

# Recruiting for Diversity: Strategies for Success at the University of San Diego

By Maya Omar

The University of San Diego (USD) recognizes the critical role diversity and inclusion will play in the university's future as an employer and educational institution. To position itself as a premier university and employer of choice, USD (a small, private, Catholic residential university located in the heart of San Diego) decided to take proactive steps to diversify its faculty, staff and administrative population.

(As an aside, many of the strategies uncovered by the task force to increase diversity among faculty are also being used more broadly on campus to increase diversity among staff and administration.)

## Compelling Diversity Language

USD actively encourages hiring managers and department chairs to include a diversity statement in their position announcements. A diversity statement serves two functions. First, it welcomes diverse applicants, as well as those applicants who value diversity, to apply. Second, it signals the organization's mission, values and a broader institution-wide commitment to diversity and inclusion. For many applicants, the presence of such a statement can signify what the potential climate may be and whether he or she may feel comfortable on campus. For this reason, diversity statements are one of the simplest ways to cultivate a diverse applicant pool.

Human resources provides a variety of sample diversity statements that hiring managers can include in position announcements. The following is an example:

"The university is committed to seeking and sustaining a culturally and ethnically diverse campus environment, and to the principles that promote inclusive practices. The [department] fully supports the university's commitment and is dedicated to building a diverse staff with expertise and interest in serving [students/a university community] with diverse needs, backgrounds, ethnicities, abilities and other distinct characteristics in respectful, sensitive and understanding ways."

This statement is compelling because at the outset it states the university's dedication to building a community on a particular set of values. It also reinforces the specific hiring department's partnership with that commitment and interest in nurturing a staff that shares those values. Hiring managers are encouraged to modify the provided sample language to capture the needs and culture of their particular area.

One of these steps included the formation in August 2010 of a faculty diversity task force to enhance faculty diversity through more effective search and recruitment. The task force was charged with developing faculty recruiting guidelines (meant to support faculty search committees in recruiting ethnically and culturally diverse candidates who will contribute to the university in meaningful ways) and a toolkit, as well as developing and launching in-house training sessions. The task force is made up of four individuals from representative areas on campus: human resources, the provost's office, the Center for Inclusion and Diversity and the Center for Educational Excellence.

One of the things the task force discovered early on was that personal touches and a data-driven approach go a long way toward an effective diversity recruiting strategy.



## Using Your Professional and Personal Network

When meeting with department chairs and hiring managers, human resources strongly encourages them to constantly seek out talented people they would like to bring aboard their area. These may be people they meet at a conference, work with on a community board, or someone recommended by a friend. Even if a position is not currently available, hiring managers are encouraged to note the candidate's contact information and if appropriate, keep in contact with that person. Then, when a position does become available in the future, the hiring manager already has a short list of candidates he or she can personally encourage to apply.

Additionally, the task force began putting together a comprehensive list of discipline-specific websites, listservs and newsletters that hiring managers and department chairs could use to more widely disseminate position announcements. They were also encouraged to e-mail the position announcements to professional colleagues and personal contacts. If one of those contacts suggested a potential candidate, hiring managers were encouraged to invite that person to apply.

These extra steps may seem time-consuming, but the value in a reputation as an employer who actively pursues and cultivates a diverse and inclusive campus is immeasurable.

## Analyze Applicant Demographics

The task force also realized that a metrics-driven approach to diversity recruiting would assist in accurately determining what approaches would be the most valuable. One strategy that provided valuable insight was to analyze the applicant demographics of recent recruitments. This was done by creating a report for a particular search based on applicant data collected through USD's applicant tracking system. Due to the sensitivity of the data, reports were only compiled on completed searches. Information was collected in the following categories for each applicant: race, gender, job-posting source and status (whether the applicant was rejected, interviewed and/or hired). After this information was gathered, it was analyzed to determine if there were any significant correlations.

An examination of one recent search indicated that a majority of applicants found the position announcement on a free, discipline-specific listserv. Furthermore, two

of the applicants from that particular listserv went on to be interviewed, an indication of the quality of applicants from that particular source. The data also revealed that personal referrals yielded a surprisingly large number of applicants. This data could then be used as evidence of the efficacy of using personal and professional referrals in the recruiting process.

## HR's Role

USD's human resources department recognizes the importance of aligning diversity recruiting initiatives with business objectives and has assisted hiring managers in understanding the value of diversity in their departments. Throughout its efforts, HR has communicated that diversity is not merely about race and gender, but also about the value of fresh perspectives and approaches. This has allowed hiring managers and department chairs not only to understand why diversity recruiting is important, but also to give the initiatives their full support.

From sitting on the faculty diversity task force, to providing guidance to department chairs and hiring managers, to creating diversity statements for use in position announcements, to providing HR metrics for analyzing data, to leveraging the task force's findings and recommendations for faculty recruiting into effective diversity recruiting practices for staff and administrative positions, human resources plays a critical role in USD's diversity recruiting strategy.

## The Tip of the Iceberg

The faculty diversity task force is just one of many ways USD is spotlighting its commitment to diversity and inclusion. Although this particular task force's focus is on recruitment and retention of diverse faculty members, there are several other initiatives underway at USD to promote awareness and discussion of what it means to be a truly welcoming, open, inclusive environment for all — from students to staff and faculty to the San Diego community at large. 

*Maya Omar is director of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action at the University of San Diego. She can be reached at [momar@sandiego.edu](mailto:momar@sandiego.edu). For more information on USD's diversity and inclusion work, visit its online Center for Inclusion and Diversity at [www.sandiego.edu/inclusion](http://www.sandiego.edu/inclusion).*