



# Diversity Statement, Then Dossier

*The Rise of DEI Cluster Hiring  
in Higher Education*

NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
of SCHOLARS

JOHN SAILER





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*The Rise of DEI Cluster Hiring in  
Higher Education*

A report by the

NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION  
*of* SCHOLARS

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# Introduction

American higher education has recently embraced a new tool for advancing its commitment to “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (DEI). Many colleges and universities are now engaged in “DEI cluster hiring,” a practice which ultimately embodies higher education’s turn toward political and social activism. Unfortunately, it has become a tool of choice for many universities across the United States.

“Cluster hiring” is not itself new. DEI cluster hiring appropriates an established form of faculty recruitment that has a long history, especially in the natural sciences, where it meant the coordinated hiring of faculty members in several departments to work on a shared research topic. This older form of cluster hiring made and still makes sense because contemporary scientific research can require the combination of several kinds of expertise.

But DEI cluster hiring serves no such purpose. Consider, for example, the following job listings.

- **The Ohio State University’s Department of Mathematics** recently sought a professor who will “study issues relevant to educational equity across STEM fields, with a special focus on race and other factors identifying historically marginalized groups.”<sup>1</sup>
- **The University of California, Berkeley’s School of Social Welfare** is hiring a professor who “may focus on anti-blackness in the US and the African Diaspora:

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<sup>1</sup> “Ohio State University, Mathematics,” Math Jobs, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://www.mathjobs.org/jobs/list/20532>.

abolition studies, critical race approaches to data science and mapping, anti-racism and anti-blackness, racial capitalism, trans/queer/feminist theory, and critical disability studies among others.”<sup>2</sup>

- **The University of Michigan’s School of Nursing** recently sought “more faculty with expertise in health equity and anti-racism and social justice methodologies.”<sup>3</sup>

These listings, and hundreds more like them, illustrate a growing trend in higher education. Universities now frequently recruit faculty with professional specialties in race, gender, social justice, and the broad gamut of critical theories. But the above jobs also share another characteristic: they are all a part of cluster hiring initiatives devoted explicitly to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In order to achieve its stated goals, DEI cluster hiring must include a host of additional interventions—in particular, a heavy reliance on diversity statements and a narrow focus on ethnicity or the themes of identity politics. These additional interventions transform cluster hiring into a means to embed DEI further into the fabric of the university, by creating dozens, and sometimes hundreds, of new faculty positions focused solely on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In this report, we seek to explain the phenomenon of DEI cluster hiring, demonstrate its widespread practice throughout academia, and highlight the dangers of the practice. Ultimately, DEI cluster hiring signals the total reorientation of the university’s function from the pursuit of truth to the pursuit of political and social transformation.

2 “Associate/Full Professor - Anti-Black Racism and Social Inclusion Cluster - Berkeley Social Welfare,” Higher Ed Jobs, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://www.higheredjobs.com/search/details.cfm?JobCode=178174261&Title=Associate%2FFull%20Professor%20%2D%20Anti%2DBlack%20Racism%20and%20Social%20Inclusion%20Cluster%20%2D%20Berkeley%20Social%20Welfare>.

3 “Health Equity Faculty Hiring Initiative,” University of Michigan, School of Nursing, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://nursing.umich.edu/health-equity-faculty-hiring-initiative>.

## Highlights:

- Cluster hiring reinforces the use of diversity statements as litmus tests for employment. In many of the cluster hiring initiatives we identify, universities eliminated faculty candidates solely on the basis of diversity statements. These diversity statement reviews eliminated as many as three quarters of those candidates. Universities frequently fail to explain clearly how they use diversity statements. Cluster hiring initiatives demonstrate that diversity statements can be used as a coercive and effective faculty selection tool.
- Cluster hiring encourages scholar activism by increasing the number of faculty jobs with a professional focus on race, identity, social justice, and a narrowly construed concept of equity. Recent cluster hiring initiatives recruited faculty who work on such themes as “Designing Just Futures,” “Latinx Studies,” and “The Racialized Body.” Many of the job listings we highlight in this report are saturated with the language of identity politics. They appear designed to recruit activists.
- Cluster hiring is a growing trend. Twenty-two of the top twenty-five American public universities have engaged in or promised to conduct DEI cluster hiring. Cluster hiring also has gained considerable financial support. The programs we identify have received more than a quarter of a billion dollars in funding. Predictably, this effort has created a huge number of faculty roles.

# Part 1: DEI Cluster Hiring: Institutional Structure

In its most basic form, cluster hiring is simple: a college or university simultaneously hires faculty for multiple positions, across multiple fields—hence the term “cluster.”

Universities have engaged in cluster hiring since the 1990s. For many years, they confined cluster hiring to the narrow purpose of recruiting faculty who could jointly research particular academic subjects.<sup>4</sup> At the University of Wisconsin–Madison, for example, cluster hires prior to 2017 included such themes as “symbiosis,” “Vitamin D,” and “Very High Energy Astrophysics and Cosmology.”<sup>5</sup> In this context, cluster hiring serves as a tool to enhance faculty research productivity and to create institutional strength in a particular subject matter. The merits of cluster hiring for these original purposes are outside the scope of this report.

In recent years, cluster hiring has been used as a tool to achieve a far different goal: to advance “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (DEI). University personnel frequently tout cluster hiring as a way to increase the number of minority faculty members. In 2015, Urban Universities for HEALTH released a study, now widely cited, praising cluster hiring

4 Laurel Oldach, “The Evolution of Cluster Hiring,” *ASBMB Today*, February 23, 2022, <https://www.asbmb.org/asbmb-today/careers/022322/the-evolution-of-cluster-hiring>.

5 “UW-Madison Clusters,” University of Wisconsin–Madison, Office of the Provost, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://facstaff.provost.wisc.edu/cluster-hiring-initiative/uw-madison-clusters/>.

as a diversity initiative.<sup>6</sup> In 2019, Carla Freeman, associate dean of faculty at Emory University's College of Arts and Sciences, declared in "The Case for Cluster Hiring to Diversify Your Faculty" that cluster hiring "represents a sea change in the intentional—rather than passive—approach to diversifying the faculty."<sup>7</sup>

Students and faculty likewise view cluster hiring as a way to hire faculty members of specific racial or ethnic backgrounds. In 2021, the University of California, Berkeley Haas Undergraduate Black Business Association created a petition calling for a cluster hire "of at least 3 Black Faculty members before the end of the 2021-2022 academic school year."<sup>8</sup> In April of 2022, University of California, Los Angeles sociology professor Desi Small-Rodriguez tweeted, "My love language is called 'cluster hire' [because] being the 'only one' is an experience nobody should endure. @UCLA needs to do better. I'm the only Native faculty in sociology or political science."<sup>9</sup>

There is no self-evident connection between hiring in groups and increasing racial diversity or advancing the vague goals of DEI. Why would a cluster hire increase the number of African American or American Indian professors? How precisely does hiring in groups advance the broader goal of DEI?

At some Canadian universities, the answer is simple: overt racial preferences. At the University of Calgary, for example, a recent cluster hire resulted in positions open only to people from particular demographics. "This position is only open to qualified Black scholars (e.g. Black Pioneer, African, Caribbean)," the Haskayne School of Business notes in one job description.<sup>10</sup> In the United States, where such racial

6 Faculty Cluster Hiring for Diversity and Institutional Climate, Urban Universities for Health, April 2015, <https://www.aplu.org/library/faculty-cluster-hiring-for-diversity-and-institutional-climate/file>.

7 Carla Freeman, "The Case for Cluster Hiring to Diversify Your Faculty," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 9, 2019, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-case-for-cluster-hiring-to-diversify-your-faculty/>.

8 "A Community Call for UC Berkeley Haas Black Faculty Cluster Hire," Change.org, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://www.change.org/p/haas-school-of-business-a-community-call-for-uc-berkeley-haas-black-faculty-cluster-hire>.

9 Desi Small-Rodriguez, Twitter post, April 28, 2022, 11:38 a.m., [https://twitter.com/native-4data/status/1519702483223781376?s=20&t=e5bjzsQIKj76P5ouC\\_bd\\_Q](https://twitter.com/native-4data/status/1519702483223781376?s=20&t=e5bjzsQIKj76P5ouC_bd_Q).

10 "Assistant, Associate or Full Professor, Haskayne School of Business," University of Calgary, accessed December 6, 2022, <https://business.careers.ucalgary.ca/jobs/11115626-assistant-associate-or-full-professor-haskayne-school-of-business>.

discrimination in hiring is illegal, DEI cluster hiring must achieve its goals by other means.

To answer these questions for American universities, we will examine cluster hires at four universities: the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley), Vanderbilt University, Emory University, and the University of California, Irvine (UC Irvine). All four universities' cluster hires heavily emphasized diversity statements, along with the themes of race, social justice, equity, and so-called "anti-racism." Their practices demonstrate how exactly universities use cluster hiring as "diversity" initiatives.

## The University of California, Berkeley: Life Sciences Initiative

One of the most widely known examples of a cluster hiring initiative took place at the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley).

In 2017, the UC Berkeley College of Engineering conducted a hiring initiative which made "advancing equity and inclusion" a "key criterion in selecting faculty candidates," and which relied heavily upon applicant diversity statements as a selection tool throughout the hiring process.<sup>11</sup> Faculty diversity statements typically required candidates to express their past contributions to DEI, as well as their future plans to advance the cause.<sup>12</sup>

The program, by its own standards, was a remarkable success. The applicant pool was 19.5 percent female, but 45 percent of candidates who received an offer were female (see Figure 1).<sup>13</sup> Likewise, the applicant pool was 2 percent African American, but 22 percent of candidates who received offers were African American (see Figure 2).<sup>14</sup>

11 "Advancing Faculty Diversity 2017-18 Final Project Status Update," UC Berkeley, College of Engineering, September 2, 2018, [https://ofew.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/ucb\\_advancing\\_faculty\\_diversity\\_2017-18\\_final\\_project\\_update.pdf](https://ofew.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/ucb_advancing_faculty_diversity_2017-18_final_project_update.pdf).

12 John Sailer, "Higher Ed's New Woke Loyalty Oaths," *Tablet*, September 6, 2022, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/higher-ed-new-woke-loyalty-oaths-dei>.

13 "Advancing Faculty Diversity," UC Berkeley.

14 "Advancing Faculty Diversity," UC Berkeley.



