

Recruitment Tips: Starting Critical Meetings, Search Committees as High Functioning Teams
For: Search Committee Chairs
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Each meeting of the search committee is critical to the success of the recruitment, evaluation and hiring process; it also presents the opportunity for ongoing group cohesion leading to full and honest participation of the group's members. Attending to these aspects and making sure the official procedures and best practices are conducted confidentially and transparently is the role of the search chair, no matter the eventual outcome of the search process.

It is important for the search committee chair to reference [this checklist each meeting](#).

Indeed, there are a few critical moments in the lifecycle of a search committee during which the chair can focus on process and minimize bias. These especially include final evaluation/recommendation meetings when fatigue and emotions can be high during final decisions about which interviewees should be offered a job.

The search committee chair can help reset and focus the committee members for the task at hand with a statement such as the following (suitable for the evaluation meeting, for example):

"During this meeting we will be discussing the qualifications of candidates for a position in our department, using the established criteria to provide structure to our conversation. It's an exciting moment for us to envision the future with a new colleague, and so I'd like to remind you about and re-establish our agreements on a few important points:

- Let's stay mindful of how easily biases and stereotypes in faculty recruitment and evaluation can arise.
- How will we address potential biases if they creep in or if one of us thinks we are straying from the criteria?
- Does everyone have a copy of our evaluation rubric and understand how we are considering the criteria?
- It's important to remember that our search process is being conducted confidentially, until we're ready to make an official announcement.
- Are there any questions about our process?"

Research shows that being reminded that tools exist to mitigate bias and that the group has established criteria can support the members of an evaluation team to stick to the rubrics and evidence thereby minimizing stress, emotions and snap judgements from having oversized impacts on the decision-making process.

Responding to bias moments in real time can be a challenge for a host of reasons, though it is often easier when the chair and committee members mutually agree to do so. Suggested categories and examples of responses below have been modeled at prior workshops about bias bystander intervention. Contact ADVANCE for more information.

- Questioning/Interrupting
 - I'm sorry, could you repeat that, I'm not sure I understood you correctly.
 - What do you mean by....?
- Arouse Dissonance
 - I'm surprised to hear you say that; you've always worked to minimize bias, and this doesn't sound like you to me.
 - I know you and you're not the kind of person to treat people unfairly, so what's your thinking here?
- Disagree
 - I don't think we should make statements assuming X [women can't make it because of family responsibilities] about Y. That assumes a lot of stereotypes about [men and women].
 - You know, I don't think that's a 'gay' thing....
 - I don't think we should assume this candidate is brilliant only because they worked with [academic star] at [prestigious university].
- Pivot/Advocate
 - Have you met...
 - I'd like to come back to what [junior colleague] said earlier about this. I think they made an excellent point which merits more discussion.
- Express emotion/saying 'ouch'
 - I'm really [uncomfortable, disappointed, surprised] by this comment.
 - Use non-verbal reactions to communicate how a bias moment makes you feel.