



### Introduction

The goal of the Canada Excellence Research Chairs (CERC) program is to recruit exceptional researchers from outside Canada to lead cutting-edge programs that will enhance Canada's reputation for research excellence world-wide. The goals of this program can only be reached if the strongest candidates are in the applicant pool, if their applications are advanced forward through the stages of the search process, and if the preferred candidate is successfully recruited to leave their current position and relocate both their personal and professional lives to Canada.

In order to ensure that all of the best researchers around the world are considered for these prestigious positions, institutions should create their recruitment strategies carefully. In particular, a conventional search and hiring process might not be sufficient. Institutions should follow known best-practices to encourage well-qualified candidates to apply for and accept the position (if offered), regardless of country of origin, gender, race or ethnicity, family status, age, ability status, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic not related to job qualifications.

In Phase 2, the Review Panel will review all the CERC Recruitment Plans (Part B of the application package), and evaluate the plans in accordance with six essential elements for successful faculty recruitment<sup>1</sup>:

- I. Run an Effective and Efficient Search Committee
- II. Actively Recruit an Excellent and Diverse Pool of Candidates
- III. Raise Awareness of Unconscious Assumptions and Their Influence on Evaluation of Candidates
- IV. Ensure a Fair and Thorough Review of Candidates
- V. Develop and Implement an Effective Interview Process
- VI. Closing the Deal: Successfully Hiring Your Selected Candidate

This Best Practices document highlights a few important points within each element, providing examples from the CERC recruitment plans (anonymized) submitted by the 46 applicants to the Phase 1 2012 competition to illustrate key points. The CERC Review Panel endorses the principles set forth in this best practices document.

The Review Panel notes that it is clear, from the strength of the research teams that are described in the CERC Phase 1 proposals, that Canadian universities have been very successful at recruiting and hiring extremely competent faculty members. The review panel wishes to stress, however, that recruiting and hiring for a prestigious CERC position is likely going to require a different approach, and encourages institutions to consider some of the best practices described herein.

### Diversity as a Consideration for Recruiting CERCs

The Canada Excellence Research Chairs program has an interest in ensuring that faculty hired under this program are not only top-level researchers, but also diverse in terms of gender, race and ethnicity, ability/disability, and

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<sup>1</sup> Searching for Excellence & Diversity" Guidebook (<http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/SearchBook.pdf>) and brochure, "Reviewing Applicants: Research on Bias and Assumptions." ([http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/BiasBrochure\\_2ndEd.pdf](http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/BiasBrochure_2ndEd.pdf)), from the Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI).

other personal characteristics<sup>2</sup>. The benefits of diversity in improving creativity and finding solutions to problems is well-demonstrated,<sup>3,4,5</sup> and provides the main justification for why universities and the CERC program have a compelling interest in hiring a diverse group of CERC chairholders. However, finding diverse candidates to fill these positions can be a challenge, especially if the processes that produce these faculty hires proceed in the usual way, with little attention paid to the goal of diversity in the candidate pool and the final hire.<sup>6</sup>

In Canada, all universities are expected to pursue equity within their faculties with regards to the protected categories of women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities. In addition, many universities pay attention to diversity in terms of sexual orientation, age, religion, family status, or other characteristics as well. When referring to “diversity”, we typically include all of these characteristics. However, because gender and racial/ethnic diversity are the most visible, well-studied, and easily documented aspects of diversity, most of the advice and recommendations in this document and in the literature cited refer primarily to gender and racial/ethnic diversity. Because other dimensions of diversity are equally important, we encourage hiring committees to apply the advice provided and the lessons learned from research on gender, race, and ethnicity to the many types of diversity human beings exhibit.

## I. Run an Effective and Efficient Search Committee

**Compose Search Committee Thoughtfully.** For a faculty search committee to be maximally effective at recruiting the best candidate for the CERC position, attention should be paid to the composition of that committee. Certainly, important stakeholders should be represented on the committee. But if diversity of hires is an important goal, then diversity within the search committee should also be considered. The chair of the committee must be committed to diversity, as the leadership of that person will be instrumental in ensuring that diversity-related best practices are followed throughout the search, and that the search committee is firmly unified behind this goal. The demographic diversity of the committee is also important. Underrepresented faculty members often have different professional networks than faculty from majority groups, allowing for a broader search. Diverse committee members offer diverse perspectives and ideas. But perhaps most importantly, diverse committee members serve as visible reminders that excellence comes in more than one gender or race.<sup>7,8</sup>

It is important to note that the best practice of composing a diverse search committee is not based on expectations that women or minority members of the committee will take responsibility for ensuring diversity in the search, or are inherently less biased in their evaluation of underrepresented candidates than are members of majority groups. Rather, it is based on research showing that the presence of

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<sup>2</sup> Dowdeswell, E.; Fortier, S.; and Samarasekera, I. 2011. “Report to the Minister of Industry of the Ad Hoc Panel on CERC Gender Issues.” [http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/icgc.nsf/eng/h\\_05589.html](http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/icgc.nsf/eng/h_05589.html) .

<sup>3</sup> Herring, C. 2009. “Does Diversity Pay?: Race, Gender, and the Business Case for Diversity.” *American Sociological Review*. 74(2): 208-224.

<sup>4</sup> Chang, M.; Witt, D.; Jones, J.; and Hakuta, K. 2003. *Compelling Interest: Examining the Evidence on Racial Dynamics in Colleges and Universities*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

<sup>5</sup> American Council on Education and American Association of University Professors. 2000. *Does Diversity Make a Difference?: Three Research Studies on Diversity in College Classrooms*. Washington DC: ACE and AAUP.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, D.G.; Turner, C.S.; Osei-Kofi, N.; and Richards, S. 2004. “Interrupting the Usual: Successful Strategies for Hiring Diverse Faculty.” *Journal of Higher Education*, 75(2): 133-142.

<sup>7</sup> Blair, I.; Ma, J.; and Lenton, A. 2001. “Imagining Stereotypes Away : The Moderation of Implicit Stereotypes Through Mental Imagery.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 81(5):828-841.

<sup>8</sup> Blair, I. 2002. “The Malleability of Automatic Stereotypes and Prejudice.” *Personality and Social Psychology Review*. 6(3):242-261.

diverse search committee members helps the entire committee do their job better. Ensuring diversity is the responsibility of the *entire* committee.

*“A search committee will be established that brings multiple perspectives and is enthusiastic and genuinely committed to faculty diversity.”*

*“A diverse search committee is defined in terms of gender and other equity groups, as well as expertise.”*

*“The recruitment of the CERC will be led by a senior university administrator who is a dedicated champion of diversity and excellence in recruitment...”*

## II. Actively Recruit an Excellent and Diverse Pool of Candidates

An important albeit obvious aspect to note is that Canadian universities will not be able to hire the best candidates for their CERC positions if those candidates are not in the applicant pool for the position. Therefore, much time and attention must be paid to generating a pool that is excellent and diverse, as the universe of potential hires will quickly be limited to those candidates who actually apply for the position.

**Prepare a Job Advertisement that Invites Applications from Diverse People.** The job position description/job advertisement of the CERC position need not only list the requirements for the job and the ideal characteristics of the successful candidate. It can also be used to recruit applicants, and wording can be incorporated that encourages applications from diverse peoples.

*“The recruitment and nomination process involves open advertising with a statement of commitment to equity in the nomination and appointment process.”*

*“We will prepare an executive brief on the proposed CERC to be used as a marketing tool that, among other things, profiles the skills and experience the university is seeking for this position with particular reference to the interest in candidates who: meet equity and diversity priorities adopted by the university, demonstrate an excellent trajectory according to years of experience, ... and describes the high quality of academic life at the university and living in the university’s region.”*

**Actively Recruit.** Universities applying for a CERC should spend considerable time articulating a plan for recruiting an excellent and highly diverse pool of applicants. How will the search committee go beyond the simple act of placing an advertisement in the usual places, to really *reaching out* to potential applicants of many diverse backgrounds in a variety of ways? How will advertisements be crafted to appeal to a broad array of potential applicants? Where might these advertisements be placed to maximize the chances they will be seen *and considered* by top-notch researchers of diverse backgrounds? What personal contacts might be made to recruit potential CERC candidates into the applicant pool? The best candidates for these high-level positions are very likely productive and busy people who are not looking for a new position. How will the committee locate those people, inform them of the CERC opportunity, interest them in the position, and convince them to apply? CERCs could come from anywhere in the world. While faculty members on the search committees certainly have many contacts and colleagues outside of Canada, they cannot possibly know every potential candidate throughout the world. How will excellent candidates that are currently unknown to committee members but no-less qualified than known researchers be identified and recruited to apply? Because of the nature of the position to fill, should the search/selection committee comprise international representation?

