

NIH Scientific Workforce Diversity Seminar Series

#SWDSS

Identifying Resource Needs for Cohort Recruitment and Professional Development

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Cluster (Cohort) Hiring Program at Wisconsin

- **Since 2018 we have authorized 25 clusters across the biological sciences, physical sciences, social sciences and arts and humanities**
- **Each cluster is composed of at least 3 faculty**
- **Each cluster is given the same total dollar amount to be used toward salaries**
- **We have 45 faculty in our clusters with 20 positions unfilled**

Cluster (Cohort) Hiring Program at Wisconsin

...improve institutional excellence by breaking down silos, reallocating resources to benefit the whole institution and attracting innovative, nontraditional scholars....



Cluster (Cohort) Hiring Program at Wisconsin

Our Process

Call goes out to all faculty for cluster ideas that have been vetted by Dean's office



Provost appoints 10-person Faculty Cluster Hire Committee



Review criteria: potential to increase faculty diversity; relevance to university mission; potential for success; quality.

Pool of finalists submitted to the Chancellor, Provost and Graduate School Dean who make the final decision



Upon approval of a cluster, the Provost's Office identifies a Lead Dean for that cluster. The Lead Dean appoints a search committee



The committee must identify candidates who meet the needs of the cluster as well as the needs of potential tenure home departments.

Cluster (Cohort) Hiring Program at Wisconsin

Our Process

- The process is complicated because there may be multiple potential tenure homes for a single candidate. These potential tenure homes may also reside in different schools and colleges.
- The Lead Dean oversees the process. When the search committee identifies its choice for the position, the tenure home department must vote in favor of the cluster candidate.
- The Lead Dean, the cluster search committee chair, and the department chair develop an offer letter for the candidate. Like non-cluster faculty candidates, cluster faculty candidates also have start-up costs (not covered by cluster program).

Cluster (Cohort) Hiring Program at Wisconsin

Lessons learned for successful cluster hiring:

- Make diversity goals explicit and develop supporting strategies to achieve those goals, such as expanding recruitment and targeting disciplines where diversity is more prevalent.
- Work to ensure early buy-in from Department Chairs and especially Deans.
- Engage faculty members early in the process and follow the lead of professors, since silos may form without their buy-in.

Cluster (Cohort) Hiring Program at Wisconsin

Lessons learned for successful cluster hiring

- Establish clear expectations for cluster hires from the beginning, such as how they'll be evaluated for promotion and tenure and what resources are available to them.
- Give cluster hires credit for work they perform as part of the cluster in the tenure and promotion process. Doing so provides an incentive to engage in interdisciplinary research in the long run.

Cluster (Cohort) Hiring Program at Wisconsin

Lessons learned for successful cluster hiring

- Establish infrastructure to support interdisciplinary collaboration, such as hiring faculty in cohorts and holding regular events where informal social networking can occur.
- Communicate the value of the program to stakeholders across the institution, so that short-term sacrifices will be seen as longer-term investments.
- Develop a plan for sustaining the program throughout leadership changes, such as embedding it in a strategic plan or obtaining external funding commitments.

Cluster (Cohort) Hiring Program at Wisconsin

...cluster hiring offers a tangible alternative to some of the classic hiring mistakes. Some companies still hire every team member separately, and largely for their qualifications, without investigating how well they might work with the others. Some continue to hire for “culture” or “fit,” which can be a great way to crush diversity and breed a toxic culture. In the end, I think the point is this: Maybe the best way to assemble a great team is to let the team assemble itself.

-Sam Walker, Wall Street Journal
January 11, 2020