



Are you on a Search Committee or Hiring

Gender bias is widespread and has a major effect on the careers of women. You can combat gender bias with effective planning.

Leaders at ESF want to overcome gender biases to ensure women's careers have equal opportunity. Please do your part to support women as an integral part of hiring.

Have you?

Set objective criteria before reviewing applications

In an experiment pitting qualified candidates with more experience vs. more education, given CVs with male experienced candidates and female educated candidates, experience was rated as more important, but when the male and female names were switched, education was rated as more important. Deciding on criteria before viewing any applications can avoid these post-hoc justifications. Criteria should also match description.

Remind the committee the letters can be biased

For equally successful individuals, letters for men are more likely to use words like 'brilliant, creative, outstanding' and letters for women 'careful, conscientious, reliable.' Women's letters also more often contain doubt-raisers that may be seen as red flags.

Specifically solicit qualified female colleagues

Because women may not be as well-integrated into professional networks, asking people to take a moment to specifically think of these candidates can be effective. Encourage colleagues to encourage women to apply, especially if they meet most of the requirements.

Good practices to counterbalance the effects of inherent bias include (Office of Institutional Equity, University of Connecticut):

1. Learning about research on biases and assumptions and striving to minimize their influence on the evaluation of candidates.
2. Developing criteria for evaluating candidates and applying them consistently to all applicants.
3. Spending sufficient time evaluating each applicant.
4. Evaluating each candidate's entire application and not depending too heavily on only one element, such as the prestige of the degree-granting institution or post-doctoral program or the letters of recommendation.
5. Explaining the decision for rejecting or retaining a candidate based on evidence in the candidate's file as related to the qualifications.
6. Periodically evaluating the committee's decisions to consider whether qualified women and underrepresented groups are included and whether evaluation biases and assumptions are influencing decisions.