Introduction to the OSU Search Advocate Program

Anne Gillies
Search Advocate Program Director
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What is a Search Advocate?

Neutral external process advisor who:

✓ Advocates for diversity/inclusive excellence
✓ Attends to equity, validity, and rigor
✓ Encourages proactive evidence-based strategies to mitigate implicit bias
✓ Recommends practices/process enhancements to enhance equity, validity, and diversity
✓ Asks questions to help committee members recognize and test their thinking
Empathy – imagining what another might be thinking or feeling without imposing one’s own perspective.

Collaboration – working together towards a common goal

Inclusion – showing value for each person and respect for their differences, supporting full participation and ensuring that all are able to reach their potential

Respect – honoring, admiring, esteemizing, treating others with courtesy and dignity yet not being silenced

Integrity – being honest and trustworthy; aligning actions to values

Curiosity – letting go of certainty; seeking to understand the unfamiliar and resist the rush to judgment

Equity – ensuring that each person has what they need to succeed; addressing continued barriers to a level playing field

Hospitality – welcoming others with respect, regard, and sensitivity to their needs and desires
Search Advocate Mission

Enhance

Validity

Equity → Justice

Diversity

in search & selection
**Fairness**
Assumption is that everyone will benefit from the same supports – they are being treated equally.

* or *equality*

**Equity**
Individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access—they are being treated equitably.

**Justice**
All three can see now without supports or accommodations since the cause of the inequity is addressed; the systemic barriers are removed.
Implicit Bias develops within a societal and institutional context.
Program Considerations

**Training** – robust interactive learning experience commensurate with the complexity of the goal

**Shared governance** – Explicitly affirm/support shared governance

**Relationships** – maintain collaboration with stakeholders including academic faculty, faculty senate, employees of color, leadership, administrative units, relevant programs

**Community of practice** – advocates learn together, discuss challenges and share effective approaches in a confidential environment
Developing Search Advocates

**Workshop series**

- Mission, values, role
- Implicit bias (cognitive & structural)
- Diversity and inclusion
- Legal context
- Search stages – risks/remedies
- Inclusive excellence practices

**Applied Learning**

- Serve on search committees

**Continuing Education**

- Community of Practice
- Coaching & peer mentoring
- Workshops, website, listserv
Search Advocate Approach

**Flexible** – no “one-size-fits-all” requirements; Work with current practice, responsive to feedback

**Facilitative** – not the “HR police”

**Proactive** – discuss risks and strategies *before* issues arise

**System 2 over System 1 thinking** – favor slower analytical thinking (System 2) to reduce cognitive bias

**Evidence** – examine evidence that supports and contradicts conclusions; question assumptions

**Processes, not people** – strategies are non-blaming, non-judgmental
What might a similar role look like?

P&T Process Consultant or Proponent

**Purpose** - Support integrity and validity of the P&T process

**Location** - Consultant should have sufficient distance from the academic unit to have no other stake in the outcome; not limited by disciplinary norms, power dynamics, or working relationships

Initiate conversation with P&T committees *before* dossier review begins

- current/past practice
- criteria, risks of implicit cognitive and structural bias
- strategies to mitigate these risks

Serve as neutral process resources – ask and answer questions, offer tools
What might a similar role look like?

P&T Process Consultant or Proponent

Preparation - Thoroughly grounded in:

◦ Mechanisms of implicit cognitive and structural bias
◦ Specific bias risks in P&T process – assumptions and practices that can have unintended exclusive consequences
◦ Current institutional P&T process requirements
◦ Facilitative questioning strategies
◦ Bias mitigation tools tailored to P&T review

Continuing education – Maintain alignment with program practices and improvements
DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS