

Gender Equity Guidelines for Research Search Committees
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Our vision is to develop a superb Research Centre that carries out world class research that is impactful. To accomplish this vision, we need to:

- Create a research environment/culture that is open, inquisitive, supportive, and collaborative
- Recruit and retain the best scientists
- Recruit and retain scientists of diverse backgrounds including gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation

This document focuses on changes to the search process for hiring scientists to ensure that we increase the percentage of female scientists at St. Michael's Hospital (SMH). We are hoping to achieve recruitment of 50% female scientists in the next 3-5 years, as well as to achieve 50% female Faculty in leadership positions in the next 5-7 years. Other approaches to ensure a culture of gender equity for the SMH Research enterprise are outlined in a separate document entitled "*Gender Equity Guidelines for Research*".

Prior to forming a Search Committee, the Centre/Program/Platform Directors should establish any hiring goals and targets in consultation with the Research Leadership Committee.

A detailed rationale (including references) for implementing these guidelines is included in Appendix 1 below. The proposed approach aims to mitigate gender bias in research search committees to ensure that the search process is equitable.

1. Research Search Committees

The following guidelines should be followed when establishing research search committees:

- All search committees should strive for 50% female members on the committee. If the 50% target cannot be met, at the very least 1/3 of committee members should be women, reflecting the current SMH researcher pool but acknowledging this proportion should increase as the recruitment of women increases. This target will be assessed yearly by the Office of the VP Research.
- Raise awareness of committee members of potential for unconscious bias
 - Each committee member should complete the Harvard Implicit Association Test (<http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/leaderiat.php>)
 - Each committee member should complete the e-learning seminar, 'What you don't know: The science of unconscious bias and what to do about it in the search and recruitment process' (https://www.aamc.org/members/leadership/catalog/178420/unconscious_bias.html)

2. Advertising the Position

The following guidelines should be followed when advertising the position:

- Avoid gender-specific language in the job advertisement
- Establish agreement on credentials/qualifications for the job posting
- Search committee to develop and approve the job description to ensure everyone agrees on credentials and qualifications needed
- The job posting should include the following statement: *The SMH research enterprise strives to achieve equity and fairness within our community.*
- Include the use of informal networks to advertise the position and broaden the recruitment pool
- All reasonable efforts in the circumstances should be made to have at least 50% women applicants; if this proportion is achieved, women are more likely to be considered qualified for a position

3. The Interview and Candidate Selection Process

During the interview and candidate selection process, standardization is important. The following guidelines should be followed, where applicable and possible:

- Confirm confidentiality of all discussions
- Screening process: HR will provide all resumes to Chair of committee (including those who may have been screened out and the reasons for why they were screened out – e.g., unable to work in Canada). Chair of the committee will go through and screen out other potential candidates. The Chair will then present all resumes to the search committee and provide a rationale for short listed candidates and those filtered out. The Search Committee will have to agree on potential candidates before moving forward.
- Conflicts of Interest: If committee members have a conflict with the candidates, they must disclose this as soon as possible. There should be an overall agreement on how to deal with conflicts of interest (i.e., if the committee member is allowed to continue in the process, vote, be in the room for the interview etc.)
- Standardized questions and structured interviews should be used when possible, understanding that there will be opportunities to include tailored questions related to the advertised position, as relevant
 - The search committee should agree upon the interview questions (contact Faculty Office Coordinator for “Sample Academic Interview Questions”).
- Should not require letters of reference until later in the recruitment process
 - Raise awareness that letters of reference may reflect unconscious bias (see Appendix 2 for examples)
- Candidates should not be penalized for ‘CV gaps’ that may coincide with parental leaves
- Responses should be compared to the interview questions horizontally, across candidates, question by question
- Sufficient time should be available to discuss each applicant
- Use agreed upon evaluation criteria

4. **Monitoring the Process**

It is important that the search process be monitored to ensure that the guidelines are being met and any improvements can be made to the guidelines, if deemed necessary. The Office of the VP Research will review the search process bi-annually including decisions made. The search process should be documented for each search and documentation should be provided to the Faculty Office Coordinator in the Office of Research Administration.

Appendix 1: Our rationale for implementing these guidelines is based on the following:

- A diverse faculty benefits the entire research community, the Hospital, and our patients
- Individuals have unconscious bias, defined as an implicit attitude, stereotype, motivation or assumption that can occur without one's knowledge, control or intention. Unconscious bias affects all types of people and can be found in men and women. Examples of unconscious bias include gender bias, racial bias, and ageism. Unconscious gender bias is the differential treatment of men and women, the impact of which may be positive, negative or neutral
- The work, ideas and findings from women or minorities may be undervalued or unfairly attributed to a research director or collaborators despite contrary evidence in publications or letters of evidence.[1-5]. Search Committees should evaluate candidates with this in mind.
- Assumptions about possible family responsibilities and their effect on the candidate's career may negatively influence evaluation of a candidate's merit, despite evidence of productivity.[6]
- Institutions reproduce themselves
 - The ways in which institutions are organized and governed transmit their institutional norms from generation to generation, and individuals within those institutions are socialized to expect things to be a certain way [7]
 - This phenomenon maintains the power and advantages of groups that have traditionally held those advantages and makes it harder for those from groups that have traditionally been less powerful to be successful and become leaders [8]
 - The identification of this phenomenon of cultural reproduction, including pointing out assumptions that advantage or disadvantage certain groups, helps to disrupt the cycle, thereby enabling positive change [9]
- Equity efforts will benefit recruitment and retention

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Appendix 2: Examples of Unconscious Bias in Letters of Reference

In a linguistic analysis of letters of reference for faculty hired at a major medical school in the US, differences were noted between letters written for men and women. Letters written for female applicants were shorter and less focused on the candidate's record of accomplishment. They used more gendered terms such as 'intelligent young lady'.

Letters for women included more grindstone adjectives such as: hardworking, conscientious, dependable, careful, dedicated or meticulous.

Letters for men included more standout adjectives such as excellent, superb, outstanding or unique.

This finding suggests that women's success is more often associated with effort while men's success is associated with ability.

Letters written for female applicants included more references to personal life than those written for men.

Letters written for men were more likely to have references to their CV, publications or patents.

Trix F, Psenka C. Exploring the color of glass: Letters of recommendation for female and male medical faculty. *Discourse & Society* 2003;14: 191-220.