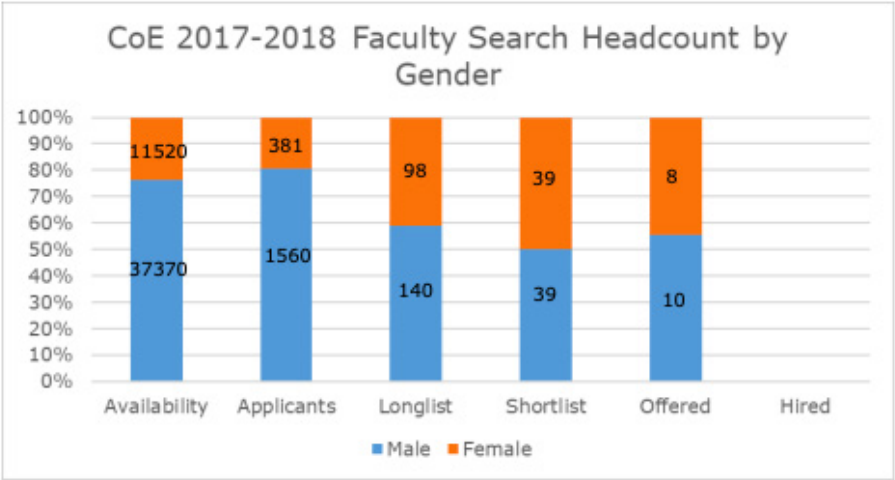


Figure 1. Overall results for all departments in the College of Engineering 2017–2018 Faculty Searches by gender. Orange reflects those who identify as female, while blue denotes those who identify as male. Source: “Advancing Faculty Diversity 2017-18 Final Project Status Update: UC Berkeley College of Engineering,” University of California, Berkeley

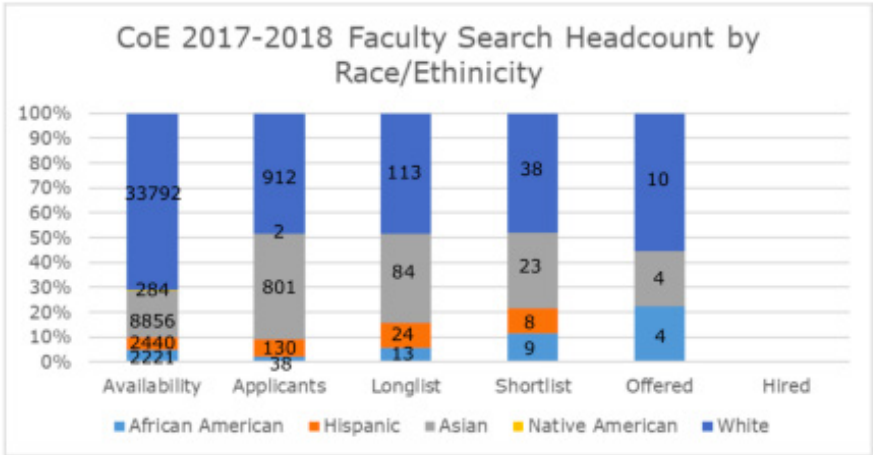


Figure 2: Overall results for all departments in the College of Engineering 2017–18 Faculty Searches by ethnicity. Individuals who identify as African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, and White are denoted in light blue, orange, gray, yellow, and dark blue, respectively. Source: “Advancing Faculty Diversity 2017-18 Final Project Status Update: UC Berkeley College of Engineering,” University of California, Berkeley

The College of Engineering declared in its follow-up report that emphasizing diversity would become a permanent priority in hiring, noting that “we will continue to emphasize in our hiring practices that excellence in advancing equity and inclusion must be considered on par with excellence in research and teaching.”<sup>15</sup> Administrators at UC Berkeley evidently decided that this process, which ascribed heavy weight to diversity statements, was an effective tool by which to achieve their diversity-hiring goals.

The next year, UC Berkeley undertook an even more ambitious project, a cluster hire across eight departments called the “Initiative to Advance Faculty Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Life Sciences at UC Berkeley.”<sup>16</sup>

The initiative looked like any other cluster hire. Eight life sciences departments advertised jobs at the same time. The initiative, however, included an innovation inspired by the College of Engineering’s program from the year before. The Life Sciences Initiative (LSI) Committee began the hiring process with a blind review of diversity statements. The LSI Committee then eliminated three quarters of the applicants in this review solely on the basis of their diversity statements, thereby reducing the pool of applicants from 893 to 214.<sup>17</sup> Finalists also were asked to describe their DEI efforts during their job talks.

The LSI Committee used a standardized rubric for its diversity statement review: “Rubric for Assessing Contributions to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” (RACDEI). (See **Appendix C: Diversity Statement Rubrics**.) RACDEI clearly promotes an ideological agenda. It dictates that candidates should receive a low score if they “state that it’s better not to have outreach or affinity groups aimed at particular individuals because it keeps them separate from everyone else, or will make them feel less valued”; if they describe their past DEI efforts with language that is “brief, vague, nominal, or peripheral”; or—most remarkably—if they state that “the intention to ignore the varying backgrounds of

<sup>15</sup> “Advancing Faculty Diversity,” UC Berkeley.

<sup>16</sup> Rebecca Heald and Mary Wildermuth, “Initiative to Advance Faculty Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Life Science [sic] at UC Berkeley Year End Summary Report: 2018-2019,” UC Berkeley, accessed November 28, 2022, [https://ofew.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/life\\_sciences\\_initiatve\\_year\\_end\\_report\\_summary.pdf](https://ofew.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/life_sciences_initiatve_year_end_report_summary.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Heald and Wildermuth, “Initiative to Advance Faculty Diversity.”

their students and ‘treat everyone the same.’”<sup>18</sup> RACDEI also rewards candidates for discussing “diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging as core values that every faculty member should actively contribute to.”<sup>19</sup>

Like the College of Engineering’s previous initiative, the Life Sciences Initiative was successful in achieving its intended results. From an applicant pool that was 41.7 percent female, the shortlist was 63.6 percent female. Likewise, the applicant pool was 13.2 percent Hispanic and 53.7 percent white, while the shortlist was 59.1 percent Hispanic and 13.6 percent white. It should be noted that the greatest shift in candidate demographics took place between the longlist and the shortlist, not after the first-round review of diversity statements. The longlist—which was the result of the blind diversity statement review—was 48.1 percent white and 22.9 percent Hispanic. UC Berkeley has not provided materials that would allow us to explain the reason for this large change, but it is plausible to believe that the university engaged in discrimination to further DEI goals.

**Table A: Life Science Faculty (Cluster) Search Demographics:**

| GENDER           | Applicant Pool | Longlist | Shortlist |
|------------------|----------------|----------|-----------|
| Count            | 894            | 214      | 22        |
| Female           | 41.70%         | 60.30%   | 63.60%    |
| Male             | 56.50%         | 39.30%   | 36.40%    |
| Unknown          | 1.80%          | 0.50%    | 0.00%     |
| RACE/ETHNICITY   | Applicant Pool | Longlist | Shortlist |
| Count            | 894            | 214      | 22        |
| African American | 2.80%          | 6.10%    | 9.10%     |
| Hispanic         | 13.20%         | 22.90%   | 59.10%    |
| Native American  | 0.40%          | 1.40%    | 0.00%     |
| Asian            | 25.70%         | 18.70%   | 18.20%    |
| White            | 53.70%         | 48.10%   | 13.60%    |
| Unknown          | 4.10%          | 2.80%    | 0.00%     |

Source: “Initiative to Advance Faculty Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Life Science at UC Berkeley Year End Summary Report: 2018-2019,” University of California, Berkeley

<sup>18</sup> “Rubric for Assessing Candidate Contributions to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging,” UC Berkeley, Office for Faculty Equity and Welfare, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://ofew.berkeley.edu/recruitment/contributions-diversity/rubric-assessing-candidate-contributions-diversity-equity>.  
<sup>19</sup> “Rubric for Assessing Candidate Contributions,” UC Berkeley.

The Life Sciences Initiative received substantial media coverage because of its open and heavy reliance on diversity statements. Headlines declared that “Berkeley Weeded Out Job Applicants Who Didn’t Propose Specific Plans To Advance Diversity”<sup>20</sup> and explained “How Diversity Screening At The University Of California Could Degrade Faculty Quality.”<sup>21</sup>

Some higher education policy scholars considered the project a success despite this public criticism.<sup>22</sup> Its creators point to it as a model.<sup>23</sup> The project’s creators note that, “It has been a high profile ‘proof of concept’ that changing faculty search practices can result in successful recruitment of candidates that are both excellent researchers and committed advocates for advancing diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) through their research, teaching, and/or service.”<sup>24</sup>

For the purposes of this report, the Life Sciences Initiative demonstrates that diversity statements function as a key component of DEI cluster hiring.

## Vanderbilt University: Department of Psychology and Human Development

During the 2019–2020 academic year, Vanderbilt University’s Department of Psychology and Human Development made sweeping DEI plans—which included a pledge to promote DEI in hiring. As a group of faculty put it, “One specific short-term plan included an open area search for new faculty to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion

20 Robby Soave, “Berkeley Weeded Out Jobs Applicants Who Propose Specific Plans to Advance Diversity,” *Reason*, February 3, 2020, <https://reason.com/2020/02/03/university-of-california-diversity-initiative-berkeley/>.

21 Michael Poliakoff, “How Diversity Screening at the University of California Could Degrade Faculty Quality,” *Forbes*, January 21, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelpoliakoff/2020/01/21/how-diversity-screening-at-the-university-of-california-could-degrade-faculty-quality/>.

22 Needhi Bhalla, “Strategies to Improve Equity in Faculty Hiring,” *Molecular Biology of the Cell* 30, no. 22 (October 2019): 2744–49, <https://www.molbiolcell.org/doi/10.1091/mbc.E19-08-0476>.

23 Rebecca Heald, “Can Cluster Hires Move the Needle to Advance Faculty Diversity?,” *American Society for Cell Biology*, April 1, 2021, <https://www.ascb.org/careers/can-cluster-hires-move-the-needle-to-advance-faculty-diversity/>.

24 Heald and Wildermuth, “Initiative to Advance Faculty Diversity.”

(EDI) initiatives through their research, teaching, service and/or lived experience.”<sup>25</sup>

In 2021, following through on this stated goal, the department conducted a cluster hire. It wrote in the job announcement that:

The Department of Psychology and Human Development at Vanderbilt University is seeking applicants for a cluster hire of three tenure-track assistant professors. We seek candidates who will increase the department’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through their research, teaching, mentoring and/or lived experience.<sup>26</sup>

The Vanderbilt cluster hire was nearly identical in structure to the Berkeley Life Sciences Initiative.<sup>27</sup> The hiring committee reduced the initial applicant pool by around 85 percent, from 400 to around 60, on the basis of a blind diversity statement review. The committee returned to the remaining candidates’ statements in a later stage of the review process and used the Berkeley rubric (RACDEI) to assess them again.

Vanderbilt illustrates that Berkeley’s Life Sciences Initiative was no outlier. Vanderbilt’s cluster hire achieved its goal of advancing DEI by relying heavily on diversity statement reviews to eliminate a large portion of its job applicants, following Berkeley’s model.

## Emory University: College of Arts and Sciences

Another widely noted cluster hiring initiative took place at the College of Arts and Sciences at Emory University. The initiative was praised by many higher education administrators and, as we will discuss at greater length in **Part 2: The Rapid Increase in Faculty**

25 Autumn Kujawa et al., “Organizing a Faculty Cluster Hire to Promote Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Psychological Sciences,” *Psychonomic Society*, August 25, 2022, <https://featuredcontent.psychonomic.org/organizing-a-faculty-cluster-hire-to-promote-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-in-psychological-sciences/>.

26 “Vanderbilt Diversity Cluster Hire: Any Area of Psychology,” *Psychology Jobs and Research Opportunities*, August 26, 2021, <https://guppsychology.wordpress.com/2021/08/26/vanderbilt-diversity-cluster-hire-any-area-of-psychology/>.

27 Kujawa et al., “Organizing a Faculty Cluster Hire.”

**Cluster Hiring**, it ultimately inspired the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to create its own cluster hiring grant program.<sup>28</sup> Carla Freeman, associate dean of faculty at Emory's College of Arts and Sciences, has championed cluster hiring and has pointed to Emory's practices as a model. The program had provided a blueprint for cluster hires throughout American academia.<sup>29</sup>

Starting in 2017, the College of Arts and Sciences began a series of cluster hires. Freeman argued in "The Case for Cluster Hiring to Diversify Your Faculty," that hiring in cohorts "increases the likelihood of a diverse pool of candidates, identifies synergistic connections among candidates and, by recruiting faculty cohorts together, fosters collaboration and a shared experience."<sup>30</sup>

Of course, on its own, a larger applicant pool is hardly noteworthy, and like all other DEI cluster hires, the Emory initiatives required tailored measures to achieve their "inclusive excellence" goals. Freeman described two measures: a heavy reliance on diversity statements and the use of carefully chosen themes.

Like the initiatives described above, the Emory cluster hires heavily emphasized diversity statements. For one STEM cluster hire, which involved eight departments, Freeman makes it clear that Emory employed the same tool as Berkeley's Life Sciences Initiative. As she puts it, "Diversity statement, then dossier." Emory required all applicants to write a "statement about their experience with, and vision for, mentoring students from underrepresented backgrounds." Freeman notes that "Only candidates with compelling mentoring statements progressed to the next stage of review."<sup>31</sup>

Freeman also notes that the cluster hiring initiative inspired the College of Arts and Sciences to establish many similar DEI practices.

