the Hiring Process:
Promising Practices for Recruiting Diverse Applicants

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Executive Summary

The “Hiring Managers Guidelines and Promising Practices” workgroup is comprised of five UCR staff members from various cross-campus departments, service / research centers, and administrative units. Our workgroup was tasked with identifying best practices, policies or tools that help address and/or increase religious diversity of applicants in the hiring process. In specific, our group agreed to focus on staff recruitment and to determine best practices that help to develop a religiously diverse applicant pool and promote diversity in the application process and face-to-face interview.

To accomplish these goals, we identified and assigned key areas of investigation:

- Current state and federal laws governing hiring and interviews
- Relevant UC policies and guidelines for recruitment and interview questions
- Best practices at other higher education institutions in these same areas

Team members examined web resources, contacted local staff and program offices, and conducted phone interviews with relevant personnel at other institutions including UC Los Angeles, UC Irvine, Cal State San Bernardino, Cal State Long Beach, and Cal Poly Pomona. In the external interviews, we posed questions on their campus policies and best practices for recruiting and interviewing applicants. We also asked interviewees to talk about religious diversity as it impacts these same areas and to help brainstorm more religiously inclusive practices.

The main result of the research was a clearer understanding of the all the barriers that prevent or inhibit the inclusion of religious diversity during the hiring process. At first, we felt this to be a fundamental flaw in the topic as assigned. After further discussion, we identified four potential recruitment and hiring practices that, by emphasizing and promoting campus diversity, could indirectly and positively affect religious diversity. Some of our suggestions would require investment and resources, including more staffing. However, some can be implemented immediately with little investment. We feel confident that these suggestions will help UCR to continue to develop a more welcoming and religiously inclusive environment.
Introduction

The target audience for this project includes human resource professionals, hiring supervisors and managers, as well as search committees, and diversity officers.

In order to prevent discrimination and promote equity within hiring employment practices, federal and state laws define categories or personal “characteristics” that must be considered and protected in all workplace interactions. According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), employers are prohibited from discrimination due to “race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy), national origin, age (40 or older), disability or genetic information” and military service. This protection extends to job applicants as well as employees. To this list, California’s Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) adds marital status, ancestry, mental disability, and general mental condition.

The University of California’s policies and procedures elaborate on these federal and state regulations and provide specific guidance on hiring and affirmative action. In the UC system, applicants, employees and students (including prospective students) are protected from the time recruitment begins for a position or during the student application and enrollment process through the time of separation or graduation. In the UC system and thus at UC Riverside, this multilayered regulation results in specific procedures, prohibitions, required practices and reporting policies that guide and complicate the hiring and admission processes.

The UC Diversity Statement positively frames this as protection of “difference” and points to “differences” as resources for inspiration, creativity and progress. This vocabulary shifts focus from merely avoiding discrimination to actively valuing the qualities and rich life experiences of UC colleagues and potential applicants.

Recommendations

Given that religious affiliation is a protected characteristic and thus cannot be addressed in the interview process or (in most circumstances) targeted in recruitment, how can hiring managers

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2 FEHA reference, webpage [http://www.dfeh.ca.gov/Publications_FEHADescr.htm](http://www.dfeh.ca.gov/Publications_FEHADescr.htm)
3 UC hiring principles, webpage [http://diversity.ucr.edu/about/NondiscrimAffirmAct.pdf](http://diversity.ucr.edu/about/NondiscrimAffirmAct.pdf)
4 UC policy on admission, webpage [http://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/4401.html](http://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/4401.html)
5 UC Diversity Statement, webpage [http://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/4400.html](http://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/4400.html)
remain sensitive and open to attracting a religiously diverse applicant pool? Adherence to federal and state regulations and university policies can result in a cautious ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ method that relies on assumptions based on visual and verbal clues or complete avoidance of religious topics and issues. In order to embrace difference as a value and welcome increasingly diverse applicants, careful attention must be paid to how to target underrepresented populations in the recruitment process.

This project acknowledges the importance of compliance with federal and state regulations and university policies on protected characteristics as well as the tension between appropriate protection and an active cultivation of diversity. The workgroup has wrestled with how to—or how not to—address the topic as assigned while remaining sensitive to legal and cultural issues and aware of the wider implications and impact. We therefore offer the following suggestions on improving diversity hiring practices in general, from the standpoint that by emphasizing UCR’s openness and inclusion of ALL forms of diversity, so that religiously diverse individuals will also be welcomed and valued.

“How to Get Hired” Community Workshops
Modeled after similar programs at UC San Diego, we suggest the campus conduct “How to Get Hired at UCR” Workshops at local houses/places of worship, community centers and area schools. In addition to demystifying the hiring process, the workshops could emphasize the university’s mission and diversity statement. Hosting these workshops at local venues underscores our openly diverse hiring practices and reaches community members who might not otherwise picture themselves working at UC Riverside.

