

BUILDING DIVERSE APPLICANT POOLS

Beyond its legal obligations to ensure equal opportunity, Georgia Southern University is committed to acting affirmatively in recruiting and retaining members of under-represented groups to create a diverse faculty body that, consistent with national research findings, contributes to its pursuit of academic excellence.¹ However, attracting a diverse workforce cannot be accomplished without specific, targeted efforts to expand the pool of qualified applicants, particularly individuals from under-represented groups.

While there are countless approaches taken by academic institutions to diversify their faculty within the limits of the law, recognizing that a diverse faculty cannot be hired absent of a diverse applicant pool, Georgia Southern has adopted the approach of race and gender conscious recruiting efforts aimed at casting as broad a recruiting net as feasible to diversify the applicant pool. The dissemination of the ad is an important element of effective recruitment efforts to build diverse applicant pools. Research has shown that hiring diverse faculty is directly linked to the efforts of the search committee to be proactive about building a diverse applicant pool.² Being proactive requires that the search committee do more than simply place ads and wait for candidates to submit applications viewed from traditional, discipline-specific outlets. When developing the recruitment strategy, the search chair should remember that although conventional advertising methods are valuable, they are no more effective than other forms of recruiting, particularly personal contacts with potential candidates.

In other words, the search committee must make concerted efforts to build applicant pools that include qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds. In a recently-published article in *the Chronicle of Higher Education*,³ Caroline Turner argued that “search committees charged with this task [to diversify the racial and ethnic makeup of their faculties] often approach their task in a passive, routine way.” She concluded that “search committees must go beyond business as usual to attract people of color.” Consistent with recommendations from Dr. Turner and affirmative action leaders at other institutions, Georgia Southern has advocated that such efforts go beyond merely advertising in traditional, discipline-specific outlets to exploring minority and women’s caucuses within those disciplines, print outlets targeted to members of under-represented groups, electronic job posting and list serv subscriptions that include large minority audiences, building and cultivating networks with individuals at minority-serving institutions and organizations, and similar measures designed to diversify the pool of applicants. Success of such efforts has been demonstrated to be linked to search committees’ recognition and appreciation of the institutional goal of recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty that effectively reflect the institution’s mission.

“The creation of a strong pool of candidates is crucial. Gone are the days when a mere posting of a position will yield results. Unless a college makes special efforts - including, among other things, sending the announcement to various print and online publications read by people of diverse backgrounds, contacting people at historically black colleges and other relevant institutions and organizations, and attending professional conferences

with an eye toward identifying emerging stars – strong candidates of varied backgrounds may not emerge.”⁴

In summary, to again quote Dr Barnard, “No single act produces results; the cumulative effect of many acts does. Word gets around. An institution whose actions consistently support diverse perspectives will develop the reputation of having a welcoming environment. That reputation will aid in future recruitment efforts.”⁵ It is to that end that the University continues its efforts to use diverse recruiting outlets, and, as the data on faculty trends demonstrate, we are beginning to reap the benefits of that approach (please refer to the attached tables).

1. See, for example, “Does Diversity Make a Difference? Three Research Studies on Diversity in College Classrooms,” American Council on Education & American Association of University Professors (2000)
2. “How to Diversify the Faculty,” Daryl G. Smith. *Academe*, September/October, 2000, Volume 86, No. 5, American Association of University Professors (<http://www.aaup.org/publications/Academe/2000/00so/SO00Smit.htm>)
3. “Before Starting a Faculty Search, Take a Good Look at the Search Committee”, Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, special insert on Diversity in Academic Careers, B32.
4. “When Seeking a Diverse Faculty, Watch Out for Legal Minefields”, Pamela J. Bernard, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, special insert on Diversity in Academic Careers, B31.
5. Ibid.