28 Krystle Palma Cobian and Ángela Gutiérrez, *Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Health Sciences and Policy Research Workforce: Lessons and Implications from Case Studies on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Interventions*, AcademyHealth, May 2021, [https://academyhealth.org/sites/default/files/publication/%5Bfield\\_date%3Acustom%3AY%5D-%5Bfield\\_date%3Acustom%3Am%5D/advancing\\_dei\\_horizon\\_scan\\_june\\_2021.pdf](https://academyhealth.org/sites/default/files/publication/%5Bfield_date%3Acustom%3AY%5D-%5Bfield_date%3Acustom%3Am%5D/advancing_dei_horizon_scan_june_2021.pdf).

29 Alyson Powell Key, "Colleges and Universities Adopt Cluster Hiring to Enhance Diversity Among Faculty," *Diversity in Research*, March 30, 2020, <https://www.diversityinresearch.careers/article/colleges-and-universities-adopt-cluster-hiring-to-enhance-diversity-among-faculty/>.

30 Freeman, "Case for Cluster Hiring."

31 Freeman, "Case for Cluster Hiring."

Soon every department in the college required diversity statements from applicants.<sup>32</sup> In the journal *Communications Biology*, several biologists at Emory described their search for two new hires, which followed Freeman's lead by heavily emphasizing diversity statements. The job application required a diversity statement, and the committee began by narrowing down its initial applicant pool from 585 to about 45 candidates by scoring three categories equally: teaching, research, and contributions to DEI. (For a full description of that hiring search, see **Appendix D: A DEI Intervention at Emory University.**)

Emory also used a second tool as part of its cluster hiring initiatives. Some of its cluster hires deliberately focused on themes that the university considered more likely to attract minority candidates. Freeman describes two of these themed hires, both of which emphasized race and ethnicity. Emory hired three tenure-track faculty members in a cluster hire focused on "the history of race and ethnicity in the United States." Emory hired another three to work on "the interdisciplinary field of Latinx studies."<sup>33</sup>

Emory College of Arts and Sciences in Atlanta, Georgia announces a special initiative to recruit and support several tenure-track and tenured faculty (advanced assistant and/or associate/full professors) in the area of contemporary LatinX studies in the humanities and social sciences. Faculty whose research advances this emerging field of scholarship, who bring a demonstrated commitment to mentoring a diverse student body, and who are eager to contribute to the University's ambitious goals of scholarly excellence, diversity and inclusivity, and interdisciplinarity are encouraged to apply.<sup>34</sup>

Emory's themed cluster hire pioneered a new way to promote DEI through cluster hiring. Themed cluster hires define faculty positions in

<sup>32</sup> Freeman, "Case for Cluster Hiring."

<sup>33</sup> Freeman, "Case for Cluster Hiring."

<sup>34</sup> Fannie Bialek, "Job Opportunity: Contemporary LatinX Studies Cluster Hire, Emory," *Feminist Religion*, October 11, 2018, <https://feministreligion.com/2018/10/11/job-opportunity-contemporary-latinx-studies-cluster-hire-emory/>.



DEI-saturated language; as we will show below, many focus not only on race and ethnicity but also on ideological goals such as “social justice,” “equity,” and so-called “anti-racism.” Diversity statements only require applicants to demonstrate their allegiance to the tenets of DEI; themed cluster hires restrict acceptable faculty fields of research to scholarship that focuses exclusively on the themes of DEI.

Emory University’s themed cluster hiring, perhaps even more than the Berkeley Life Sciences Initiative, has been an influential exemplar for other universities. In late 2021, Dean Freeman was invited to speak at an NIH webinar on the benefits of cluster hiring; the NIH, as we will see below, has followed Freeman’s model.<sup>35</sup> And, increasingly, universities incorporate the themed cluster hire as a notable tool for living up to their stated commitment to social justice.

## The University of California, Irvine: Black Thriving Initiative Cluster Hiring Program

The University of California, Irvine’s (UC Irvine) “Black Thriving Initiative Cluster Hiring Program” demonstrates how themed cluster hiring can lead to the creation of large faculty cohorts which focus on the themes of identity politics. The Black Thriving Initiative, according to the UC Irvine website, “aims to recruit scholars that focus on understanding anti-Blackness and interrogate structural racism in its myriad forms.”<sup>36</sup> The specific themes of the initiative include: “The lived experience of anti-Black racism and associated inequalities in diverse institutional domains,” “The collateral consequences of racism, historically and in the present era,” and “Public policy solutions to structural racism in criminal justice, education, the built and natural environment, health and wellness, urban planning, etc.”<sup>37</sup>

35 Carl Freeman, “Cluster & Cohort Hiring: 3 Models, Opportunities, and Challenges,” National Institutes of Health, accessed November 28, 2022, [https://diversity.nih.gov/sites/coswd/files/images/C\\_Freeman\\_NIH\\_Cohort\\_Hiring\\_summary\\_slide\\_COSWDO\\_508.pdf..](https://diversity.nih.gov/sites/coswd/files/images/C_Freeman_NIH_Cohort_Hiring_summary_slide_COSWDO_508.pdf..)

36 “UCI Black Thriving Initiative Cluster Hiring Program,” UC Irvine, Office of Inclusive Excellence, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://inclusion.uci.edu/action-plan/msi/uci-black-thriving-initiative/uci-black-thriving-initiative-cluster-hiring-program/>.

37 “UCI Black Thriving Initiative,” UC Irvine.

In practice, this means the university is engaged in the ongoing project of hiring faculty in two areas: Poetic Justice and Infrastructure Equity. We list the recently open positions in each area below.

| Poetic Justice   |  |
|--|--|
| Position   | Description  |
| Full Professor, Department of African American Studies               | We are interested in candidates whose research demonstrate expertise in: 1) critical theories of racial slavery and modernity; 2) issues of translation, race and colonial languages; and 3) a global African American Studies beyond diasporic frameworks or comparative ethnic studies of race and colonialism. We have a particular interest in candidates whose research, teaching and service focus on social activism, arts and cultural movements, and the production of critical theoretical frameworks from African and African American liberation struggles. <sup>38</sup>  |
| Associate Professor of Criminology, Law and Society                  | We are interested in candidates whose research demonstrate expertise in: 1) how surveillance, mass incarceration and/or other forms of punitive regulation have impacted and been challenged by black communities; 2) utilizing creative research methods that engage with experiences of system-impacted groups, including black and other marginalized communities; and 3) collaborating with public-facing institutions (e.g., libraries, museums, and community-based organizations) to expand data and research accessibility to support social justice movements. We have a particular interest in candidates whose research, teaching and service focus on the intersection between incarceration, community-driven or participatory research and education, and might be interested in collaborating on the LIFTED initiative to offer college degrees to incarcerated students. <sup>39</sup> |
| Assistant Professor of Art, affiliated with African American Studies | We are seeking a visual artist exploring the multidimensional experience of Black life in the United States. The artist's practice may be studio-based (painting, sculpture, photography, video. etc.), interdisciplinary or performative. Some dimension of the ideal candidate's creative research should engage audiences through participatory, collaborative, or community-based projects. <sup>40</sup>  |
| Assistant Professor of Business                                      | We are seeking individuals from all areas of business with a commitment to research on creative enterprises, with a focus on diversity and equity. <sup>41</sup>   |

38 "Full Professor, Department of African American Studies," UC Irvine, Academic Personnel Recruit, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://recruit.ap.uci.edu/JPF07834>.

39 "Associate Professor of Criminology, Law, and Society," UC Irvine, Academic Personnel Recruit, accessed December 12, 2022, <https://recruit.ap.uci.edu/JPF07832>.

40 "Assistant Professor of Art, affiliated with African American Studies," UC Irvine, Academic Personnel Recruit, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://recruit.ap.uci.edu/JPF07937>.

41 "Assistant Professor, UCI's Black Thriving Initiative in Poetic Justice," UC Irvine, Academic Personnel Recruit, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://recruit.ap.uci.edu/JPF07696>.

Infrastructure Equity

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor of Urban Planning and Public Policy   | We are interested in candidates whose research extends UPPP's focus on sustainability and social justice by advancing distributional and procedural equity for Black communities and other groups adversely impacted by past and future investments. <sup>42</sup>   |
| Tenure-Track or Tenured Faculty Position in Civil & Environmental Engineering | The Department is especially interested in candidates with a strong engineering background, and a vision for innovating the nation's aging civil infrastructure (including its design, operation, and maintenance) to improve livelihoods, deliver greater equity, more easily adapt to climate and human-driven change, and achieve higher levels of sustainability. Successful candidates are expected to bring research experience with Black and/or other historically marginalized communities. <sup>43</sup>   |
| Professor of Law  | We are particularly interested in scholars whose work addresses the following types of questions: (1) Policy frameworks: Analysis of historical or emerging infrastructure policies and regulations and their effects on Black communities and other historically marginalized communities; (2) Monitoring progress: Development and/or evaluation of screening tools for identifying disparate impacts on Black communities and other historically marginalized communities and promoting equity in resource allocation decisions related to infrastructure; and (3) Alternative futures: Assessment of emerging infrastructure alternatives that provide economic, health, and environmental benefits for Black communities and other historically marginalized communities. <sup>44</sup> |
| Assistant or Associate Professor of Earth System Science                      | We seek a faculty member with a clear vision to expand scientific knowledge that can facilitate mitigation/adaptation measures to increase resilience within economically disadvantaged communities and communities of color. Research areas of interest to this call include but are not limited to: air quality; extreme heat; land use issues, including urban heat islands and green space management; decarbonization of energy systems and infrastructure; equitable pathways for attaining net zero emissions; flooding from sea level rise, tropical cyclones (e.g., hurricanes), and extreme precipitation. <sup>45</sup>   |

As the above job listings show, for the Black Thriving Initiative, a strong DEI statement is not just the first-round condition for having one's job application considered. Rather, DEI must be foundational to a candidate's research.

42 "Infrastructure Equity Faculty Cluster Hire – Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor of Urban Planning and Public Policy," UC Irvine, Academic Personnel Recruit, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://recruit.ap.uci.edu/JPF07762>.

43 "Tenure-Track or Tenured Faculty Position in Civil & Environmental Engineering - Infrastructure Equity Faculty Cluster Hire," UC Irvine, Academic Personnel Recruit, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://recruit.ap.uci.edu/JPF07793>.

44 "Infrastructure Equity Faculty Cluster Hire | Acting Professor / Professor of Law," UC Irvine, Academic Personnel Recruit, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://recruit.ap.uci.edu/JPF07784>.

45 "Infrastructure Equity Faculty Cluster Hire – Assistant or Associate Professor of Earth System Science," UC Irvine, Academic Personnel Recruit, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://recruit.ap.uci.edu/JPF07874>.

## Part 2: The Rapid Increase in Faculty Cluster Hiring

We have shown that cluster hiring initiatives can disqualify dissenting faculty—candidates who reject today’s narrow and ideological conception of diversity, equity, and inclusion. They also can exert a huge influence on the areas of research of a given university faculty, diverting focus to highly politicized research topics and, ultimately, changing the university’s core mission from the pursuit of truth to the pursuit of social and political goals. Thus, cluster hiring has the potential to transform American academia as a whole.

In this section, we will examine a few programs that highlight the growing ubiquity of DEI cluster hiring. In a matter of a few years, particularly since 2015, the practice has gone from a relatively obscure mechanism to one backed by hundreds of millions of dollars.

### The National Institutes of Health: FIRST Program

In January 2020, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced its Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST) program.<sup>46</sup> The program was designed to award \$241 million

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<sup>46</sup> “Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST) Proposed Common Fund Initiative,” National Institutes of Health, January 2020, [https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/sites/default/files/CoC\\_Jan\\_2020\\_1115\\_FIRST\\_program\\_concept\\_clearance.pdf](https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/sites/default/files/CoC_Jan_2020_1115_FIRST_program_concept_clearance.pdf).

to universities over nine years, specifically for creating faculty cluster hires. It funds cluster hires at twelve institutions, with the goal of creating 120 new faculty roles in its first five years.

