

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ETH WPF FOR IMPROVING THE FACULTY SEARCH PROCESS¹

Motivation. The conventional process for searching for new faculty has proven inadequate to increase the diversity of the faculty at an acceptable rate. A more proactive search process is needed that would include intermediate milestones for progress. The compliance of search committees with the proactive process should be monitored and search committees should be held accountable for their performance.

Talent scouting in the pre-search phase. A key problem of the conventional search process is that the time window is often quite narrow. A proactive process of talent scouting should be routine practice in all Departments. Field-specific databases of leading women (at all ranks) should be created and maintained. This should include the most talented women students graduating from each Department, who should be tracked as they progress in their academic careers. Contact with individuals identified through talent-scouting should be made through seminar and/or sabbatical invitations. The individuals identified through talent scouting should be included as potential candidates in faculty profile papers, informed when searches are opened and considered for target-of-opportunity appointments.

Target-of-opportunity appointments (including “direkt Berufung”). ETH should develop principles and guidelines for target-of-opportunity appointments (i.e., “headhunting”) that would include, but not be limited to, the existing policy for “direkt Berufung”². A target-of-opportunity appointment process can easily be misused and it is important to balance the need for flexibility with the need for fairness and equity. If used appropriately, however, a target-of-opportunity appointment process could offset some of the rigidity that is inherent in the long-term professorial planning as practiced at ETH. A modification of the existing policy of “direkt Berufung” should be considered such that consultation with the ETH President can proceed iteratively with the deliberation and decision processes within a Department. Special consideration should be given to targeting senior women faculty whose appointment on a target-of-opportunity basis could help to redress the gender imbalance at the level of Full Professor.

Taking the list of potential candidates seriously. Potential candidates are identified in the profile papers for proposed faculty positions. These lists could be used as an effective tool to promote talent scouting and the serious consideration of female candidates. It should be a requirement that women should constitute at least 25-35% of the potential candidates identified for Assistant Professor openings and at least 15-25% (depending on field) of the potential candidates identified for Associate or Full Professor openings. The women identified as potential candidates should be personally informed when the position is announced (this could be done through the Faculty Office). If they do not apply for the position, they should be personally contacted to determine the basis for their decision. If appropriate, they should be encouraged to apply. This follow up should be required between the closing date for the position and the first meeting of the search committee.

Advertising the position and constituting the search committee. The standards established by the University of Zurich,³ should be followed, specifically: (1) use of gender-neutral language in advertisements, (2) avoidance of exclusionary language in advertisements, (3) specification of ETH as an “equal opportunity employer” in advertisements, (4) inclusion of women faculty on search committees, and (5) solicitation of reviews from female experts. Note that inclusion of women faculty on search committees is less effective if the scheduling of committee meetings and interviews does not accommodate their schedules. Every effort should be made to do so. In addition, the Delegates of the President, Department Heads and the spokespersons for the Departments should

¹ v. 1 by J.G. Hering (07.04.2015), v. 2 revised (24.04.2015) by JGH based on input from ETH WPF Executive Board, v. 3 revised (1.05.2015) by JGH based on input from ETH WPF General Assembly

² It should be noted that the rules and practices associated with “direkt Berufung” are not widely known in the various Departments.

³ <http://www.mnf.uzh.ch/en/research/women-in-science/frauenfoerderung.html#c4940>

be required to take an on-line assessment of unconscious bias.⁴ All members of search committees should be encouraged to do so.

Timing and accountability before the first meeting of the search committee. At least 2-3 weeks should be required between the closing date for the position and the first meeting of the search committee. During this time, a small group should evaluate the representation of women among the *credible* candidates for the position. If there is an insufficient number of women among the leading candidates, a serious effort must be made to solicit additional applications from women who would be *credible* candidates for the position. In particular, women who were identified as potential candidates but did not apply should be contacted and encouraged to apply. This process should be documented as part of the official record of the search process.

Accountability for the representation of women on the short list. The diversity of the short list (i.e., candidates to be invited for interviews) must be critically assessed. If there are no women included on the short list, it should be the responsibility of the Department spokesperson to draft a short document that provides the following information: (1) a list of women who could be candidates for the short list (regardless of whether or not they have applied for the position), (2) for women who did apply for the position, a specific explanation of why they are not being proposed for the short list, and (3) for women who did not apply, a description of attempts that were made to solicit their applications and the reasons that they chose not to apply (if known). The President must approve the continuation of the search on this basis or decide that further solicitation of applications from female candidates is required before the interviews can proceed. This latter course of action is recommended in cases where there is a high representation of women in the potential candidate pool (e.g., in life sciences).

⁴ Implicit Association Test (IAT), Harvard University, <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html>