*“University-wide recruitment now requires the inclusion of proactive measures to attract and encourage participation of a broad and diverse pool of potential candidates. Recommended proactive search strategies include: identifying websites, centres and institutions beyond the “usual” for advertising; connecting with other leaders in the field to assist with broad advertising; making all members of the search committee responsible for contacting specific individuals/organizations; and identifying up front the expected availability of equity groups in the search area....”*

*“To limit any potential bias of using established researcher networks to identify candidates, we will expand and diversify our potential pool by thinking beyond individuals who are “top-of-mind” and using various approaches to identify internationally renowned leaders within top-ranked organizations. Through literature reviews and discussions with research leaders, we have already begun to survey the landscape of global institutions with strong expertise in the CERC field, and we are gathering recommendations regarding potential CERC candidates through interviews, lists of invited conference speakers at internationally regarded summits and symposia, and bibliometric analysis.”*

*“Additionally, the university will access its extensive and global network of researchers, centres and institutes, collaborators, and industry partners in wide-ranging disciplines as part of its candidate search.”....” Members of senior management are prepared to travel to visit potential candidates and to further encourage the candidates.”*

**Recruit Specifically for Diverse Candidates.** Increasing the diversity of the applicant pool increases the chances that the new CERC is a member of an underrepresented group. While the consideration of demographic characteristics such as gender or ethnicity should not enter into the evaluation of candidates (see below), there is no reason that such characteristics should not be targeted at the recruitment stage. Indeed, because they are underrepresented, targeted recruitment efforts may be essential for ensuring that women and minority candidates are in the applicant pool. How will the search committee specifically search for qualified women candidates, candidates from underrepresented racial or ethnic groups, or candidates of other minority statuses, and convince them to apply for the position?

*“In addition, the ad will be circulated through all available focus groups such as Women in Physics, Women in Materials Science and Engineering and Women in Engineering.”*

*“A highly experienced search firm with international reach and connections will be contracted to assist in the identification of suitable candidates. Special attention will be given to qualified female candidates, as well as those from other underrepresented groups.”*

*“To match our city and country’s diversity, our outreach plan has identified and will target underrepresented groups, particularly of women in technology....The hiring committee will be proactive and strategic in approaching prestigious programs around the world to identify potential candidates.”*

*“Broad solicitation of applicants will be ensured by advertising widely and going beyond traditional methods, in journals, list-servs, web pages and publications aimed specifically at the underrepresented gender (such as societies of women in the field)...The steering committee has already spent considerable effort identifying female candidates to approach directly.”*

**Head-hunting firms.** The Review Panel has noticed that several universities are planning to work with a specialized placement firm to support their active recruitment strategy. Such firms, especially when directed to ensure that the pool of applicants is diversified, may be of significant help in identifying quality candidates. In the experience of a few review panel members, however, the business model of head-hunting firms may not allow appropriate time to identify an optimally diverse and qualified pool of

candidates. The review panel therefore advises caution when relying primarily or solely on a head hunting firm to recruit potential candidates for the CERC position.

### III. Raise Awareness of Unconscious Assumptions and Their Influence on Evaluation of Candidates

*“Although we all like to think that we are objective scholars who judge people based entirely on merit and on the quality of their work and the nature of their achievements, copious research shows that every one of us brings with us a lifetime of experience and cultural history that shapes our evaluations of others.*

*Studies show that people who have strong egalitarian values and believe that they are not biased may nevertheless unconsciously or inadvertently behave in discriminatory ways.<sup>9</sup> A first step toward ensuring fairness in the search and screen process is to recognize that unconscious biases, attitudes, and other influences not related to the qualifications, contributions, behaviors, and personalities of candidates can influence our evaluations, **even if we are committed to egalitarian principles.***

*The results from controlled research studies in which people were asked to make judgments about human subjects demonstrate the potentially prejudicial nature of our many implicit or unconscious assumptions. Examples range from physical and social expectations or assumptions to those that have a clear connection to hiring, even for faculty positions.*

*It is important to note that in most of these studies, **the gender of the evaluator was not significant, indicating that both men and women share and apply the same assumptions about gender**”.<sup>10</sup>*

**Make Committee Aware of Unconscious Biases.** Given that unconscious or implicit biases have been shown in both experimental and real-world settings to negatively impact the hiring of underrepresented persons such as women or minorities, how will the search committee be made aware of these potential biases and given the tools to reduce their activation and impact on the evaluation of candidates?