Like so many other cluster hiring programs, the FIRST program was pitched as a pilot, a test case for determining effectiveness. Citing the Urban Universities for HEALTH report, the NIH announcement notes that “a cohort model might be an effective strategy for enhancing diversity and inclusion, but the approach has not been tested rigorously.”<sup>47</sup>

The FIRST program guidelines echo the language of other cluster hiring initiatives, emphasizing that contributions to DEI must be paramount in the hiring process. As the FIRST program webpage puts it, faculty hired through its grants must “have demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting diversity and inclusive excellence.”<sup>48</sup> It clarifies that this means mandatory DEI statements and evaluations akin to any other major cluster hiring program: “All future FIRST faculty candidates will be required to submit a statement to the grantee institution describing their commitment to promoting diversity and inclusive excellence.”<sup>49</sup>

Three years into the program, the NIH has funded more than a dozen hiring initiatives. These grantee institutions include San Diego State University, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, Florida State University, Cornell University, the University of South Carolina at Columbia, the University of New Mexico, and the University of Maryland, Baltimore.<sup>50</sup> The roles created by these institutions focus broadly on health and medicine, including research on cancer, infectious diseases/immunology, neuroscience, data science, and health disparities.<sup>51</sup>

These grantee institutions, moreover, reiterate the NIH’s main goal. Any professor who wishes to be hired through the program must first demonstrate a sterling commitment to DEI. In most grant

47 “Faculty Institutional Recruitment,” National Institutes of Health.

48 “Frequently Asked Questions,” National Institutes of Health, Common Fund, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://commonfund.nih.gov/FIRST/faqs>.

49 “Frequently Asked Questions,” National Institutes of Health.

50 “Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST) Program Highlights,” National Institutes of Health, Common Fund, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://commonfund.nih.gov/first/programhighlights>.

51 “Program Highlights,” National Institutes of Health.

announcements, the grantee institutions emphasize that candidates must submit robust diversity statements or otherwise demonstrate their commitment to the cause—as the University of Maryland put it, “a demonstrated commitment to promoting diversity and inclusive excellence.”<sup>52</sup> Through public records requests, the National Association of Scholars acquired the rubrics used for the NIH FIRST program at the University of New Mexico and the University of South Carolina. Both institutions copied the Berkeley rubric almost verbatim.

The FIRST program directs a massive amount of money to cluster hiring and shapes the actions of would-be institutional recipients. Some institutions that have not yet received FIRST grants have instituted cluster hiring programs in order to increase their chances of eventually receiving NIH funds.<sup>53</sup>

## The Ohio State University: RAISE Initiative

In February 2021, Ohio State University (OSU) President Kristina M. Johnson announced in her first State of the University Address the university’s new Race, Inclusion and Social Equity (RAISE) Initiative.<sup>54</sup> The program initiated an enormous hiring boom at OSU—aimed specifically at promoting DEI. Through the RAISE Initiative, Johnson pledged to hire 50 faculty members focused on “social equity” and “racial disparities,” and another 100 “underrepresented and BIPOC hires in all fields of scholarship.”<sup>55</sup>

“Ultimately,” Johnson said in her address, “the RAISE initiative will bring to Ohio State researchers who develop new approaches to

52 Vanessa McMains, “NIH Awards \$13.7 Million Grant to Recruit Underrepresented Groups as New Faculty,” University of Maryland School of Medicine, September 20, 2022, <https://www.medschool.umaryland.edu/news/2022/NIH-Awards-137-Million-Grant-to-Recruit-Underrepresented-Groups-as-New-Faculty.html>.

53 Ananya Sen, “Cluster Hires Facilitate Long-Term Institutional Success,” University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology, November 15, 2022, <https://www.igb.illinois.edu/article/cluster-hires-facilitate-long-term-institutional-success>; Janjay Innis and Jim Fessenden, “Reflecting on a Work in Progress,” *UMass Chan Medical School Magazine*, Fall 2022, 18–27, [https://issuu.com/umassmed\\_magazine/docs/atumass-chan\\_fall2022\\_final](https://issuu.com/umassmed_magazine/docs/atumass-chan_fall2022_final).

54 Kristina M. Johnson, “2021 State of the University,” Ohio State University, February 18, 2021, <https://president.osu.edu/speeches/sotu2021>.

55 Sara Weissman, “Ohio State President Announces Pledge to Hire 50 Scholars Focused on Race, Equity Issues,” *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, February 22, 2021, <https://www.diverseeducation.com/home/article/15108668/ohio-state-president-announces-pledge-to-hire-50-scholars-focused-on-race-equity-issues>.

building an anti-racist society, while changing the composition of our faculty and transforming our own culture, practices and policies so that Ohio State becomes an absolutely inclusive community.”<sup>56</sup>

The RAISE Initiative will accomplish Johnson’s ambitious goals through themed cluster hiring—referred to as “cohort” hiring at OSU. The program created 48 tenure-track faculty positions by late 2022, which were grouped across more than a half-dozen themes.<sup>57</sup> Each theme forwards and requires a professional specialization in DEI, race, ethnicity, and social justice.

- The “Critical STEM fields: Chemistry, Math, and Physics” cohort “seeks to address social equity and racial disparities in three core educational areas essential for all STEM students: chemistry, mathematics and physics.”<sup>58</sup>
- The “Racial Equity by Design” cohort “will recruit new faculty members whose research addresses bias and inequity in engineering design, as manifested in areas such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, human-centric computing, robotics, circuits, electronic devices, feedback control, and technology for social justice.”<sup>59</sup>
- The “Global Black Arts” cohort “will support systematic investigation of the ethics and aesthetics that foster enduring artistic creations that are critical and wary of the spaces they can and cannot occupy. This cohort encompasses critical, performance, and studio practices in relation to, and as part of, the concerns of Black communities.”<sup>60</sup>

The job listings for these cohorts make clear their emphasis on race, social justice, disparities, and equity.

<sup>56</sup> Johnson, “State of the University.”

<sup>57</sup> “Proposals Approved for Additional RAISE Faculty,” Ohio State University, Office of Academic Affairs, September 7, 2022, <https://oaa.osu.edu/proposals-approved-additional-raise-faculty>.

<sup>58</sup> “RAISE initiative,” Ohio State University, Office of Faculty Affairs, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://oaa.osu.edu/raise-call-for-proposals>.

<sup>59</sup> “RAISE initiative,” Ohio State University.

<sup>60</sup> “RAISE initiative,” Ohio State University.



| Department        | Job Description   |
|-------------------|---|
| Mathematics       | This hire is part of an Ohio State “RAISE” initiative cluster of three scholars who will be hired in the Departments of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Mathematics, and Physics, with one hire in each Department. We envision a candidate interested in developing a world-class program in discipline-based education research and in joining other scholars to coordinate efforts at Ohio State to study issues relevant to educational equity across STEM fields, with a special focus on race and other factors identifying historically marginalized groups. <sup>61</sup>   |
| Political Science | The Department of Political Science invites applications in the area of Race and Ethnicity in American Politics for a faculty position in the Advancing Racial and Criminal Justice Through Collaborative Science Hiring Cluster at The Ohio State University. We are particularly interested in candidates whose research is at the intersections of the study of race and ethnicity, law and criminal justice, or public policy. We invite scholars studying police-citizen encounters and law enforcement policies and practices more generally, prosecutorial and judicial decision making, racial and ethnic disparities in jails, prisons, and community correction facilities, and concentrated disadvantage, segregation, and the reentry of formerly rated individuals. We are also interested in scholars addressing how the observed racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system might be reduced through legal reform, more inclusive, equitable and effective public policy, organizational change, and innovative community initiatives. <sup>62</sup> |
| Geography         | The Department of Geography invites applications for a tenure-track position at the assistant professor level, commencing autumn semester 2023. We seek a GIScience scholar whose research addresses the racial disparities and social inequities of climate impacts and helps shape adaptations sensitive to these disparities and inequities. <sup>63</sup>   |

The RAISE Initiative promises to transform OSU by its sheer scope, through a hiring boom that gives “social justice” and “diversity, equity, and inclusion” priority over other considerations. Every job listing posted by OSU’s College of Arts and Sciences concludes with the note that, “Over the next few years, The Ohio State University is committed to welcoming 350 new faculty hires, many of which will contribute to growing our role as a premier research university equipped to answer and interrogate the critical domestic and global societal challenges that deter equality and inclusion.”

61 “Ohio State University, Mathematics,” Math Jobs, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://www.mathjobs.org/jobs/list/20532>.  
62 “Ohio State University, the Department of Political Science,” Academic Jobs Online, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://academicjobsonline.org/ajo/jobs/22326>.  
63 “Ohio State University, Geography,” Academic Jobs Online, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://academicjobsonline.org/ajo/jobs/22054>.

## Purdue University: Equity Task Force

OSU is not the only large midwestern university promising a hiring boom focused squarely on the themes of diversity, equity, and inclusion. In October 2020, Purdue University announced its first steps toward creating an Equity Task Force, which in turn would draft recommendations and, eventually, institutional policies for advancing “equity” throughout the university.<sup>64</sup> By November 2021, the university had raised \$75 million to fund the campaign, which by then included a cluster hiring initiative.<sup>65</sup>

Purdue soon announced that it had launched a “major cluster hire effort to add 40 full-time faculty as part of \$75 million diversity initiative.” Peter Hollenbeck, Purdue’s vice provost for faculty affairs, stated that, “Launching this many cluster hire searches at once is unprecedented and truly exciting. We’re sending the message that Purdue is looking to establish a large footprint in public health, that we are taking the necessary steps to expand mentoring and community-building initiatives, and enhancing career development opportunities and professional recognition for diverse faculty members.”<sup>66</sup>

## The University of California: Advancing Faculty Diversity Program

Since 2016, the University of California (UC) system has awarded grants through its Advancing Faculty Diversity (AFD) program, which is aimed, as the name suggests, at increasing the number of minority faculty members.<sup>67</sup> Each year, universities in the system can apply for these grants. Berkeley’s Life Sciences Initiative, as a notable example, was funded in part by an AFD grant.

64 “Equity Task Force Updates,” Purdue University, Office of the Provost, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://www.purdue.edu/provost/diversity/equity/updates.html#oct9>.

65 “Equity Task Force,” Purdue University.

66 “Purdue Launches Major Cluster Hire Effort to Add 40 Full-Time Faculty as Part of \$75 Million Diversity Initiative,” Purdue University, November 15, 2021, <https://www.purdue.edu/newsroom/releases/2021/Q4/purdue-launches-major-cluster-hire-effort-to-add-40-full-time-faculty-as-part-of-75-million-diversity-initiative.html>.

67 “Advancing Faculty Diversity (AFD) Project Abstracts 2016-17 through 2021-22,” University of California, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/reg-meet/may22/a3attach1.pdf>.

We examined all of the AFD grants awarded between 2016 and 2022. The AFD program funded six separate cluster hiring initiatives in the UC system during these six years. (See **Appendix A: University of California, Advancing Faculty Diversity Grants** for the abstracts of these six cluster hiring initiatives.)

The University of California, Santa Cruz's (UC Santa Cruz) "Improving Application Diversity and Impact of Contributions to Diversity" program provides an illustrative example of the effects of the AFD program. Again, per UC Santa Cruz's description, diversity statements played a key role:

UC Santa Cruz will introduce the first-line use of contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion statements for departmental searches in Arts and Engineering and for a cluster hire of four faculty members in a new program in Global and Community Health in the divisions of Physical and Biological Sciences and Social Sciences.<sup>68</sup>

Cluster hiring, evidently, is ubiquitous throughout the UC system, which includes some of the highest-ranked public universities in the country.

These six programs are not the only cluster hiring initiatives in the UC system; these are just the clusters supported by AFD grants. These six cluster hiring initiatives alone received approximately \$4 million in AFD grant money. We also list cluster hires at the best 25 public universities in America in **Appendix B: Cluster Hiring Initiatives at the Best 25 Public Universities**, which includes other cluster hires conducted within the University of California system.

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<sup>68</sup> "Advancing Faculty Diversity," University of California.

# Part 3: DEI Cluster Hiring at the Top 25 Public Universities

Cluster hiring is rapidly becoming a key component of university DEI efforts. In order to demonstrate the extent of DEI cluster hiring more rigorously, we have examined the top 25 American public universities, as ranked by the *U.S. News and World Report*.<sup>69</sup> For each university, we looked for cluster hiring initiatives that focused on themes of social justice, race, and gender; that explicitly highlighted DEI requirements; or that were touted as a way to increase diversity.

