Executive Summary

Extension organizations across the Western States are committed to diversifying their faculty and staff in order to more effectively meet the educational needs of the multicultural communities they serve. Each Extension organization is unique and has its own mandates and constraints that shape diversity initiatives. The attached document is a list of promising management practices for recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce gathered from Extension organizations throughout the United States. Here are a few examples.

- Make every effort to assemble diverse interview teams and search committees.
- Develop an effective training for search committees on why they should attend to diversity issues including unconscious bias when hiring new faculty.
- Instruct interview teams on appropriate and inappropriate interview questions.
- Make a conscious effort to advertise positions in a broad array of outlets that reflect diversity and reach beyond traditional Extension social networks.
- Develop relationships with faculty in colleges and universities that produce the largest numbers of women and graduates of color within identified program areas.
- Request that county based academic units (Extension, Research and Extension Centers, Experiment Stations, other) establish and maintain active advisory groups that reflect an appropriate level of diversity for their community.
- Assist, coach, mentor, and provide support for classified, fixed term employees, and recent graduate students to gain the experience and degrees necessary to compete for tenure track positions.
- Communicate throughout the organization applicant and workforce demographic data in order to inform our faculty about parity, progress, and areas needing improvement.
- Form and empower a diversity task force or diversity catalyst team.
- Develop effective and sustained mentor/coaching programs for new faculty, especially those with limited Extension and Academia experience.
- Clarify with faculty and staff that one of the goals of diversity initiatives is to promote a more welcoming, inclusive and supportive workplace environment. Everyone benefits.
- Develop procedures and methods for conducting exit interviews. Request all supervisors conduct and report the results of exit interviews to designated human resource managers.

What follows is a comprehensive list of promising recruitment and retention practices organized under the headings: Formation of Search Committees, Training of Search Committees, Position Descriptions and Announcements, Proactive Recruitment, County Advisory Groups, Development of Internal Candidates, Leadership Development, Continuous Marketing, Supporting New Hires, Professional Development, Workplace Climate, and Assess, Track and Communicate Progress. The many citations below reflect the growing body of research based literature that informs our recruitment and retention efforts. Your comments and additional suggestions are welcome.
Recruitment and retention are catching the attention of Extension administrators throughout the United States. They recognize that in the next five to ten years there will be a remarkable wave of baby boomer retirements. In 2008, boomers born in 1946 will turn 62 and will become eligible for retirement. As the first set of baby boomers retires, the national workforce will contract by eleven percent (Sherwood, 2005; Myers, 2007). By 2015, baby boomers age 55 and older will comprise only twenty percent of the workforce. This tidal wave of baby boomer retirements will completely reshape the national Extension workforce.

Extension administrators are preparing to effectively manage the succession of generations in Extension. Diversifying the Extension faculty and staff is a key element of that management and leadership task. The most rapid and efficient way for Extension to develop the organizational capacity to meet the needs of new, emerging, and underserved audiences and the needs of our rapidly changing society in the twenty first century is to hire talented new faculty and staff from traditionally underrepresented groups (Subervi and Cantrell, 2007; Tuner, 2002).

## I. Recruitment

### Formation of Search Committees

1. Make every effort to include an appropriate level of diversity on interview teams and search committees (Smith, Wolf, and Busenberg, 1996; Turner, 2002).

2. Request at least one person on every search committee have diversity training specifically related to the search process.

### Training Search Committees

1. Instruct search committees to assign value not only to academic degrees and experience, but also to the ability, perspective, and experience necessary to work with diverse or targeted audiences (ECOP, 1991; ECOP, 1993; Alger, 1999; Schauber, 2001).

2. Develop an effective training for search committees on how and why they should attend to diversity issues and how to manage unconscious bias during the search process (Alger, 1999; Reskin, 2000).

3. Instruct interview teams on appropriate and inappropriate interview questions. Request that interview questions be reviewed by Human Resources/Affirmative Action professionals prior to conducting interviews.

### Position Descriptions and Announcements

1. Clarify that active involvement in shaping position descriptions and announcements is part of the responsibilities of all search committee members.

2. Develop position descriptions/announcements that apply to a broad based educational background (Turner, 2002) so that people do not feel they are “ruled out.”

3. Ensure all position descriptions indicate a commitment to diversity that goes beyond including standard Civil Rights Act statements. Go further.

4. Request position descriptions and announcements are reviewed by appropriate human resource/affirmative action professionals.
Proactive Recruitment

1. Clarify that active involvement in recruitment efforts is part of the responsibilities of all search committee members (Cooper and Smith, 1990).

2. Make a conscious effort to advertise positions in a broad array of outlets that reflect diversity and reach beyond traditional Extension social networks (Colby and Foote, 1995).

3. Encourage faculty and staff, especially those from underrepresented groups, to actively share position announcements with their friends and colleagues, even if those individuals are not actively looking for a new position.

4. Develop relationships with faculty in colleges and universities that produce a large number of graduates of color within identified program areas (MWDD, 2008).

5. Develop collaborative relationships with appropriate institutions to trade faculty with different skill sets.

6. Purchase a booth at conferences and job fairs that are held in locations expected to have diverse participants.

7. Arrange for organizations that serve underrepresented groups or individuals that represent the candidate’s culture to meet with candidates during the interview process.

8. Consult university human resource offices to determine the percentage of underrepresented groups nationally and regionally in various Extension positions.

9. Identify recruitment and retention goals and opportunities for improvement.

10. Use a parity data driven approach to recruitment (Subervi and Cantrell, 2007).

11. Request searches remain open for a reasonable amount of time to ensure candidate pools reach an appropriate level of diversity.

