

Minimizing Bias in Graduate Student and Resident Selection: Tip Sheet

Working against bias in the selection process by

- Being aware of specific types of biases
- Personally combat your own biases
- Create processes that minimize the effects of bias (slow down the thought process)
- Utilize an assessment rubric

Common bias triggers that affect selection processes:

- *Appearance bias*: characteristics of the applicant that are readily perceived and can influence ratings, particularly physical appearances unrelated to how successful they will be in your program or how well they can do the job.
- *Cloning bias or "similar to me" bias*: a tendency to favor people who are physically or professionally similar to me. Maybe they are the same gender as me or from the same race or ethnic group. I relate more closely to them, therefore I unconsciously rate them higher, which is unrelated to how well they can do the job.
- *Early Bird or Recency bias*: the first or the most recent application you read or applicant you read/met is viewed more favorably
- *Supposed pedigree*: favoring candidates from top academic institutions (is that relevant to your assessment criteria?)
- *Accent bias*: When we hear English spoken with an accent different than our own, we unconsciously make positive or negative associations. Can be linguistic discrimination.
- *Known quantity bias*: internal candidates can be both disadvantaged and advantaged
- *Virtual interviews*: unconscious bias associated with the background of a virtual interview video screen.
- *"Fit"*: "cloning," in-group favoritism, familiar and comfortable, not related to criteria

Strategies for combatting biases:

1. Clearly articulate and define search criteria in assessment rubric
 - 5-8 max items
 - Discuss and agree on definitions of criteria (1-2 sentences)
 - Identify "must have" vs "nice to have" criteria; rank relative importance of criteria
 - Define and agree on scoring scale (high-medium-low or outstanding-excellent-good-fair-deficient)
 - Stick with the rubric throughout the process
2. Craft the position ad to accurately reflect the search criteria
 - a. The ad should clearly state what the qualifications, criteria, and expectations are
 - b. Consider your audience and write the ad to attract candidates
 - c. Be conscious of and avoid gendered language

- d. Reflect on whether the ad reads like an impossible list of expectations (tends to decrease application response of women candidates)
3. Ensure all candidates are subject to the same kind of evaluation (consistency, fairness, perception of fairness)
 - o Read all applications at the same time and in the same way; no early access
 - o Discuss how reference letters will be used (or not used); consider using them as a check and not primary source; reference letters are highly likely to include unconscious bias of the letter writer
 - o Randomize the order in which applications are read; assign reading order to committee members
 - o Always refer back to the search criteria
 - o Include professional citizenship and collegiality on search criteria (to combat ambiguous “fit”)
 - o Discuss potential conflicts of interest with potential/actual candidates
 - o Script questions that will be used during interviews; ensure each candidate has the same opportunity to answer
4. Share search criteria and assessment rubric with everyone who will interview, meet with, provide feedback on the candidates; Any written feedback forms should mirror assessment rubric
5. Require all interviewers and every member of the search committee to complete your department’s bias training. Document completion of training and do not accept input from individuals who do not complete the training. Consider SDAMPP-developed training videos if you do not have your own materials.
6. When designing the interview experience, consider stakeholders who should be given the opportunity to meet each candidate (search committee, chair, director at site of practice) and (in terms of selling the position) who the particular candidate may be interested in meeting (i.e. mutual research interests). Make the interview schedule reasonable (include breaks, longer interview slots with small groups instead of endless one-on-one interviews). Determine interview topics/questions in advance so that the candidates do not repeatedly get asked the same questions, so that all areas of the assessment rubric are covered (clinic, education, research, etc.), and so that each candidate has the same opportunities to answer.