

DUNLAP INSTITUTE
for **ASTRONOMY & ASTROPHYSICS**

Unconscious Bias, Inclusion, and Challenges to Fair Assessment

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*(with thanks to Maydianne Andrade, Sarah Brough,
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How To Respond: Personal

- › Recognise & compensate for bias in yourself & in your organisation
 - do the implicit association test
 - get into habit of scrutinising who's in the room, who's speaking, who's being quiet, and who's being interrupted
 - make decisions based on objective criteria
 - keep careful notes; avoid general statements (“strong application”) or comparisons (“not as good as Jones”)
 - beware of elite school biases
 - use (and ask for) specific examples to support assertions
 - ensure sufficient time for careful decision-making (rushing = stronger biases), minimise distractions

How To Respond: Committees

- › Recognise and compensate for bias in yourself and in your committee
 - ensure committee has at least two members of designated groups
 - get everyone on the committee to do the implicit association test
 - articulate in advance: conflicts of interest, use of external information
 - establish selection criteria and **basis for assessment** beforehand
 - scrutinise use of “excellence” in job description
 - make decisions based on objective and consistent criteria; use & ask for specific examples to support assertions (no “reading between the lines”)
 - avoid numerical rankings (cf. yes/no/maybe) and do not rank finalists
 - ask department members to articulate level of interaction (read CV, attended lunch/dinner, attended job talk, read scholarship, etc)
 - interview people on your shortlist using identical questions and format

How To Respond: Bias Interrupters

- › Directly seek input from those who have been quiet
- › Focus on accomplishments & record, rather than inferences or personality descriptions
- › Encourage thorough discussion of strengths as demonstrated in the record for all candidates
- › Redirect focus of committee to specifications in the job ad / criteria
- › Be vigilant for reconstruction of merit criteria or for unspecified “fit”: the criteria seen as key can shift between men and women
- › Ask for specific examples from the record in support of assertions
- › Explicitly remind committee that personal information is not under consideration

How To Respond: Recommendation Letters

- › Be aware of common patterns in reference letters and in your discussion
 - Letters for men and for white applicants are longer and use more superlatives
 - Men are dynamic and innately talented, while women are cheerful and hard-working; differing use of names and titles: “Sarah is a caring and compassionate supervisor” vs “Dr Gray has been very successful with his students”
 - Prove It Again / Benefit of the Doubt: “he’ll go far” vs “she’s not ready”
 - Attribution of Success: “he is talented” vs “she’s been lucky”
 - Tightrope: “he knows his own worth” vs “she’s a primadonna”
 - Maternal Wall: “her priorities lie elsewhere”
 - Irrelevant personal info: “her health is stable, for now”, “she likes to keep in shape”, “she’s close to my wife”
 - Doubt raisers: “although problems in her group resulted in relatively slow progress, the results were impressive” vs “he has overcome personnel challenges to produce impressive results”
- › Read everything but the reference letters, then form your impression
 - now read the letters; if your impression changes, document the reasons

“We Must Not Compromise on Excellence!”

- > Seek out applications deeply and broadly
- > Define excellence and basis for assessment before reading any applications
- > Discuss if definition of excellence has evolved in response to specific candidates
- > There are many paths to excellence: definition needs to reflect that

- > University of Michigan candidate evaluation tool :

Candidate’s Name:

Please indicate which of the following are true for you (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read candidate’s CV
<input type="checkbox"/> Read candidate’s scholarship
<input type="checkbox"/> Read candidate’s letters of recommendation
<input type="checkbox"/> Attended candidate’s job talk | <input type="checkbox"/> Met with candidate
<input type="checkbox"/> Attended lunch or dinner with candidate
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain):
<hr style="width: 100%;"/> |
|--|---|

Please rate the candidate on each of the following:

	excellent	good	neutral	fair	poor	unable to judge
Potential for (Evidence of) scholarly impact						
Potential for (Evidence of) research productivity						
Potential for (Evidence of) research funding						
Potential for (Evidence of) collaboration						
Fit with department’s priorities						
Ability to make positive contribution to department’s climate						
Potential (Demonstrated ability) to attract and supervise graduate students						
Potential (Demonstrated ability) to teach and supervise undergraduates						
Potential (Demonstrated ability) to be a conscientious university community member						

Equality is Not Equity ("I Don't See Colour")



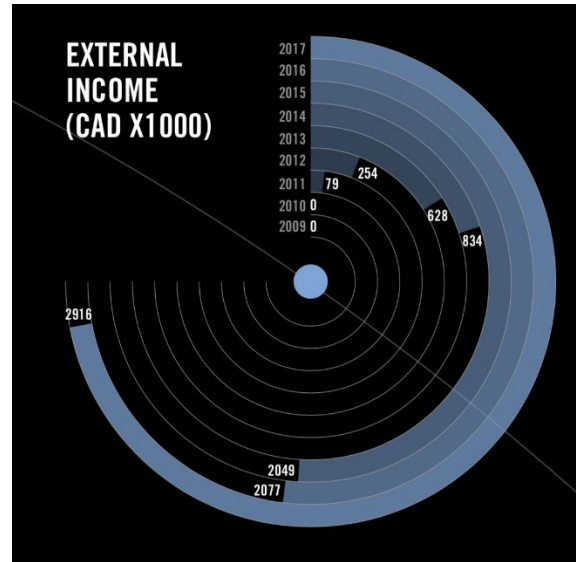
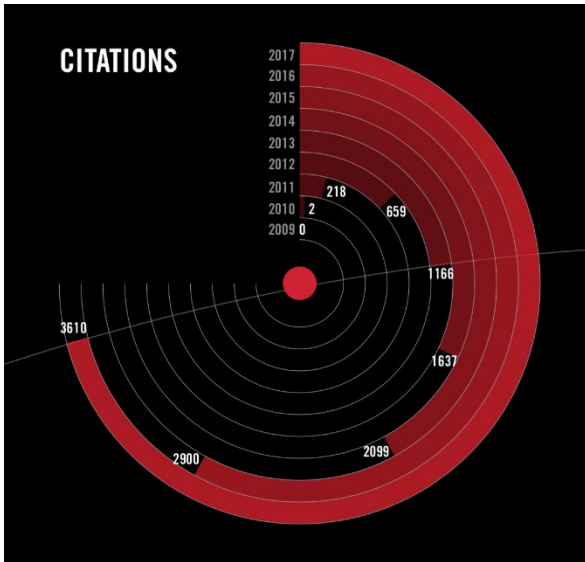
Dunlap Institute: Recruitment



- › **Explicit selection criteria and basis for assessment (listed in job ad)**
- › **Minimise “excellence” in job description**
- › Anonymous diversity survey as part of application
- › Selection committees contain at least two members of designated groups
- › Articulate in advance: conflicts of interest, use of external information
- › **Interview questions must be submitted and approved in advance**
- › **Postdoc hires: blind longlist selection using anonymous 300-word summary**
- › Selection of shortlist using yes/maybe/no grading (no numerical rankings)
- › Reference letters scrutinised for bias
- › Report on equity practices must be submitted before shortlist approved
- › **Postdoc hires: standard non-negotiable pay scale to avoid salary gaps**
- › **Postdoc hires: all positions advertised and offered with part-time option**
- › **Postdoc hires: exit interviews conducted by external party**

Dunlap Institute: Outcomes

- > Current complement: 88 people
 - faculty & associate faculty: 11% → 25% women
 - fellows, postdocs & researchers: 27% → 54%
 - professional staff: 33% → 46%
 - students: 31% → 54%



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