

## ASSUMPTIONS AND BIASES IN THE SEARCH PROCESS

Biases and assumptions can influence faculty searches in many ways. What follows are a few descriptions of common effects.

**First Impressions** – Forming a favorable or unfavorable impression of someone in the first few minutes of the interview, and filtering or distorting information that comes later. For example, one might take an immediate liking to a charismatic person and overlook or discount the fact that s/he lacks specific qualifications for the job. Alternatively, one might decide right away that a person is unsuitable and “tune out” for the rest of the interview.

**Halo Effect** – Over generalizing, or being so influenced by one striking characteristic of a person that we ignore all others. For example, rating someone high overall because their work was published in a prestigious journal, even though their research focus is not aligned with the rest of the department.

**Contrast Effect** – The tendency to evaluate someone in comparison to something other than the predetermined, objective criteria. For example, evaluating a candidate too highly because s/he was interviewed right after a very unqualified candidate, or because s/he was most unlike a recent, unsuccessful faculty member.

**Negative Information** – When trying to distinguish among well-qualified candidates, searching for any negative information to disqualify a person, and therefore giving undue influence to a negative factor that may not be significant in later performance.

**Fleeing to Objective Indicators** – When faced with difficult decisions among well-qualified candidates, the tendency to search for any information that appears to be “objective”—e.g., number of years of experience—when it may not be a valid predictor of a person’s performance.

**“Similar to Me” Effect** – Being influenced by some way in which the candidate shares an experience or characteristic with an interviewer or search committee member e.g., common alma mater.

**“Fit”** – The tendency to feel most comfortable with people like one’s self, and therefore screen out diversity of all kinds. It is important to try to distinguish a valid criterion of “interpersonal skills” from judgments of personal style. Watch for: individual differences in dress, accent, eye contact, degree of formality in an interview, assertiveness, etc., as these can have a very different meaning in different cultures and subcultures. Also watch for differences in evaluating “style,” e.g., level of assertiveness, formality of communication.

**Inferences About Motivation** – Assuming that it is possible to know something about a person’s motivation by inference from her or his life circumstances. For example, that a person who commutes from “over the hill” may not be as interested in making tenure as a candidate who lives in the Santa Cruz area.

## **BEST PRACTICES FOR FACULTY RECRUITMENT**

The Dean and Department Chair should promote a clear message that UCSC's continued excellence depends upon faculty who reflect the University's values of equal opportunity and diversity.

### Search Committee Composition

- Make sure that a diversity of perspectives is represented on your committee.
- Include faculty who are committed to diversity.
- Ensure that women and minorities have equal opportunity to serve on search committees.
- Support the work of the diversity liaison.

### Position Announcement Development

- Broaden the job description to attract the widest pool of candidates.
- Include language that highlights the department's interest in attracting candidates whose teaching, research or service will contribute to the diversity of the campus.

### Proactive Recruiting

- Advertise in venues that reach women and underrepresented minorities.
- Think beyond the "usual" academic institutions in outreach.
- Promote our family friendly policies.

### Candidate Selection

- Develop evaluation tools that ensure consistency.
- Take at least 10-15 minutes to evaluate each application.
- Be aware of biases.
- Committee members are required to support opinions with facts and evidence.

### The Interview

- Provide interviewees with the opportunity to talk with others outside of the department.
- Provide information about partner hiring and family friendly policies to all candidates.
- Be aware of and avoid illegal questions.