Currently, UCR Human Resource Analysts host monthly meetings for interested applicants (including special sessions for veteran applicants) at the Human Resource offices in University Village. These “Applying to UCR” sessions lead prospective applicants through each step of the application process. Due to limited staff time, off-site workshops are produced only upon request and on a limited basis. We suggest that the campus proactively send the workshops out to the community on a scheduled basis in order to reach more applicants.

Diversity Ambassadors
To increase awareness of diversity laws, policies and practices among UCR staff and faculty members, particularly hiring managers or those on search committees, we strongly advocate

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creating a team of Diversity Ambassadors. These designated staff diversity specialists could host annual diversity training sessions for supervisors, hiring managers or interested staff or faculty members. Diversity Ambassadors could also attend departmental meetings to speak directly with potential hiring committee members. We believe a Diversity Ambassador program would address gaps in diversity training and help ensure consistency of information and accountability in recruitment. The Diversity Ambassador team would report directly to the Vice-Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion and work closely with Human Resources.

Interactive Diversity Statements in Online Applications

We recommend that the campus diversity statement be increased in the online staff application by adding video and/or click-through images that require user acknowledgement or interaction before the application can be submitted. An embedded video showcasing UCR’s principles of community and diverse hiring practices could also be featured on the staff employment website, replacing the passive links currently available. The addition of dynamic, interactive video or animation that includes user interactivity will help raise applicants’ awareness of our diversity principles and help promote inclusion and accountability throughout the application and hiring process.

For example, the UC system-wide jobs posting page has recently received a dynamic and visually engaging overhaul that features diversity on the main page.7 An additional example of how to intertwine the university’s efforts in collecting data from applicants while promoting the EEO statement would be to refer to Loma Linda University’s employment portal as a template, tailoring the design to UCR’s goals and including questions on campus-wide climate for diversity and inclusion.8

At minimum, we suggest the inclusion of a statement that the applicant can accept, similar to this one:

_The University of California is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law._

_UCR is a world-class research university with an exceptionally diverse undergraduate student body. Its mission is explicitly linked to providing routes to educational success for underrepresented and first-generation college students. A commitment to this mission is a preferred qualification._

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7 UC Jobs, webpage [http://jobs.universityofcalifornia.edu/](http://jobs.universityofcalifornia.edu/)
8 Loma Linda University Health System, webpage [http://www.llu.edu/team/](http://www.llu.edu/team/)
Diversity Packet for the Face-to-Face Interview

Leveraging an idea suggested by Noah Apodaca at UCLA, we urge the creation of a Diversity Packet to be used by search committees and hiring managers as a best practice. The UCR packet would be created in three stages. The first stage, developed by Human Resources, would include general campus hiring details, benefits information and a diversity statement in a branded UCR folder. The second stage, developed by college offices, would include the addition of college or division-specific information. Individual departments could then elect to further refine the packets with the addition of job descriptions and other pertinent departmental information. Completed packets would be provided to each applicant in the face-to-face interview or, as a greener option, emailed to applicants as part of the invitation to interview.

Implementation

Human Resources is the most logical facilitator for the implementation of the workshops. We suggest a two-part roll out. In part one, workshop organizers would target outreach to houses/places of worship, community centers and local schools. Their goal is to invite community members to on-campus workshops and develop contacts for part two. In the second stage of the roll out, workshops will be hosted off-campus at the various centers or schools.

With the cooperation and advocacy of existing departments and upper management, each department or unit will allot a percentage of time/effort for the creation of designated staff Diversity Ambassadors. Volunteers will be recruited through a Call for Participation with each department determining appropriate selection criteria. Diversity Ambassadors will not receive remuneration beyond the set amount of paid release time allotted per quarter for meetings and training. The position should be considered a personal development exercise and framed as an honor and responsibility. Ambassador duties could include: attending HR and diversity training, keeping colleagues informed on diversity issues, meeting with staff and faculty to update recruitment staff on important diversity legal issues on a regular basis (monthly, quarterly or annually at minimum), and participating in the HR community workshops.

Implementation of the augmented application portal and the diversity packets would leverage existing campus and college resources (C&C, Human Resources, college offices, etc.)

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9 Noah Apodaca, Employment Consultant, UC Los Angeles. Phone interview, January 12, 2016.
Benefits

The benefits of hosting community-based workshops include advance recruitment of community members from diverse off-campus environments and an applicant pool familiar with UCR’s mission and diversity statement. Additionally, the workshops would benefit the community groups by sharing what the university has to offer their organization, including jobs, research initiatives and co-operative service opportunities.

The establishment of Diversity Ambassadors is an immediate and tangible investment in UCR’s principles of community. By staying up-to-date on diversity policies and by engaging co-workers in key conversations, the ambassadors will help disseminate training and develop the campus dialogue on diversity. The role allows staff to contribute to the future direction of UC Riverside and also provides opportunity for emerging leaders.