Our review found that all but three have recently implemented diversity cluster hiring initiatives or have recently announced their intentions to do so. We list those universities in **Appendix B: Cluster Hiring Initiatives at the Best 25 Public Universities**, along with excerpts describing their cluster hiring programs.

Some of these initiatives advertise standard academic jobs, but with a strong emphasis on DEI in the hiring process. A few of the initiatives are more vague and are touted as vehicles for advancing DEI with little explanation. Many more focus explicitly on race, gender, and social justice.

Examples of these cluster hires include:

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<sup>69</sup> "Top Public Schools," *U.S. News & World Report*, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/top-public>.

## Design Justice, University of Minnesota Twin Cities

In 2020, the University of Minnesota's College of Design launched its "Design Justice Initiative," a program to advance the goals of "social justice" and "anti-racism" within the college. According to the *Minnesota Daily*, the initiative would accomplish this mission through "affinity spaces, policy adaptations and operational changes."

Design Justice is a new initiative within the College of Design, seeking to create space, policy, and practices that support the inclusion and retention of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) as well as other communities who have been historically underinvested. Design Justice is supported by a group of individuals across design disciplines, known as the Collective, who are committed to anti-racism, decolonized pedagogy, and the liberation of communities who have been underinvested historically, in both design academia and the design industry.<sup>70</sup>

One feature of the Design Justice Initiative is the Design Justice Cluster-Hire Initiative, which recruits faculty focused on themes such as race, equity, and identity.

Areas of scholarship, teaching, and/or service will involve: anti-racism, racial justice, racial disparities, and/or racial discrimination; equity, power/privilege, and/or bias; benefits to the BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee populations; environmental and social justice; and/or other forms of studying and counter-ing systemic oppression.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> "Design Justice: The Faculty Cluster Hire," University of Minnesota, College of Design, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://design.umn.edu/justice/cluster-hire>.

<sup>71</sup> "Design Justice," University of Minnesota.

## Designing Just Futures, UC San Diego

The University of California, San Diego (UCSD) has engaged in several large-scale DEI cluster hires. As we show in **Appendix A: University of California, Advancing Faculty Diversity Grants**, UCSD received University of California grant funding for a DEI cluster hire in STEM and a “LatinX cluster hire initiative.” Its recent cluster hire is perhaps the most notable, given its considerable focus on the theme of social justice.

The Designing Just Futures Cluster Hire seeks to recruit diverse faculty engaging in innovative and interdisciplinary research at the intersections of design and social justice that prioritize Indigenous, Black, and migrant Futures.

We encourage the recruitment of scholars who are committed to using their skills, talents, and knowledge to have a societal impact, whether it be public scholarship, engagement with civic or industry partners, and/or commitment to shaping public policy. Across these social impacts, this cluster hire emphasizes futures that might otherwise be foreclosed by structural racism, futures that are made visible when we center Indigenous, Black, and migrant communities.<sup>72</sup>

This, too, is part of a larger hiring boom focused on DEI. When discussing the Designing Just Futures initiative, UCSD Executive Vice Chancellor Elizabeth H. Simmons noted that “Over the next five years, we plan to hire up to 50 new faculty members and researchers whose interdisciplinary work centers on the Latinx and Chicanx experience, Indigenous knowledge, the convergence of Black Studies and STEM, as well as health equity in the biomedical sciences.”

<sup>72</sup> “Designing Just Futures,” UC San Diego, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://www.design-just-futures.ucsd.edu/>.

## REACT 2020, University of Texas at Austin

In 2020, the Department of Psychology at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) announced an initiative to address “institutional racism” within the department. The REACT strategy (Recruitment, Empowerment, Admissions, Conversation, Training), as with most DEI programming, involved multiple institutional policy changes, one of which was a cluster hire.<sup>73</sup>

The department’s website notes that the REACT strategy includes two cluster hires, one on “Diversity in cognitive functioning brain correlates of cognitive function in aging” and one on the “Neurobiological impact of childhood adversity on development.”<sup>74</sup> These are part of a larger cluster hiring initiative at the university level, a stated goal of which is “increasing campus diversity.”<sup>75</sup>

## Beyond the Top 25 Public Universities

It should be emphasized that academic institutions throughout the United States—public and private, selective and nonselective—embrace cluster hiring. In our research for this report, we found dozens of examples of cluster hires that did not take place at the top 25 public universities.

Many top medical research institutions, for example, have engaged in cluster hiring. In 2021, Harvard Medical School (HMS) hired six faculty members through a cohort search. “The search criteria,” according to HMS’s website, “prioritized scientific excellence and a demonstrated commitment to HMS’s institutional values of diversity and community.”<sup>76</sup> A year before that, the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center launched a similar cluster hire, noting its intention to ensure “that all

73 “REACT 2020,” University of Texas at Austin, Department of Psychology, accessed December 6, 2022, <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/psychology/diversity/react-2020/>

74 “Recruitment,” University of Texas at Austin, Department of Psychology, accessed December 6, 2022, <https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/psychology/diversity/react-2020/recruitment.html>.

75 “Cluster and Interdisciplinary Hiring Initiative,” University of Texas at Austin, Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, accessed December 6, 2022, <https://provost.utexas.edu/initiatives/cluster-and-interdisciplinary-hiring-initiative-2/>.

76 M.R.F. Buckley, “6 New Faculty Joining HMS,” Harvard Medical School, October 14, 2021, <https://hms.harvard.edu/news/6-new-faculty-joining-hms>.



candidates hired share our commitment to diversity, antiracism, and inclusion.”<sup>77</sup>

Likewise, many state institutions that fall outside the top 25 have also embraced cluster hiring. In 2021, California State University Channel Islands launched a cluster hire on “Anti-Racism and the Experiences of Black Communities in the U.S.” Since 2017, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo has engaged in DEI cluster hiring. “During the 2021-2022 school year,” the university’s website notes, “a third search was launched that resulted in successfully hiring 10 diverse and inclusive assistant professors representing eight different departments.”<sup>78</sup> The list goes on.

This report provides a snapshot, not an exhaustive list, of the DEI-focused cluster hires at American universities. As our previous sections demonstrate, many universities implement more than one cluster hire, and it is likely that the number of cluster hiring initiatives will grow. Many institutions are only getting started.

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77 “Assistant/Associate/Full Professor Cluster Hire at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center,” Implementation Science News, October 9, 2020, <https://news.consortiumforis.org/2020/10/09/assistant-associate-full-professor-cluster-hire-at-fred-hutchinson-cancer-research-center/>.

78 “DEI-Focused Cluster Hires,” California Polytechnic State University, College of Liberal Arts, accessed December 6, 2022 <https://cla.calpoly.edu/diversity-cluster>.

# Conclusion: Critique and Recommendations

This report has highlighted the growth and the effects of DEI cluster hiring. We have demonstrated that the practice has received considerable financial backing, that it infuses the watchwords of identity politics into the faculty hiring process, and that it pushes faculty to specialize in disciplines almost indistinguishable from political activism. Ultimately, DEI cluster hiring imperils both academic freedom and the integrity of academic disciplines. It does this most importantly by:

- **Using Diversity Statements as Ideological Screens.** The rubrics used for evaluating diversity statements punish any applicant who objects to the mainstream of academic opinion. *Diversity, equity, and inclusion* connote a set of narrow and highly controversial views, as is made clear by the various rubrics for assessing DEI contributions. Universities that require a candidate to advance these values and that reward candidates who describe them as “core values that every faculty member should actively contribute to” inevitably engage in ideological screening in the faculty hiring process.
- **Distorting the University’s Mission.** Taken as a whole, this massive push for DEI cluster hiring will do lasting damage to intellectual freedom, intellectual diversity, and scholarly excellence—the very pillars on which the legitimacy of the university rests. Of course, race, gender, and controversial political theories can constitute legitimate areas

of scholarship that merit individual faculty appointments. When universities recruit dozens of scholars for positions focused on these themes they betray a fundamentally political project. Such a project transforms the university mission from the pursuit of truth to political activism.

- **A Centralizing the Hiring Process.** Cluster hiring initiatives usually take place across multiple departments, which means that departments have less control over the hiring process. Cluster hiring provides an opportunity for administrators to take control over faculty hiring. Some DEI administrators boast of having taken a central role in the hiring process. DEI administrators use cluster hiring's centralized process to ensure that faculty hires forward DEI policy rather than departmental, disciplinary goals.
- **Providing Camouflage for Racial Preferences.** Some cluster hiring initiatives end with eyebrow-raising results. Consider the Berkeley Life Sciences Initiative. The applicant pool was 53.7 percent white and 13.2 percent Hispanic. The shortlist was 13.6 percent white and 59.1 percent Hispanic. The largest reduction in the proportion of white candidates, and the largest increase in the proportion of Hispanic candidates, happened *after* the first-round review of diversity statements. Given the opaque nature of the process, we cannot prove that any particular cluster hiring initiative involves illegal racial preferences, but many of these initiatives are designed in a way that could provide convenient cover for illegal racial preferences.

For years, universities have heralded the rise of a new mission—not the pursuit of truth, but the pursuit of social justice and societal transformation. Increasingly, they impose ideological conformity in the service of that goal. DEI cluster hiring serves to advance that new mission.

This development requires a proportionate policy response. We suggest the following reforms:

- **End DEI statements.** Administrators should ban the practice of mandatory diversity statements for admissions, hiring, promotion, and tenure. To do so, they should consider adopting and expanding upon the University of Chicago's Shils Report, which calls for faculty to be evaluated almost exclusively on the basis of their teaching and research.
- **Implement a cluster hiring moratorium.** Many cluster hiring initiatives remain opaque. While universities advertise cluster hires as a means to increase diversity, they often fail to make clear how exactly they intend to achieve this diversity. This creates the opportunity for various abuses throughout the process. Until the process becomes clearer—and until it is clear that these initiatives do not violate academic freedom or harm the integrity of academic disciplines—administrators should call for a moratorium on faculty cluster hiring and ask for a report on how candidates have been evaluated.
- **Reform the practice of cluster hiring.** If administrators do not want to implement a ban on cluster hiring, then they should at least create strong restrictions on the practice, to safeguard academic freedom and integrity. They should consider giving departments the opportunity to opt out of any cluster hiring initiative and instead use cluster hiring funds for their own purposes. Departments also should be given the power to define the cluster hire's professional specialization, and to staff the entire personnel of the hiring committee. They should ensure transparency by requiring that all cluster hiring proposals be published on the institution's website. They also should establish research-qualification rubrics, to ensure that cluster hires meet the research qualifications of faculty hired by normal processes. Finally, they should mandate a detailed report on every faculty cluster hire, to be published online.
- **Reform universities at the state level.** If university administrators fail to take action, state legislators should

ban mandatory diversity statements in hiring. They should create transparency laws, requiring administrators to give an account of how candidates are evaluated in cluster hiring. They also should prohibit state universities from applying for or receiving federal, state, or private monies to support cluster hires with diversity requirements.

- **Remove DEI requirements from government funding.** As the NIH's FIRST program illustrates, many university DEI initiatives are the direct result of funding incentives. To the extent possible, these DEI requirements and incentives should be ended. State legislators should consider creating their own robust funding for research, replacing DEI mandates with academic-freedom and academic-rigor requirements.

American universities exist for the public, and they are accountable to the public. They should not be ideological echo chambers—and they do not have to be. All those who support academic freedom, and who decry the politicization of the university, can take effective steps to advance the project of renewal.

# Appendix A: University of California, Advancing Faculty Diversity Grants

## Grants<sup>79</sup>

### **UC Riverside: Advancing Engineering Faculty Diversity at the University of California, Riverside, \$600,000**

With a focus in the Bourns College of Engineering (BCOE) and related cluster hiring, the project targeted potential engineering faculty slightly earlier in their careers – senior PhD students or very recent graduates – by offering new faculty members funding for a postdoctoral research fellowship and additional early-career professional development through the new Provost’s Diversity in Engineering Fellows (PDEF) Program. The project included an enhanced recruitment process involving all searches within the engineering college, required diversity statements, splash ads, and a centralized review committee. All awarded funds would be committed to three new hires through the PDEF program. BCOE would also have additional hires through positions supported with college funds and positions funded through the UCR “cluster hiring” initiative.

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<sup>79</sup> “Advancing Faculty Diversity,” University of California.

## **UC Santa Barbara: Enhancing Faculty Diversity at UC Santa Barbara, Department of Economics, \$500,000**

The Department of Economics prepared a comprehensive plan that builds on a cluster hire approach to construct a strategic initiative that focused on four key components: searching across multiple ranks and fields, advertising, attractive research start-up packages, and enhanced faculty and staff time to focus on a broad search. A key component of this project was the adaptation of a successful intervention from year one of the Advancing Faculty Diversity program with the creation of a postdoctoral fellowship to precede the assistant professorship, as well as enhancement of the endowed chair start-up package to support work with underrepresented minority and low-income students.

## **UC Berkeley: Advancing Faculty Diversity in Berkeley Engineering, \$500,000**

With strong commitment by the leadership and plans for substantial hiring in 2017-18, this project focused on four broad categories: increasing the diversity of applicant pools; emphasizing and requiring contributions to equity and inclusion; improving evaluation and reducing bias; and increasing the effectiveness of interviews, recruiting, and professional development. In addition to employing best practices already promoted by the campus and ensuring they are implemented well, this project implemented additional interventions, including those identified in year one of the Advancing Faculty Diversity program and from UC Berkeley's own Search Committee Chair Survey conducted from 2012-16. The interventions included revisions to position announcements, targeted outreach, required diversity statements, expanded startup funding, equity advisor meetings for candidates, evaluation of candidates by a student committee, multicriteria rubrics, a centralized review committee, increased pool of finalists, support for partner/spouse careers, and postdoctoral support.

## **UC Berkeley: Initiative to Advance Faculty Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Life Sciences, \$500,000**

With strong commitment by campus leadership, this unique program is a cross-divisional collaboration to advance faculty diversity in the life sciences. This program centers on four broad categories: building a critical mass; strengthening applicant pools; improving candidate evaluation processes; and institutional change. The interventions will include the allocation of FTE across the life sciences; a centralized cross-department review committee; winter seminar series with participants from the President's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program (PPFP), Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program (CPFP), and other institutions; faculty search ads; targeted, personal outreach using a database of promising candidates; rubrics for evaluating contributions to diversity statements; search committee training; valuing contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion alongside contributions in research, teaching, and service; Council of Life Sciences Faculty to provide ongoing program development; diversity, equity, and inclusion retreat; a cohort mentoring program; and additions to start-up packages for equity and inclusion programs.

## **UC Santa Cruz: Improving Application Diversity and Impact of Contributions to Diversity, \$497,000**

UC Santa Cruz will introduce the first-line use of contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion statements for departmental searches in Arts and Engineering and for a cluster hire of four faculty members in a new program in Global and Community Health in the divisions of Physical and Biological Sciences and Social Sciences. Selection committees will use rubrics to assess the statements. The use of contributions to diversity statements and rubrics in the initial screening of applicants builds on successful interventions used at UC Berkeley and UC Davis during year 3 of the Advancing Faculty Diversity project and represents a significant change for UC Santa Cruz.



## **UC San Diego: Advancing Diverse Faculty, Curricula and Research through a Cluster Hire at UC San Diego \$493,000**

Leveraging its institutional strengths, student needs, and opportunities to diversify faculty, research and curriculum at the intersection of the social sciences and STEM, UC San Diego is conducting a multidisciplinary cluster hire of up to ten faculty whose research is focused on racial/ethnic disparities in health, medicine, and the environment. The new faculty will be located in the Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, and the new Wertheim School of Public Health, and would contribute a significant focus on African American communities and the Black Diaspora. The cluster would serve three purposes: 1) to increase faculty diversity; 2) to advance research on and for communities of color; and 3) to diversify curriculum in STEM affiliated with the DEI course requirement and African American Studies Minor. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic where we are witnessing social disparities translate into disparate health outcomes, this innovative proposal is both timely and globally relevant.

## **UC San Diego: Advancing Diverse Faculty, Curricula and Research through a Cluster Hire at UC San Diego \$493,000**

Leveraging its institutional strengths, student needs, and opportunities to diversify faculty, research and curriculum at the intersection of the social sciences and STEM, UC San Diego is conducting a multidisciplinary cluster hire of up to ten faculty whose research is focused on racial/ethnic disparities in health, medicine, and the environment. The new faculty will be located in the Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, and the new Wertheim School of Public Health, and would contribute a significant focus on African American communities and the Black Diaspora. The cluster would serve three purposes: 1) to increase faculty diversity; 2) to advance research on and for communities of color; and 3) to diversify curriculum in STEM

affiliated with the DEI course requirement and African American Studies Minor. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic where we are witnessing social disparities translate into disparate health outcomes, this innovative proposal is both timely and globally relevant.

**UC San Diego: Transforming UC San Diego from an emerging HSI to an HSRI through a LatinX cluster hire initiative; \$498,600**

The UC San Diego Latinx Cluster Hire Initiative (LCHI) leverages a strong campus commitment to diversifying the faculty while simultaneously working to fulfill its student-centered mission. As an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution, UC San Diego is uniquely positioned to transform into an HSRI and STEM HSI with the support of leadership and commitment to meeting the curricular, co-curricular, and cultural needs of Latinx, URM and increasingly first-generation students. The LCHI proposes to hire up to fourteen faculty whose research and pedagogical focus on issues affecting and of interest to Chicanx/Latinx students. Moreover, it would leverage the Chicanx/Latinx Studies and Latin American Studies programs, strong EDI initiatives underway and the expertise of campus Faculty Equity Advisors. A robust hiring initiative across four divisions and nine academic departments that serve a critical mass of Latinx students will serve as a catalyst for UC San Diego becoming a Latinx serving and responsive institution.

# Appendix B: Cluster Hiring Initiatives at the Top 25 Public Universities

| Rank <sup>80</sup> | University/<br>College             | Description Excerpt   |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| 1                  | University of California, Berkeley | <p>The University of California, Berkeley invites applications for a full-time tenure-track faculty position as part of a campus-wide cluster hire in the area of Diversity and Democracy. The three areas of focal interest for this position are research and teaching expertise in one or some combination of the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) diversity and identity;</li><li>2) diversity, civil society and political action; or</li><li>3) legal or philosophical frameworks for diverse democracies.</li></ol> <p>Special consideration will be given to candidates who work in one or more of the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) the content and contestation of group identities;</li><li>2) the civic and political engagement of diverse populations within local, national, and transnational contexts; or</li><li>3) the normative or legal implications of racial and ethnic diversity within democratic societies.<sup>81</sup></li></ol> |

80 "Top Public Schools," *U.S. News & World Report*.

81 "Assistant Professor - Diversity & Democracy - Othering & Belonging Institute," UC Berkeley, Academic Personnel Recruit, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://aprecruit.berkeley.edu/JPF03662>.

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|---|--|---|
| 2 | University of California, Los Angeles, School of Education & Information Studies | <p>The Department of Education in the School of Education &amp; Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles announces an open rank search for 3 faculty in the area of Environmental Justice. We aim to hire a cluster of faculty across all ranks, including assistant and associate professors, with a demonstrated record of research addressing the nexus of environmental justice and education. We are interested in a multidisciplinary, multi-methodological cluster of scholars who will engage with communities, schools, local, state, federal, and international policy makers, as well as colleagues across areas in and outside of the Department of Education.</p> <p>Recognizing that Communities of Color have been disproportionately impacted by environmental racism and Indigenous communities have also been at the forefront of fighting environmental injustice, we seek faculty whose research and teaching center the experiences and perspectives of People of Color as they engage in environmental justice, broadly defined. We are particularly interested in scholars who are engaged in interdisciplinary lines of inquiry that account for socio-ecological relations, human and environment interactions, and histories of place in regard to environmental justice, and who have experience creating programs that engage students, parents, and community partnerships.<sup>82</sup></p> |
| 3 | University of Michigan-Ann Arbor   | <p>Eight new University of Michigan faculty positions have been selected for funding in the first round of hires as part of the Anti-Racism Faculty Hiring Initiative.</p> <p>The three-year hiring initiative — an important facet of U-M's anti-racism initiatives — will ultimately add at least 20 new tenured or tenure-track faculty members with scholarly expertise in racial inequality and structural racism to schools and colleges across campus.<sup>83</sup></p>  |

82 "Open Rank Professor of Education - Environmental Justice," UCLA, Academic Personnel Recruit, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://recruit.apo.ucla.edu/JPF07155>.

83 Lauren Love, "Anti-Racism Faculty Hiring Moves Forward," *University Record*, University of Michigan, March 22, 2021, <https://record.umich.edu/articles/anti-racism-faculty-hiring-moves-forward/>.

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|---|--|---|
|   |  | <p>We will launch 15 faculty searches (to be completed over the next two to three years):</p> <p>A cluster of six searches on race and inequality across all departments;</p> <p>Three additional searches on race and democracy in the arts and humanities (in co-ordination with the Democracy Initiative and with support from the Mellon Foundation);</p> <p>A renewal of the joint search between the Carter Woodson Institute and the English Department;</p> <p>Five additional target-of-opportunity searches dedicated to expanding the diversity of our faculty across all departments (with particular but not exclusive focus on the sciences)<sup>84</sup></p>   |
| 4 | University of Virginia                   |   |
| 5 | University of Florida                    | <p>These positions are part of a diversity focused cluster hire within the Department of Psychology. We are actively recruiting candidates who can contribute to the diversity, equity, inclusivity, and excellence of the academic community at UF and in our department. Applicants will be expected to maintain an outstanding program of research with high potential for external funding, teach psychology graduate and undergraduate courses, advise students, and provide service to the institution. Specifically, the department seeks applicants who conduct research at the individual, community, and/or systemic level with an emphasis on diversity and inclusion, broadly defined. This could include applicants with research that is with, or particularly relevant to, people from marginalized communities including (but not limited to) Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color (BIPOC), queer, transgender and gender diverse communities, immigrants, lower SES communities, and people with disabilities. It could also include applicants with expertise in diversity science whose research is in the areas of race, racism, and inequality.<sup>85</sup></p> |
| 6 | University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill | <p>The College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is pleased to undertake a cluster hire in American Indian and Indigenous Studies. This initiative is part of the College's commitment to advancing an innovative curriculum and expanding its outstanding and diverse faculty. The cluster will comprise four faculty positions: three tenure-track appointments at the assistant professor level and one appointment for a distinguished professor at the full professor rank.<sup>86</sup></p>   |

84 "Next Steps: Arts & Sciences Race, Justice, Equity Initiatives," University of Virginia, College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, August 14, 2020, <https://www.as.virginia.edu/next-steps-arts-sciences-race-justice-equity-initiatives>.

85 "Two Assistant Professors and One Assistant/Associate Professor in Psychology," University of Florida, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://psych.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/75/Psychology-Cluster-AD-Post.pdf>.

86 "Cluster Hire in American Indian and Indigenous Studies," University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, College of Arts and Sciences, October 26, 2022, <https://college.unc.edu/2022/10/cluster-hire-in-american-indian-and-indigenous-studies/>.

