Massachusetts URGE Pod Deliverable 5: Admissions & Hiring Policy

This document is split into two major parts: faculty hiring and graduate school admissions. The differences between different schools in our Pod are highlighted, along with general thoughts and comments on both processes. Also included are thoughts about what could be improved and what should be considered. BC is the only school in our Pod with a graduate program so much of the discussion focused on the faculty hiring side, with a more general discussion of admission policies and procedures and what could be considered and improved.

Faculty Hiring:
Faculty hires are handled differently at each school. Some specifics are listed below:
- **Boston College:**
  - Currently in the midst of a faculty search
  - BC did a survey in December and one question was "what's the most important/immediate thing that we can do to increase diversity in the department?" and the answer was overwhelmingly "diversity the faculty"
  - Has to report diversity metrics for the applicant pool, but are not held to any specific standards along the way (e.g., through different stages in the process)
  - A Black candidate has never (to our knowledge) made it to the final round of the application process
  - Work can be done to improve the diversity of the initial-stage applicant pool, as this would propagate diversity through all stages
    - Perhaps need to focus on how to craft the advert and where/how to post it
- **Lesley University:**

- ○ At all stages of faculty hiring, the pool of applicants must meet certain percentages on individuals who self-identify of POC 2+ (people of color 2+ races). In order to close the search, the pool of applicants needs to match the diversity in doctoral awards from associated fields within a margin of error. In order to proceed at each stage, the percentage of POC 2+ candidates must meet the percentage of the pool those candidates were selected from within a margin of error. In order to proceed at each stage, the search chair must request approval from the diversity officer in Human Resources.
- ○ Overall I think this does help. It often forces us to reconsider candidates that we may otherwise have passed by in order to progress the search.
- ○ All interviews, phone and in-person, have to be scripted so that the same exact questions are asked to all faculty candidates, again as an attempt to mitigate implicit bias in the interview process
- ○ Members of all faculty search committees must undergo implicit bias training through HR before they are given access to the applicant pool.
- ○ There have been recent efforts to prioritize hiring faculty of color, particularly where they are not represented in existing faculty.
- ○ It is less clear what the process is for administrative hires. Hiring committees I have been on at the AVP level did not follow diversity protocols, except for the screenings as to proportion of POC 2+ candidates. We did not script interviews, for example.
- ● **General Comments / Thoughts (not specific to any school or faculty):**
  - ○ Need to be aware of the "bro culture" and the tendency to sometimes overtly seek out those who "vibe with the department" especially in the interview stage. This perception of "fit" is very often coded language for implicit bias.
  - ○ Hiring committees are often times white male dominated
    - ■ This could be changed, but need to be mindful to not tokenize faculty members who identify as underrepresented minorities.
  - ○ Diversity of applicant pool tends to decrease as a hiring process moves forward in stages, meaning that diverse applicants are often characterized as less qualified
  - ○ "Departments don't hire people, universities do"

- If the administration wants diversity, it will happen
- Again, the top levels of the institution have a lot of power, and ultimate say over hiring and promotion
      - At these institutions, do faculty of color get retained and promoted at the same rate as white faculty?
- **Questions to consider:**
  - How specific can departments be in looking at specific groups for hiring (e.g., can they advertise for a position only open to women, Black applicants, etc.)
    - Pretty confident that this is illegal in the states, but could be different in other countries
    - But could you frame it differently:
      - E.g., "We are looking for someone who will contribute to a diverse perspective and bring something diverse to the faculty in the department"
  - Do we consider what fraction of earth science the applicant pool is drawn from?
    - E.g., oceanography and soil science tend to have more women in them overall
    - So does integrating soil science and oceanography more fully into the geosciences tend to increase the female presence in the geosciences overall?
    - Different sub-disciplines there may be differences in representation
  - Are there inherent/embedded biases within the hiring process?
    - We tend to say "no, we are hiring the top candidate" but over and over again, the "top candidate" tends to be the one that the committees are the most connected to
    - We have to admit this as our first step! We have to admit that we are inherently biased by self-similarity-driven preferences
    - Due to implicit bias, committees of white men (just as an example) tend to find white male applicants most qualified. How do we overcome this factor in order to intentionally diversity faculty when many faculty hiring committees lack diversity, so must look beyond this self-similarity?
    - Because we want to believe that academia is a meritocracy, this is very difficult to solve. Also, for those of us who are

white, it makes us uncomfortable to consider that we may have gotten our positions not solely because we were the most qualified, but in part because we made the committee comfortable.
  - How are students involved in the faculty hiring process?
    - How is feedback from students compiled and dealt with?
  - Cluster-hire (don't want people to feel alone, needed to not only attract but also retain a diverse cohort), but permission to run a cluster hire comes from the administration level
  - Could we consider having an outside consultant evaluate the hiring processes?
  - How do we separate ourselves from a system of evaluation and hiring that seems to lead to the same set of outcomes?

Graduate student admissions:
- Connection to representation being a key impact on pipeline
- The first thing you see as an applicant on the website is the "wall of white" of white men on the faculty, but how important is seeing the diversity of the current students? Or is it all about the diversity of the faculty?
  - Mixed thoughts on this, would be interesting to see how BIPOC applicants feels about this question
- Important to make sure everyone feels like part of a community/family
- How do we increase the diversity of the applicant pool?
  - Has to be a balance between the department and the professor who you are coming in to work with
  - The advisor has a lot of say in a department that's small-medium size, since they will be working directly with the student
    - Each professor must then be aware of these efforts
  - Is it okay if Professor X tends to admit a certain type of student vs Professor Y tends to admit a different type of student?
- Maybe focusing on the faculty and undergrad diversity is more immediately do-able?
- Getting people to apply in the first place is huge, broad advertisement is important
  - Could having a specific statement of diversity in the advert be important
  - Can we send emails to more people at HBCUs?

- - Can we be more "aggressive" about the tactics of advertising and casting the net?
  - BC ditched the GRE this year
    - No drop off in quality of applicants
    - If anything, it has been a positive thing
  - Retention is a big issue as well
    - If people don't feel part of the community, they feel less comfortable and so they leave the community

Resources:
- https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-case-for-cluster-hiring-to-diversify-your-faculty/
- McMaster University cluster hire: https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/articles/mcmaster-makes-commitment-to-black-academic-excellence-across-the-university/