*“From the start, this committee will be made aware of its charge to conduct an inclusive and comprehensive search that attracts a wide range of applicants. The committee will be given information on evaluation bias; opportunities for discussion on diversity and equity issues, hiring myths, stereotypes and biases; and suggestions for avoiding discrimination.”*

*“Human resources staff will train the Committee on identifying biases in the screening process that could inadvertently ‘screen out’ strong applicants from underrepresented groups, including the need to be flexible with respect to non-traditional career paths for underrepresented groups and to recognize those who are strong scholars and leaders in their field but who have not been publicly acknowledged.”*

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<sup>9</sup> Dovidio, J.F. 2001. On the nature of contemporary prejudice: The third wave. *Journal of Social Issues*. 57(4):829-849.

<sup>10</sup> Fine, E. and Handelsman, J. *Searching for Excellence and Diversity: A Guide for Search Committee Chairs*. University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005. Page III-2.

## IV. Ensure a Fair and Thorough Review of Candidates

Once the pool of candidates is recruited to apply, the search committee can begin the work of reviewing the applicants. This review might occur in several stages, depending on the size of the applicant pool. Consistent and fair evaluation of each candidate is essential throughout this process, to ensure that the best and most qualified candidate advances in the process.

**Develop Review Criteria in Advance.** To guard against a phenomenon described by social psychologists as “reconstructing merit,”<sup>11</sup> whereby reviewers inadvertently assign more weight to the credentials of job applicants in the more stereotypically congruent gender and racial/ethnic groups for the position, it is strongly recommended that a hiring committee spend considerable time *up front* developing review criteria. Before any candidate CVs or applications are reviewed, the search committee should consider carefully those qualities they are looking for, and rank those qualities in order of importance.

*“The mandate of the Committee for the Recruitment of a CERC nominee will be: (i) to clearly define the selection criteria that will guide the choice of the nominee, (ii) to ensure that such criteria are not discriminatory, but inclusive and comprehensive.....”*

*“We will generate a preliminary shortlist of 15-20 candidate by applying six criteria: is a world-renowned researcher and leader in her/his field who advice is highly valued by leading individuals in stakeholder organizations globally; has relevant research and interests; brings an extensive network of strong relationships with potential partners, donors, and other stakeholders; has built a collaborative environment within her/his organization and with partners; is a respected educator and contributor to innovative training programs; and demonstrates solid leadership and project management skills suitable to an academic environment.”*

**Continually Review Diversity of Pool at Each Stage.** To ensure that inadvertent biases have not crept into the evaluation process, the diversity of the pool at each stage of the search should be reviewed. Gaps in recruitment, evaluation criteria that promote one group more than another, inconsistent application of criteria, or other unintentional biases may be removing otherwise stellar candidates from the search.

*“All processes conducted by the Committee are monitored to ensure that appointments committees adhere to procedures, fairness and equity in all faculty appointments processes and academic decision making.”*

*“Recommended proactive search strategies include: ... tracking the applicant pool to determine if additional recruitment strategies are needed prior to the closing deadline.”*

*“A member of our Equity Office will advise the panel and ensure that an inclusive and comprehensive search is run.”*

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<sup>11</sup> Uhlmann, E. and Cohen, G. 2005. “Constructed Criteria: Redefining Merit to Justify Discrimination.” *Psychological Science*. 16(6):474-480.

## V. Develop and Implement an Effective Interview Process

The search for a CERC will most likely include at least one on-campus visit of potential candidates. These interviews are typically thought of only in terms of evaluating the candidates. However, universities that wish to recruit the best candidates for the CERC positions must be aware that visiting candidates are also “interviewing” the campus during their visit. How will the interview process be used to recruit the preferred candidate to the university to accept the CERC position, if offered?

