

2019 TA Institute

Topic: Hiring for Success

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Background/Intro

- Address hiring at all levels, even administrative levels
- Need to recruit people from diverse backgrounds
- Build pipeline contacts/promotion
- Can't figure out why some hires worked out well, and others didn't/predictive capacity is not great
- Job descriptions
- Succession planning
- What to do to help with success
- If you're in a small center (5 faculty or less); lots of training and consultation specialists; hard to hire with the intention of promotion or helping people grow in their job

Discussion and examples:

What are your funding streams like?

- Partial university funding, but most are funded outside the university

Interview questions

- Sample interview questions
 - What are your pet peeves in the workplace?
 - Ask: Given a choice, would you rather work by yourself, or with a team? You MUST choose one. (this is important in a highly collaborative environment)
 - What would your boss/coworkers say is your greatest strength?
 - If we hired you, what kind of supports would you need from us in your first six months? What kind of supports would you need after a year?

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- Most people don't ask good questions from the references
 - Ex: "When this candidate worked with you, can you tell me about a collaboration they had that was really successful?"
 - HR limits what you can ask references; may be Department of Labor standards, but more often than not, it's the university standard
- How can you steer away from hiring highly competent, yet toxic people whose attitude/behavior can bring down team morale?
 - Hard to measure and use in performance review
 - Brent: You can use the word "collaboration"- rate employees' ability to collaborate
 - Improper hiring can be a huge time suck
- Teleworking policies
 - Preference in the room: In office work rather than teleworking
- What type of personalities are able to work on soft money
 - Celia: We let people know upfront that we are 100% soft money, but we also want them to know it's a stable job; we've only laid off people twice in 30 years
- Emily: We hire a lot of trainees, so we already know what their work ethic determinants are
 - But how do you hire a good mix of people with diverse backgrounds
- Recruitment venues
 - Recruitment matching and supervision
 - Hiring through the dean, since we don't have capacity to provide stipends, tuition money, etc.
 - Dean came to center and said "would you like a graduate assistant?" Seemed like a good match. They pay for tuition, UCEDD pays for stipend.
 - Good model: university pays the tuition, center pays the stipend
 - Tuition waivers for students are helpful; or a pool of money for tuition (getting rarer)
 - Challenge: Diversity hiring in a state that is 90% Caucasian
 - Brent: We hired permanent residents (often from a nearby airforce base with 30,000 people). Airforce base represented the diversity across the nation (gender orientation, ethnicity, language, etc). And their hires have been excellent (project directors, etc)
 - Celia: Even in a city as diverse as Philadelphia, it's been difficult to recruit minorities for senior level positions
 - Leadership positions are held mostly by white women
 - Competitive recruits will be wooed by organizations with a lot more money
 - Doing fellowships to end up in disciplinary positions
 - Hope that LEND people end up in leadership positions

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- Recruitment is really hard in academia; not very welcoming, not lucrative, need for mentors, very narrow standards
- Soft money funding is hard for people to rely on
- Recruits are making decisions based on family decisions, may be more receptive to soft money positions
- Gender diversity: recruits at these UCEDDs skew heavily female and Caucasian
 - Lots of energy around a good mix of employees (race, gender, religion, political affiliation, etc)
- Some centers have highly qualified people who would make fantastic directors, but don't have the PhD credentials and can't take a tenured position

Strategies:

- Tests – editing and proofreading
 - But beware of scaring off people who have learning disability or those for whom English is a second language
- Listen to what the candidates are telling you, not what you want them to say
 - Sometimes there are red flags but you end up ignoring them because you want to hire that person
 - Once you hire that person, you realize that you should have taken to heart those initial warning signs
- Ask for examples of research products, written work

What advice would you give:

- Six-month probationary period
 - When you hire, trust your gut. Five months in, trust it again
- Reopen the search, don't pick the best of what's available, if you're not satisfied with the pool
- Be motivating throughout the probationary period, but also give honest appraisal
- Think of yourself as someone's past supervisor

How can you help people to succeed:

- Be as realistic as you can about your expectations
- Be conscientious about peer mentoring

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- Be comfortable with letting them grow into their jobs; it may take them up to a year to grow into their job
- If you're with us for a year, you will likely be doing a job that is different in a year
- Keep the title, but the actual job/tasks/content will be broad, and you don't have to change the job description and risk losing your grant
- Immigrants tend to be overqualified, with advanced degrees from their home countries- try to make inroads into those communities, see who might be open