Placing the diversity statement front and center in the application and interview process has the dual benefit of continually emphasizing and reminding existing staff of the university’s diversity and inclusion policies while simultaneously communicating the same message to applicants.

Metrics

Workshops can be evaluated in three key ways. First, the raw number of participants can be tracked to determine the increase of individuals reached. Second, targeted areas of the community can be monitored to determine receptivity and numbers of successful applicants. Finally, the community workshops can solicit participant feedback to on content and recruitment efforts.

Under the guidance of the VC for Diversity & Inclusion, the cohort of Diversity Ambassadors will create goals and accountability measures to insure and develop effectiveness. Ambassadors would also host meetings with campus recruitment staff, human resources officers, faculty committee on Diversity & Equal Opportunity and leadership of student programs that serve diverse groups on campus. This coalition would discuss diversity issues and assess campus climate. The Diversity Ambassadors could also host a semi-annual discussion with staff that have completed the Diversity Certificate Program to assess the diversity training resources and ideas for new best practices.

Web-analytic tools can collect user data such as numbers of views and percentages of click-through to measure the online application features.
After the Diversity packets have been created, hiring managers can be surveyed at 3, 6, and 12 month intervals to determine effective and patterns of use.

**Challenges**

A key challenge is the implementation of a central diversity oversight group that can communicate a coherent and consistent vision that will harness and organize the multiple diversity programs, organizations and missions on campus. A real concern of our group is that papers or projects like these are empty gestures without genuine buy-in or backing from administration. If UCR brands itself as a diverse university to incoming staff then it must demonstrate sincerity through increasingly visible efforts such as ongoing training and sustained discussion of challenges to inclusion. Otherwise, new staff will quickly become jaded and the principles of community will lose credibility.

Additionally, the suggestions in this paper face the same issues every campus project faces: lack of resources or administrative support, not enough people to carry out the work, not enough money for expenses. As with all changes, the initial efforts would be significant work, but eventually the efforts would pay off as the suggestions were fully implemented. One hope is that the team of ambassadors could help maintain some of these suggestions.

In regard to the recommendation of holding workshops at houses/places of worship, one foreseeable issue is that attending a workshop at such a location may be offensive to some community participants. This demonstration of reluctance could help sift out potential applicants who might not thrive on an inclusive and diverse campus. Of greater concern is a potential perception of disrespect or insensitivity on the part of workshop staff as they reach out to community leaders to set up workshops. These worries are important to keep in mind. Trust and open communication will be extremely important if the off-site workshops are to succeed.
RESOURCES:

UC & UCR POLICIES AND GUIDELINES
http://diversity.ucr.edu/about/policies.html

The University of California’s Diversity Statement says:
“The diversity of the people of California has been the source of innovative ideas and creative accomplishments throughout the state’s history into the present. Diversity – a defining feature of California’s past, present, and future – refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and geographic region, and more.”

Policy on University of California Diversity Statement:
http://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/4400.html

Policy on Future Admissions, Employment, and Contracting
http://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/4401.html

http://diversity.ucr.edu/about/NondiscrimAffirmAct.pdf

University of California Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action Policy Regarding Academic and Staff Employment
http://diversity.ucr.edu/about/NondiscrimAffirmAct.pdf

APM 035. Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination in Employment
http://diversity.ucr.edu/about/apm-035.pdf

PPSM 12. Nondiscrimination in Employment
http://diversity.ucr.edu/about/PPSM12_NondiscriminationinEmployment.pdf

UCR Recruitment and Selection Guidelines for Staff Positions
https://hr.ucr.edu/recruitment/guidelines.html
FEDERAL & STATE REGULATIONS

California Department of Fair Employment and Housing Brochures and Posters
http://www.dfeh.ca.gov/Publications_Publications.htm

California Department of Fair Employment & Housing Fact Sheet

The California Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA)
http://www.dfeh.ca.gov/Publications_FEHADescr.htm

Unruh Civil Rights Act (Unruh Act)
http://www.dfeh.ca.gov/Publications_Unruh.htm

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII)
http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/titlevii.cfm

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/religion.cfm

Cal State University Diversity Practices and Resource Documents

CSU Long Beach, Faculty & Staff Diversity Plan August 2010. Provided by Jo Ann Harris, Administrative Support Coordinator, Office of Equity & Diversity.

Cal Poly Pomona
http://www.cpp.edu/~diversity/diversity-plan.shtml

CSUSan Bernardino:
Diversity Related Interview Questions
General Behavioral Based Interview Questions
Legal_IllegalInterview Questions
Documents provided by:
Caruthers Collins, Ed.D., Assistant Director for Diversity Initiatives.