**Use the Visit to Promote Your University and Community.** Reserve time in the interview visit to highlight the campus and the position. Provide candidates with a chance to have a confidential discussion with knowledgeable sources not directly involved in the search that can provide information about schools, housing, childcare, diverse communities, places of worship, or any other types of information a candidate might need in order to envision themselves moving to the community. Create a resource packet that provides all candidates with this information so that they can learn about and explore the information themselves.

*“The university will invite short listed candidates to our campus to meet with researchers and HQP. While here they will give a colloquium related to their research so that an ideal fit for mutual benefit can be determined. In addition to the Deans of relevant faculties, we have the full assistance of President and Provost and VP Academic. Each will meet with all prospective candidates and take part in the recruitment process to signal the support they will receive even from the very highest levels at our university.”*

**Personalize the Interview Visit.** Although many aspects of the campus visit should be similar or identical for each candidate, some aspects of the visit should also be personalized to maximize the recruitment potential of each visit. Consider carefully who will meet with each candidate, and match these meetings with the specific research interests of the candidate. Consider the individual needs or issues of the candidate—do they require any accommodations due to a physical disability? Do they have restrictions on the types of food they consume? Might they need extra time between meetings or talks? What kinds of information and contacts would maximize the chances of *this candidate* accepting the position, if offered?

*“Each of the selected candidates will be paired with a faculty mentor who will contact the candidate, invite them to visit the university and act as their champion.”*

## VI. Closing the Deal: Successfully Hiring Your Selected Candidate

Once a final candidate is selected and offered the CERC position, what efforts will be made to ensure the success of the new faculty member?

**View the Negotiation Process as a Recruitment Process.** Considering the prestige of the CERC program and the amount of funds committed by the Canadian government and the individual universities, salary and startup packages should not be negotiated with an eye towards frugality, but rather towards maximizing the chances that the offered package will promote the success of the candidate and entice them to accept the position. At this stage, it is important to review the different negotiating styles

employed by men, women and persons with different cultural backgrounds.<sup>12</sup> University leadership should take proactive steps to ensure that women and minority candidates receive offers just as generous as offers male/majority race candidates receive.

*“The university recognizes that a senior scientist of the caliber sought is likely already working in a leading position, and thus may be reluctant to accept a CERC nomination. The university will discuss the CERC opportunity directly with these individuals and will demonstrate how the position would provide a leadership opportunity. In doing so, the university has the opportunity to approach members of designated groups, including women and minorities, directly without any commitment on their side.”*

*“The candidate with the highest score will be invited for a second visit to confirm their candidacy and develop a funding strategy to ensure successful recruitment.”*

**Consider Dual Career Issues.** One barrier to recruiting women in academia is the fact that women, more often than men, have an academic partner to consider.<sup>13</sup> Universities hoping to hire the best candidate for the job should consider what they are prepared to offer should the best candidate have a spouse or partner who also needs employment, especially if the spouse or partner is a professional. Will the university assist in finding a position, either at the university or in the community at large? The presence of such programs will be an especially useful tool for recruiting women. Assistance with spousal/partner hiring can be advertised to all candidates regardless of gender throughout the search process; however, candidates should not be asked to disclose personal information prior to the offer stage.

*“Information on spousal-hire processes and local facilities for families such as housing, schools, child care will be provided to all applicants prior to interview. The university places a very high value on the needs of an academic professional spouse when accommodating a recruit.”*

*“The University is committed to a spousal hire should it be required by the CERC candidate. Additionally, if the candidate’s spouse is not within academia, the University commits to engaging a placement consultant to assist in securing a position in another sector.”*

*“Information will be provided early in the recruitment process about dual career opportunities at the university and in its community, and the University’s family friendly policies and resources. Balancing family and work obligations can be difficult for faculty at different stages during their careers, especially for high-performing researchers. The university has policies to mitigate the risk of qualified candidates from underrepresented groups to ‘self-select’ out of applicant pools, including the Pregnancy and Parental Leave (including Adoption) policy and a policy for spousal appointments.”*

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<sup>12</sup> Babcock, L. 2003. *Women Don't Ask: Negotiation and the Gender Divide*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

<sup>13</sup> Schiebinger, L.; Henderson, A.; and Gilmartin, S. 2008. “Dual-Career Academic Couples: What Universities Need to Know.” Palo Alto, CA: Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Stanford University.