



Best Practices for Equity in  
Selecting Faculty Awards and  
Leadership Positions

## **A RESEARCH-BASED APPROACH**

# **CAS Women's Caucus**



**College of  
Arts and Sciences**

**WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**

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Dear colleagues,

Research clearly indicates that equity leads to excellence in institutions of higher education. The selection of faculty to receive awards and the appointment of faculty to service positions are common practices that require an inclusive approach. With this evidence-based guide, which is intended to complement existing WMU policies, the College of Arts and Sciences offers recommendations to follow for those serving on award selection committees and when nominating and selecting colleagues to serve in leadership positions. On behalf of our entire community, thank you for your careful consideration of the information provided here.

**Dr. Carla Koretsky**

Dean, College of Arts and Sciences  
Spring, 2017



To achieve equity, awareness and accountability in our deliberations for peer-to-peer faculty awards and leadership positions, it is essential to consider implicit biases.

### **PRACTICE EQUITY**

*Committee members and departmental leadership set the tone for who applies and how applications are considered. Research demonstrates that championing equity as an intentional goal shared by all leads to positive results.*

*To that end, here are some specific recommended practices:*

- Review award and leadership opportunities to ensure that faculty of any gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, physical ability and, if applicable, rank, can apply. Ensure that the language of the award criteria and all associated materials are inclusive.
- Assess the gender, ethnic, racial, age, sexual diversity and physical ability among committee members and pools of applicants, and strive for equitable representation.
- Use departmental policy statements and strategic planning processes to prioritize diversity.
- Discuss the importance of equity, fairness and diversity at the start of the selection process. Make it an explicit goal of the committee's work.
- Examine the pool of applicants and awardees, looking for patterns that may indicate bias.

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- Include a diversity of images and examples of potential recipients in any information about the award to further convey a message of inclusivity.
- Post nomination requests and criteria early and widely. Encourage colleagues to apply.
- Recognize that some deserving faculty have not followed a standard trajectory of success. Focus on outcomes of success, including work that makes an impact both within and beyond academia.

### **PRACTICE AWARENESS**

*Studies indicate that we all have implicit biases and furthermore, that there is often a lack of awareness about inequities within the academic structure. To increase awareness at a grassroots level, we can:*

- Explicitly acknowledge that research shows that female faculty disproportionately bear the burden of service and teaching, while male faculty are provided more time for research.
- Encourage colleagues to participate in training and discussion about the meaning of equity, fairness, and diversity in faculty recognition through University programs.
- Request that committees and departments or programs seek out resources and training offered by the Office of Faculty Development, Office of Institutional Equity and Office of Diversity and Inclusion.
- Recognize that faculty awards are a visible statement about who is valued at an institution. Be open minded about the perceived worth of various disciplines, research styles and creative activities.

### **PRACTICE ACCOUNTABILITY**

*Scholars have shown that being held accountable heightens commitment to stated goals. To practice explicit accountability with respect to diversity goals, committees can:*

- Recognize that normative assumptions about gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, physical ability and rank perpetuate exclusionary practices.
- Be willing to consider and challenge preconceived notions of the ideal candidate.
- Examine language used throughout the award process, looking for biases or word choices that could be exclusionary.
- Exercise transparent communication in all award nomination and selection processes.
- Reflect upon the equity of the award process and criteria. Avoid simply following the approach of previous committees.
- Have as a goal the expansion of the nominee pool. Offer multiple pathways to nomination, for example, by allowing self-nominations, departmental nominations, and college nominations. Consider offering multiple levels of awards: beginning scholar, advanced scholar, community work, etc.
- Have explicit committee discussions about why each candidate is rejected or selected. Identify specific qualifications or lack thereof to enhance accountability in the process. Avoid generalized rejections such as that someone “just isn’t ready” or “doesn’t fit,” which may indicate implicit bias.

**Researched and written by Skylar J. Bre'z,  
doctoral student in history**

**Please direct questions to Sue Ellen Christian, professor of  
journalism and co-chair of the Women's Caucus**

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