County Advisory Groups

1. Request all county based academic units (Extension, Research and Extension Centers, Experiment Stations, other) establish and maintain active advisory groups that reflect an appropriate level of diversity for their community (Black et al, 1992).

2. Ensure that county faculty and staff, county advisory groups, and county policy makers understand the value of diversity to Extension and the community as a whole (Smith and Schonfeld, 2000; Traver et al, 2007).

3. Give county faculty and staff, county advisory groups, and county policy decision makers instructions regarding non-discrimination before they meet with Extension job applicants.

Develop Internal Candidates

1. Assist, coach, mentor, and provide support for classified and fixed term employees to gain the experience and degrees necessary to compete for tenure track positions.
Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse Extension Workforce
by Dan McGrath, Charity Buchert, Jan Carroll, and Linda Marie Manton

2. Promote internal candidates into leadership positions based on a combination of years of experience, organizational knowledge, as well as academic degrees.

3. Create a Diversity Administrative Intern position which provides experiences and responsibilities to prepare underrepresented employees for movement into leadership positions (Sanoff, 2006).

4. Develop fixed-term "pre-doctoral" appointments targeting underrepresented candidates who have finished coursework and are making good progress on their dissertation (Gooden, Leary, and Childress, 1994).

Leadership Development

1. Provide training in leading diversity efforts for high and mid level Extension administrators who make final hiring decisions (Ewert and Rice, 1994; Reskin, 2000).

2. Develop an administrative position that speaks for diversity and encourages new thinking.

3. Communicate throughout the organization regarding applicant and workforce demographic data in order to educate them in the areas of parity, progress, and areas needing improvement (Ewert, 1994).

4. Form and empower a diversity task force or diversity catalyst team (Ingram, 2006).

5. Develop and continually refine and communicate a diversity action plan (Iverson, 2008).

Continuous Marketing

1. Create marketing materials and advertising agendas to continually promote Extension as a career for underrepresented faculty and staff.

2. Update Web site postings with photos of diverse Extension faculty and staff so potential employees can “picture themselves” working in Extension.

3. Train faculty, staff, and administrative councils to be “continuous recruiters” who will continually identify and recruit underrepresented groups.

II. Retention

The “sink or swim” organizational culture of Extension is hard on all new hires, but is especially hard on new hires with limited academic and Extension experience. It is hard on new hires from underrepresented groups dealing with what may be for them, a “foreign culture”.

Supporting New Hires

1. Clarify the role of search committees in helping to retain successful candidates by providing new hires an introduction to their unit and on going contact and support.

2. In addition to designating a search committee chair, consider designating a search committee “follow-through” who will check in with the successful candidate periodically to ensure they are transitioning well and getting the mentoring/support they need to be successful.

3. Arrange for regular face-to-face meetings between the director and employees from underrepresented groups providing opportunity for open discussion (Duster, 1991).
4. Develop effective and sustained mentor/coaching relationships for new faculty, especially those with limited Extension and Academia experience (Birrell, 1995; Girves, 2005).

5. Limit administrative activities of junior faculty from underrepresented groups to ensure time spent on developing a successful tenure portfolio.

6. Provide ample and sustained professional development opportunities for all new faculty and staff.

7. Provide new employee orientations that clearly identify key individuals to contact for support.

8. Encourage supervisors to facilitate an open dialogue between new and existing employees and stakeholders especially when recent hires are unfamiliar with Extension and academe (Bensimon, Ward, and Sanders, 2000).

III. Professional Development

1. Provide sustained professional development opportunities in the area of diversity and cross cultural communication for faculty, staff, and administration (Hassel, 2004).

2. Incorporate expectations regarding professional development in working with diverse audiences and diversity issues into position descriptions.

3. Incorporate expectations regarding professional development in working with diverse audiences and diversity issues into performance appraisal documents and procedures.

VI. Workplace Climate

Recruitment, retention, professional development, and workplace climate are interrelated. Workplace climate has a significant impact on our ability to recruit and retain faculty and staff from underrepresented groups. Professional development of existing faculty and staff is required to improve workplace climate.

1. Clarify with faculty and staff that one of the goals of diversity initiatives is to promote a more welcoming, inclusive and supportive workplace environment (Bernal, 1996). Everyone benefits.

2. Insert cultural competence “moments” into staff meeting agendas as well as regional, professional association, program updates, and other meetings of Extension personnel.

3. Make diversity the focus of at least one plenary session at Extension’s annual meeting or forum.

4. Develop a workshop designed to facilitate understanding of privilege, power, difference, and unconscious bias among faculty, staff, and administration.

5. Conduct and report the results of workplace climate assessments at regular intervals.

6. Effective mentoring for new hires is one way to make women, minorities, and other employees from under represented groups feel welcome. Mentoring is welcoming.

V. Assess, Track, and Communicate Progress

Workplace climate and organizational culture are generally invisible to those who participate in and sustain them. It is essential to assess, track, and communicate progress over time.
1. Assess and communicate applicant and workforce demographic data on a regular basis in order to increase awareness of progress and areas needing improvement (Schauber, 2001).

2. Continually track recruitment and retention successes and failures (Turner, 2002; Turner and Myers, 2000). Get constant feedback.

3. Develop procedures and methods for conducting exit interviews (Kutilek, 2000). Request all supervisors conduct and report the results of exit interviews to designated human resource managers.

4. Evaluate, report, and discuss the aggregate results and trends in recruitment and retention on a regular basis.

Citations


Recommended Reading

The University of Missouri Extension has developed Diversity Climate Teams charged with improving the workplace climate in their region. To learn more about the University of Missouri Climate Teams, and Climate Change Tool Box at <http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/diversity/RegionalClimate.html>.

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