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|----|---|---|
| 7  | University of California, Santa Barbara       | (Cluster Hiring Initiative Global Migration: Engaging Inequalities, Affirming Communities)<br><br>In naming this area of excellence, the Dean has invited departments across the Division to participate in a multi-year hiring initiative, though which we seek to achieve deep and sustained interdisciplinary expertise and collaboration on Global Migration, in research, teaching, and service. <sup>87</sup>   |
| 8  | University of California, Irvine              | I am pleased to announce the outcome of the 2021-22 call for proposals for the UCI Black Thriving Initiative Faculty Cluster Hiring Program. The program is a competitive two-year effort to recruit faculty who interrogate structural racism in its myriad forms. As part of the UCI Black Thriving Initiative, the program aims to build on the hiring priorities of academic units; pave new paths for research and creative expression, teaching and learning, and community engagement; and manifest our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in research, teaching and service. <sup>88</sup>   |
| 9  | University of California, San Diego           | The Designing Just Futures Cluster Hire seeks to recruit diverse faculty engaging in innovative and interdisciplinary research at the intersections of design and social justice that prioritize Indigenous, Black, and migrant Futures.<br><br>We encourage the recruitment of scholars who are committed to using their skills, talents, and knowledge to have a societal impact, whether it be public scholarship, engagement with civic or industry partners, and/or commitment to shaping public policy. Across these social impacts, this cluster hire emphasizes futures that might otherwise be foreclosed by structural racism, futures that are made visible when we center Indigenous, Black, and migrant communities. <sup>89</sup> |
| 10 | University of California, Davis <sup>90</sup> | UC Davis is embracing the philosophy that the world's most serious problems can be solved only by people with a wide variety of perspectives, and is encouraging colleges and schools all over campus to infuse their recruitments for new faculty members with a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion.<br><br>The ensuing new faculty members, 100 to start with, will bring their diverse and transdisciplinary approaches to bear on UC Davis' Grand Challenges — serious problems that include sustainable food systems, reimagining the land grant university, climate crisis and emerging health threats. <sup>91</sup>   |

<sup>87</sup> "Cluster Hiring Initiative Global Migration: Engaging Inequalities, Affirming Communities," UC Santa Barbara, Department of Global Studies, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://www.global.ucsb.edu/news/announcement/760>.

<sup>88</sup> "UCI Black Thriving Initiative," UC Irvine.

<sup>89</sup> "Designing Just Futures," UC San Diego.

<sup>90</sup> The UC Davis Grand Challenges initiative bears many of the characteristics of a cluster hiring program. It is hiring program organized around themes with an explicit emphasis on DEI. The university has, however, provided few details about the program, so its not clear whether the program can rightly be described as a cluster hiring program. We have chosen not counted it as a cluster hire but are providing the above information

<sup>91</sup> Cody Kitaura, "A Renewed Emphasis on Diversity in Faculty Hiring," UC Davis, October 11, 2022, <https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/renewed-emphasis-diversity-faculty-hiring>. Note: this

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|----|---|---|
| 11 | University of Texas at Austin           | <p>[All cluster proposals are required to include the following:]</p> <p>Description of how the cluster hires have the potential to add diversity to the campus community, and what efforts will be made in the hiring process to recruit a diverse pool of candidates.<sup>92</sup></p>  |
| 12 | University of Wisconsin–Madison         | <p>In 2017, phase two of the Cluster Hiring Initiative was authorized and has since authorized 19 additional clusters.</p> <p>[Program goals include “Assist the fulfillment of other missions of the university, particularly increasing diversity.”]<sup>93</sup></p>   |
| 13 | University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign | <p>Vanderpool is now organizing a fourth cluster hire effort that she hopes will be supported by the NIH Common Fund’s Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST) program. The program aims to use the cluster hire mechanism not only to enhance multidisciplinary diversity but also to enhance and maintain cultures of inclusive excellence in the campus biomedical research community. It was developed due to the recognition that fostering inclusive environments will provide creative minds the opportunity that they might not otherwise have to contribute to the research and health goals of the U.S. As the nation’s population continues to become more diverse, it is important to ensure that diversity in scientific talent is recognized and supported.<sup>94</sup></p>   |
| 14 | College of William and Mary             | <p>The Department of Sociology and the Africana Studies program at William &amp; Mary, a public university of the Commonwealth of Virginia, invite applications for a tenure track position at the Assistant Professor level. The successful candidate will specialize in the study of critical criminology and race. Appointment will begin August 10, 2023. We are interested in individuals with research and teaching expertise in applying and assessing quantitative data science methods for studying trends and racial inequities in policing, mass incarceration, and the criminal justice system. Complementary areas of expertise considered include critical race theory, racialized discourse about crime, and comparative transnational analysis of crime and criminal justice. ...</p> <p>This position is part of a cluster hire initiative for the Africana Studies Program at W&amp;M.<sup>95</sup></p> |

initiative is not advertised as a cluster hire, but it is virtually indistinguishable from typical DEI cluster hiring initiatives: faculty will be hired to address particular themes and must demonstrate their continued contributions to DEI.

- 92 “Cluster and Interdisciplinary Hiring Initiative Proposal Process,” University of Texas at Austin, Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://provost.utexas.edu/initiatives/cluster-and-interdisciplinary-hiring-initiative-2/cluster-and-interdisciplinary-hiring-initiative-proposal-process/>. See also “Recruitment,” University of Texas at Austin: “These two faculty hiring lines are aimed at recruiting diverse candidates that are working with diverse populations.”
- 93 “Cluster Hiring Initiative,” University of Wisconsin–Madison, Office of the Provost, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://facstaff.provost.wisc.edu/cluster-hiring-initiative/>.
- 94 Sen, “Cluster Hires.”
- 95 “Assistant Prof Sociology & Africana Studies (Critical Criminology/Race),” William & Mary, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://jobs.wm.edu/postings/51009>.

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|----|---------------------------------|---|
| 15 | Georgia Institute of Technology | No initiative found   |
| 16 | The Ohio State University       | <p>The Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies seeks candidates whose research interrogates gendered and sexualized disparities alongside the dispossessions of settler colonialism, the imaginary and creative dimensions of indigenous justice movements, and the potentials of women- and two-spirit or queer-led innovations in preserving embattled minority and colonized food/health/body/eco cultures. We invite interdisciplinary scholars who work in areas such as Feminist Indigenous Environmental Studies; Land and Water Protectors; food justice movements; the cultural and social dimensions of land/water/air, especially relating to gender, race, sexuality, settler colonialism, disability, and nation; or the roles of indigenous women, queer, and two-spirit people in sovereignty struggles or who work to combat land/body insecurity and threats to community and Nation thriving.</p> <p>... This hire in Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies is part of a cluster hiring collaboration with the Department of Comparative Studies, the Department of English, the Department of Linguistics, and The Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures, which will each hire an Assistant Professor in Indigenous Studies.<sup>96</sup></p> |
| 17 | University of Georgia           | No initiative found   |
| 18 | Purdue University               | <p>Purdue University is launching one of the largest faculty hiring initiatives in its history as a key part of a \$75 million Equity Task Force effort to diversify the racial makeup of its faculty, staff and student ranks. Over the next five years, 40 full-time faculty will be added through several academic clusters as part of this initiative.<sup>97</sup></p>   |
| 19 | Florida State University        | <p>A team of Florida State University researchers from the College of Nursing, College of Medicine and College of Arts &amp; Sciences has received a \$14.5 million National Institutes of Health grant to build a diverse community of early career researchers committed to improving mental health and chronic disease prevention and management.</p> <p>The university will use the funding to create the FLORIDA-FIRST BRIGADE, a program designed to support new tenure-track assistant professors and build a research community committed to diversity and inclusive excellence.<sup>98</sup></p>   |

96 "Ohio State University, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies," Academic Jobs Online, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://academicjobsonline.org/ajo/jobs/2223/>.

97 "Purdue Launches Major Cluster Hire," Purdue University.

98 Kelsey Klopfenstein, "FSU receives \$14.5M from National Institutes of Health to Foster Faculty Diversity in Health Sciences Research," Florida State University, October 14, 2021, <https://news.fsu.edu/news/health-medicine/2021/10/14/fsu-receives-12-8m-from-national-institutes-of-health-to-foster-faculty-diversity-in-health-sciences-research/>.



|    |                                      |   |
|----|--------------------------------------|---|
| 20 | Rutgers University                   | Since a thriving culture of inclusive excellence often depends on thoughtful collaboration within and across units in areas that are of strategic value to the university, the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs invites proposals for faculty cluster hires that fit within one of four areas of strength and emerging promise across all the Chancellor-led units at Rutgers: Race, Racism, and Inequality; Health Equity; Advancing STEM Diversity; Engaged Climate Action. <sup>99</sup>  |
| 21 | University of Maryland, College Park | <p>The College of Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSOS) at the University of Maryland is pleased to announce an effort to hire several faculty members focused on racial inequality, and invites applications for positions in multiple departments: African American Studies, Anthropology, Criminology and Criminal Justice, Government and Politics, Psychology, and Sociology.</p> <p>Through this effort, the college will further enhance its research portfolio on racial inequalities and disparities related to: institutions and resource access; health and well-being; and identity stigmatization in the United States and abroad. We are particularly seeking faculty members who focus on race, racial disparities, diversity science, or related areas.<sup>100</sup></p> |
| 22 | University of Washington             | <p>The College of Engineering cluster hiring initiative was launched in January 2020. The initiative aims to facilitate interdisciplinary strategic hiring within the College to:</p> <p>Bridge gaps in existing faculty expertise where a critical new hire could lead to significant advances and increase reputation in that area.</p> <p>Catalyze, encourage and foster interdisciplinary research across departments, in innovative and exciting fields of study.</p> <p>Increase diversity and improve equity and inclusion.</p> <p>Address enrollment growth and strategic teaching needs.<sup>101</sup></p>   |

<sup>99</sup> "Strategic Diversity Cluster Hiring," Rutgers University, Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://academicaffairs.rutgers.edu/academics/investing-faculty-diversity-rutgers/strategic-diversity-cluster-hiring>.

<sup>100</sup> "BSOS Hiring Numerous Racial Inequality Scholars across Multiple Departments," University of Maryland, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://bsos.umd.edu/academics-research/bsos-hiring-numerous-racial>.

<sup>101</sup> "Cluster Hiring Initiative," University of Washington, College of Engineering, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://www.engr.washington.edu/faculty-research/cluster-hiring>.

|    |                                      |   |
|----|--------------------------------------|---|
| 23 | University of Minnesota, Twin Cities | Design Justice is a new initiative within the College of Design, seeking to create space, policy, and practices that support the inclusion and retention of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) as well as other communities who have been historically underinvested. Design Justice is supported by a group of individuals across design disciplines, known as the Collective, who are committed to anti-racism, decolonized pedagogy, and the liberation of communities who have been underinvested historically, in both design academia and the design industry. Areas of scholarship, teaching, and/or service will involve: anti-racism, racial justice, racial disparities, and/or racial discrimination; equity, power/privilege, and/or bias; benefits to the BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee populations; environmental and social justice; and/or other forms of studying and countering systemic oppression. <sup>102</sup> |
| 24 | University of Pittsburgh             | <p>This university-wide cluster hire and retention initiative will transform Pitt's expertise in, and research on, Race and Social Determinants of Equity, Health and Well-Being. The initiative will focus on four interrelated goals:</p> <p>Significantly increase the number of faculty who are hired, promoted and retained who work in these fields;</p> <p>Attract, recruit and graduate undergraduate and graduate students for whom these issues are important;</p> <p>Raise the University's local, national and international profile and expertise in Race and Social Determinants of Equity and Well-Being; and</p> <p>Increase the University's capacity to contribute to important and sustainable societal change.<sup>103</sup></p>  |
| 25 | Virginia Tech                        | <p>[From the College of Architecture and Urban Studies "Equity and Inclusion Strategic Implementation and Action Plan"]</p> <p>Develop, fund and implement a pilot cluster hire cluster [sic] hire in the college.<sup>104</sup></p>  |

<sup>102</sup> "Design Justice," University of Minnesota.

<sup>103</sup> "Race and Social Determinants of Equity, Health and Well-Being Cluster Hire and Retention Initiative," University of Pittsburgh, Office of the Provost, accessed November 28, 2022, <https://www.provost.pitt.edu/priorities/diversity-and-inclusion/race-and-social-determinants-equity-health-and-well-being-cluster>.

<sup>104</sup> "2021-2023 CAUS Equity and Inclusion Strategic Implementation and Action Plan," Virginia Tech, College of Architecture and Urban Studies, accessed November 28, 2022, [https://aad.vt.edu/content/dam/aad\\_vt\\_edu/about/CAUS-Equity-and-Inclusion-Plan-Implementation-Plan-2021-2023.pdf](https://aad.vt.edu/content/dam/aad_vt_edu/about/CAUS-Equity-and-Inclusion-Plan-Implementation-Plan-2021-2023.pdf).

