

## Guide to Diversifying Faculty Searches

# *Equity-Minded Interview Questions*

### Introduction

Interview questions convey information to the candidate about the department's goals and potential for being a supportive environment. Having interview questions that reflect a commitment to inclusion will signal to candidates the department is attempting to engender greater diversity and equity within the department.

In addition to requesting that applicants describe their prior, current, and planned contributions to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in required application materials (e.g., cover letter, teaching statement, or diversity statement), preparing equity-minded interview questions will help deepen or clarify the committees' understanding of candidates' commitment during the interview process. Prioritizing equity-minded interview questions in formal interview protocols will ensure these questions are asked in a consistent manner to all candidates. Raising equity-minded questions in other contexts, such as immediately after the job talk or over dinner, may also help round out the committee's understanding of finalists' commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in ways that are consistent with the department's goals in its diversity and inclusion action plan.

A sample<sup>9</sup> of interview questions are included below and meant to provide search committees with options to consider. These questions are not prescriptive and the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity encourages search committees to use these questions as starting points for discussion. The objective for search committee members is to listen carefully for complexity and nuance, critical reflection, humility, self-awareness and a commitment to lifelong learning. Search committees should feel empowered to ask follow-up questions and hold high expectations for responses, signaling that faculty are expected to espouse the values of the department.

### Sample Interview Questions

#### *Teaching Philosophy and Student Success*

- What does it mean to you to be effective in an environment that values diversity and equity?
- What are some pedagogical techniques you employ to ensure your teaching is responsive across different identities and backgrounds?
- How do you draw upon your student's prior knowledge, backgrounds, and lived experiences in order to inform your teaching, research and service?
- How does epistemic diversity play a role in your scholarship and teaching?
- How does your approach to teaching bring in readings and research produced by underrepresented scholars or about underrepresented people and communities into the learning process?
- How do you affirm and engage diverse perspectives in the classroom?
- What techniques do you have for drawing on your students' knowledge?

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<sup>9</sup> Some of these questions are adapted from a workshop on "Hiring a Diverse Faculty" led by the USC Center for Urban Education, and some are adapted from Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017.

- How have you (or could you) use data to identify differences in experiences and outcomes across diverse students in your class? Please describe your process of doing so (or how you could do it if you do not already). What would you do (have done) once you notice these differences?

### ***Learning, Mentoring and Engagement***

- How do you recruit and support racially diverse graduate students? What successes have you had? What challenges have you encountered?
- Tell me about an instance where you adapted your teaching or mentoring approach in order to work more effectively with students who have identities that are different from yours?
- In what ways have you fostered (or do you anticipate fostering) inclusive approaches to mentoring?

### ***Classroom/Department Climate and Culture***

- As an instructor, how do you create a classroom culture that intentionally welcomes, respects, and supports students from different racial/ethnic, gender identities, and socioeconomic backgrounds?
- There have been several socio-political movements that impact life and learning in the academy. One example is that there have been calls both nationally and at Brown to decolonize the curriculum. Choosing your own example, how do you -- or suggest members in our department -- engage with, and affirm, diverse lived experiences inside and outside the classroom in ways that foster learning, support and engagement?
- More and more students are demanding faculty accountability on issues of race and equity. What has been your experiences with similar requests, and how have you responded? What areas of growth do you see for yourself?
- If you notice patterns of racialized outcomes in your course or department, what would you do? For example, if you notice white students tend to speak up more or select your class or research programs at greater frequencies, what would you do to strive for more diversity, inclusion and equity?

### ***Service and Professional Development***

- In what ways has diversity, equity and inclusion shown (or could show) up in your commitment to service at the national, regional, local, and/or institutional levels?
- What professional development or academic training have you received on subjects such as culturally relevant pedagogy, implicit bias, and/or racial equity, and how have these engagements informed your approach to being a better scholar and instructor?

### **Appropriate Inquiries**

While it is important to consider equity-minded interview questions, it is also important to know which questions cannot be asked during the interview process given that Brown is an equal opportunity employer. Specifically, the Corporation Policy Statement on Equal Opportunity, Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action states, "Brown University provides equal opportunity and prohibits discrimination, harassment and retaliation based upon a person's race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other characteristic protected under applicable law, in the administration of its policies, programs, and activities". Therefore, every stage in the search and hiring process should be undertaken with this policy in mind, and the search committee should be aware of what questions are and are not permissible.

SUBJECT	APPROPRIATE INQUIRIES	INAPPROPRIATE INQUIRIES
Age	None.	Questions about age, date of birth, requests for birth certificate.
Arrests and Convictions	May ask if any record of criminal convictions and/or offenses exist, only if all applicants are asked.	Inquiries regarding arrest record.
Citizenship	May ask questions about legal authorization to work in the specific position if all applicants are asked.	May not ask if person is a U.S. citizen or what citizenship the person holds.
Disability	May ask about applicant's ability to perform job-related functions.	Question (or series of questions) that is likely to solicit information about a disability.
Education	Inquiries about degree or equivalent experience.	None.
Height and Weight	None.	Inquiries or comments about the applicant's height or weight.
Marital or Parental Status	None.	Any inquiry about marital status, children, pregnancy, intentions on starting a family or child care plans.
National Origin	May ask if legally authorized to work in this specific position if all applicants are asked.	May not ask a person's birthplace; if the person is a U.S. citizen; questions about the person's lineage, ancestry, descent, or parentage; how the person acquired the ability to speak/read/learn a foreign language.
Personal Finances	None.	Inquiries regarding credit, owning a home, or garnishment record.
Photograph	None.	Any inquiry for a photograph prior to hire.
Political Affiliation	None.	Inquiries about membership in a political party.
Organizations	Inquiries about professional organizations related to the position.	Inquiries about personal or professional organizations suggesting race, sex, color, religion, creed, national origin or ancestry, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, height, weight, disability, or veteran status.
Race or Color	None.	Comments or questions about complexion or color of skin.

SUBJECT	APPROPRIATE INQUIRIES	INAPPROPRIATE INQUIRIES
Religion	None.	Comments or questions about religious preferences, affiliation, denominations, church, and religious holidays observed.
Sex and Gender Identity	None.	Comments or questions regarding sex assignment, gender identity and expression.
Sexual Orientation	None.	Comments or questions about the applicant's sexual orientation.

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**Equity-Minded Interview References and Resources**

Sensoy, Ö., & DiAngelo R. (2017). “We are all for diversity but...”. How faculty hiring committees reproduce whiteness and practical suggestions for how they can change. *Harvard Education Review*. 87(4), 557-580.