# Appendix C: Diversity Statement Rubrics

## University of California, Berkeley: Rubric for Assessing Candidate Contributions to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging<sup>105</sup>

**Knowledge about Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging [5 points max]**

| Score | Examples  |
|-------|---|
| 1 - 2 | Little expressed knowledge of, or experience with, dimensions of diversity that result from different identities. Defines diversity only in terms of different areas of study or different nationalities, but doesn't discuss gender or ethnicity/race. Discusses diversity in vague terms, such as "diversity is important for science." May state having had little experience with these issues because of lack of exposure, but then not provide any evidence of having informed themselves. Or may discount the importance of diversity. |
|       | Little demonstrated awareness of underrepresentation, or of differential experiences, of particular groups in higher education or in their discipline. May use vague statements such as "the field of History definitely needs more women" without offering further examples or specifics.  |
|       | Seems not to be aware of, or understand the personal challenges that underrepresented individuals face in academia, or feel any personal responsibility for helping to create an equitable and inclusive environment for all. For example, may state that it's better not to have outreach or affinity groups aimed at particular individuals because it keeps them separate from everyone else, or will make them feel less valued.  |

<sup>105</sup> "Rubric for Assessing Candidate Contributions," UC Berkeley.

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|--|--|
| 3  | Has some knowledge of demographic data related to diversity and awareness of its importance.   |
| Some evidence of awareness, but falls short of significant knowledge base or deep interest | Shows some understanding of challenges faced by individuals who are underrepresented and the need for everyone to work to create an equitable and inclusive environment for all.   |
|  | Comfort discussing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging related issues  |
|  | Clear knowledge of, experience with, and interest in dimensions of diversity that result from different identities, such as ethnic, socioeconomic, racial, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and cultural differences. This understanding can result from personal experiences as well as an investment in learning about the experiences of those with identities different from their own. |
| 4 - 5  | Is aware of demographic data related to diversity in higher education. Discusses the underrepresentation of particular groups and the consequences for higher education or for the discipline.   |
| Clear and deep understanding of dimensions of DEIB in higher education                     | Comfort discussing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging related issues (including distinctions and connections between diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging).  |
|  | Understands the challenges faced by underrepresented individuals, and the need for all students and faculty to work to create an equitable and inclusive environment for all.  |
|  | Discusses diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging as core values that every faculty member should actively contribute to.  |

**Track Record in Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging [5 points max]**

| Score  | Examples  |
|--|---|
| 1 - 2  | Participated in no specific activities, or only one or two limited activities (limited in terms of time, investment, or role).  |
| Describes few or no past efforts in any detail | Only mentions activities that are already the expectation of faculty as evidence of commitment and involvement (for example, "I always invite and welcome students from all backgrounds to participate in my research lab, and in fact have mentored several women." Mentoring women scientists may be an important part of an established track record but it would be less significant if it were one of the only activities undertaken and it wasn't clear that the candidate actively conducted outreach to encourage women to join the lab). |
|  | Descriptions of activities are brief, vague, nominal, or peripheral ("I was on a committee on diversity for a year").   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>3</p> <p>Some evidence of past efforts, but not extensive enough to merit a high score</p>                  | <p>Evidence of active participation in a single activity, but less clear that there is an established track record.</p> <p>Limited participation at the periphery in numerous activities, or participation in only one area, such as their research to the exclusion of teaching and service.</p> <p>In describing mentoring of underrepresented students, gives some detail about specific strategies for effective mentoring, or awareness of the barriers underrepresented students face and how to incorporate the ideas into their mentoring.</p>  |
| <p>4 - 5</p> <p>Sustained track record of varied efforts to promote DEIB in teaching, research, or service</p> | <p>Describes multiple activities in depth, with detailed information about both their role in the activities and the outcomes. Activities may span research, teaching and service, and could include applying their research skills or expertise to investigating diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.</p> <p>Consistent track record that spans multiple years (for example, applicants for assistant professor positions might describe activities undertaken or participated in as an undergraduate, graduate student and postdoctoral scholar).</p> <p>Roles taken were significant and appropriate for career stage (e.g., a candidate who is already an assistant professor may have developed and tested pedagogy for an inclusive classroom and learning environment, while a current graduate student may have volunteered for an extended period of time for an organization or group that seeks to increase the representation of underrepresented groups in science).</p> <p>Organized or spoken at workshops or other events (depending on career stage) aimed at increasing others' understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging as one aspect of their track record.</p> |

### Plans for Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging [5 points max]

| Score  | Examples   |
|--|--|
| <p>1 - 2</p> <p>No personal plans to advance DEIB</p>                | <p>Vague or no statements about what they would do at Berkeley if hired. May even feel doing so would be the responsibility of someone else.</p> <p>Describes only activities that are already the minimum expectation of Berkeley faculty (e.g., being willing to supervise students of any gender or ethnic identity).</p> <p>Explicitly states the intention to ignore the varying backgrounds of their students and "treat everyone the same."</p> |
| <p>3</p> <p>Some ideas about advancing DEIB, but not much detail</p> | <p>Mentions plans or ideas but more is expected for their career stage. Plans or ideas lacking in detail or clear purpose (for example, if "outreach" is proposed, who is the specific target, what is the type of engagement, and what are the expected outcomes? What are the specific roles and responsibilities of the faculty member?)</p>  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | Identifies existing programs they would get involved with, with a level of proposed involvement commensurate with career stage (a tenured faculty member would be expected to commit to more involvement than a new assistant professor would).   |
| 4 - 5                                       | Clearly formulates new ideas for advancing equity and inclusion at Berkeley and within their field, through their research, teaching, and/or service. Level of proposed involvement commensurate with career level (for example, a new assistant professor may plan to undertake one major activity within the department over the first couple of years, conduct outreach to hire a diverse group of students to work in their lab, seek to mentor several underrepresented students, and co-chair a subcommittee or lead a workshop for a national conference. A new tenured faculty member would be expected to have more department, campus-wide, and national impact, and show more leadership). |
| Clear and detailed plans for advancing DEIB | Convincingly expresses intent, with examples, to be a strong advocate for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging within the department/school/college and also their field.  |

## Emory University: Rubric to Assess Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Statements<sup>106</sup>

Please note, this rubric is not meant to be a prescriptive tool. To achieve the best outcomes, we recommend that committees using this rubric should preemptively discuss the specific needs of their department and calibrate the rubric accordingly. During the assessment process, reviewers should use the rubric score and discuss the content of the DEI statement to holistically assess each candidate (i.e., the rubric score alone should not determine a candidate's ranking).

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<sup>106</sup> Karena H. Nguyen et al., "Proactive Strategies for an Inclusive Faculty Search Process," *Communications Biology* 5, no. 592 (2022): Supplementary Note 1.

### Problematic Approaches

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 0 | Solely focuses on how their teaching, research, and/or service could theoretically address DEI, but the ideas are not entirely novel, feasible, practical, or impactful |
|   | Solely focuses on their belonging to an underrepresented group as evidence they completely understand barriers other individuals could face in the academy              |
|   | Solely acknowledges that racism, classism, etc. are issues in the academy   |
|   | Solely discusses how they are knowledgeable about DEI through passive participation in a few workshops, sessions, reading groups, etc.                                  |
|   | Solely provides personal anecdotes about how they have been discriminated against or have discriminated against someone as evidence they value and understand DEI       |

### Valuing and Understanding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1-2 | Has given little to no effort on increasing their knowledge/understanding of DEI-related topics through workshops, communication, etc.   |
|     | Simply discusses DEI in vague terms and does not describe how they would work to improve DEI in their lab/classroom/department/university/community  |
| 3   | Recognizes and places significance on their role as a faculty member in shaping and supporting DEI efforts in their lab/ classroom/department/university/community   |
|     | Expresses willingness to discuss and confront challenges related to advancing DEI practices with the broader community of undergraduates, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, faculty, and staff  |
| 4-5 | Demonstrates an understanding that diversity has many dimensions (e.g., ethnic, socioeconomic, racial, gender, sexual orientation, disability, cultural differences, etc.) and that individuals have unique experiences given their intersectionality along these dimensions |
|     | Vocalizes that antiracism practices requires consistent and long-term growth, reflection, and engagement (and that they are prepared to put in this work)  |

### Track Record in Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Note: For this section, keep in mind that individuals may come from departments that were hostile to DEI-related activities, so they may not have felt comfortable participating.

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1-2 | Has invested little time in advancing DEI beyond basic expectations for their academic rank or institutional climate   |
|     | Passively describes past participation in workshops, committees, etc. and does not describe the purpose, outcome, or their specific role in such events or organizations |
| 3   | Shows limited participation in single activity but provides a clearer description of the objectives/results of activity and/or the individual role they played           |

Demonstrates strong leadership role in past groups/projects that support underrepresented students at various levels (e.g., undergraduate, graduate, postdoctoral)

4-5

Leadership in DEI extends to organizing events aimed at the departmental level to increase representation and better support underrepresented students as well as colleagues

Documents continuous participation in events or organizations geared towards advancing DEI (can include work completed outside of academia, e.g., community activism) during multiple career stages

### **Track Record in Mentoring Diverse Trainees**

Note: For this section, keep in mind the difference between diverse and BIPOC (black, indigenous, and people of color). I.e., a white male who mentors a white woman 10 years their senior can honestly say they mentored a diverse trainee however has no interaction with trainees from historically underrepresented groups in STEM and therefore cannot advocate or be an ally for these trainees.

1-2

Briefly mentions inclusion in curriculum, but has no plans to implement additional teaching strategies that enhance inclusion

Shows little evidence of personal actions taken to mentor diverse students in the classroom or the lab (e.g., I had a diverse classroom and they did fine)

3

Has taken a few workshops dedicated to enhancing intercultural or intergroup competencies and skills

Demonstrates evidence (through specific strategies) of how they have updated their syllabus, teaching approach, course curriculum, etc. to enhance representation and retention of underrepresented groups

4-5

Demonstrates engagement in long-term mentorship program(s) that supports underrepresented groups

Identifies continued commitment towards evaluating and assessing inclusive teaching practices and offers suggestions on how

### **Plans for Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

1-2

Does not verbalize a plan for advancing DEI beyond general expectations for all faculty as outlined by the department (no personal agency or motivation)

Describes a vague plan for how they will create an inclusive classroom or lab space without clear actionable items that they intend to accomplish to reach that goal. The plan lacks detail/purpose (e.g., if "outreach" is proposed, there is no mention of the specific target, the type of engagement, or expected outcomes)

3

Mentions plans or ideas they intend to implement to advance DEI and provides clear and detailed ideas for what existing programs they would get involved with (with reference to current activities/limitations) as appropriate for their academic rank



Presents ways in which their research, teaching, and/or service will advance DEI in the university, their academic societies, or the broader community

4-5 Addresses multiple areas of need (e.g., classroom climate, the laboratory, conferences)

Presents clear way of evaluating plans along with their impact. May also describe the growth of their plan over time

# Appendix D: A DEI Intervention at Emory University

In the journal *Communications Biology*, several biologists at Emory University described their search for two new hires.<sup>107</sup> The job application required a diversity statement, and the committee began by narrowing down its initial applicant pool from 585 to about 45 candidates by scoring three categories equally: teaching, research, and contributions to DEI.

The committee then held a first round of interviews, during which it asked candidates to describe their past efforts and future plans for promoting DEI. The committee afterward decided who would be invited for a final interview by anonymizing the candidates' DEI statements and having four of the committee members' colleagues evaluate them using a rubric provided by the committee.

That rubric was even more overtly politicized than the UC Berkeley rubric. Candidates received a high score if they showed that they understood the concept of intersectionality and/or advanced DEI through "community activism." It also rewarded candidates who stated "that antiracism practices requires [sic] consistent and long-term growth, reflection, and engagement (and that they are prepared to put in this work)."

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<sup>107</sup> Nguyen et al., "Proactive Strategies."



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