



## WHAT WORKS - CASE STUDIES FOR STEM FACULTY

# DIVERSITY SCENARIOS

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### Case Study 1

During a faculty meeting to discuss the selection of which of the three candidates who have interviewed on campus for a faculty position should be offered the position, the group decides that two of the candidates are the clear front runners.

One of the two is a white male who graduated from a university the U.S. News and World Report named #1 in the field of his study. He just finished his dissertation. The other is a Latina (female) who received her PhD from a Hispanic Serving Institution. She has taught for three years at regional comprehensive university, where she has had excellent teaching evaluations. She has just received a hard to get CAREER grant from National Science Foundation.

Both did well throughout the interview process. The discussion of there being equivalent in credentials has focused on the fact that each one has three strong journal publications. Finally, the chair of the search committee (a white male) states that if they are this close then the Latina should be hired, given the President's emphasis on diversifying the faculty. A different white male says that he believes we never should make a choice based on someone's race or gender.

Then, the only current faculty member who is a woman of color (there is one other male of color and one other white female among the 35 in the faculty meeting) speaks. She states her feeling of coming to campus and not seeing anyone else like herself, thus makes the point that since they are both qualified, the Latina will be the best choice for the students and potential other faculty in the future.

Then the same person who spoke against considering race or gender reacts loudly and with clear anger, stating that he is fed up with this Affirmative Action bull and it has not helped the department or University in the past. *We are here to decide who to hire not to hear how someone else felt 3 years ago.* The room is silent. After a short pause the Department Chair states that it is time to vote. The Latina is selected based upon a 21 to 14 vote.

### NOTES:

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Faculty should be advocates for diversity; administrators need to be convinced that diversity has intrinsic value and that it promotes intellectual excellence, broadens the total range of an institution's experience, and stimulates the exchange of ideas. Diversity should be seen as a moral imperative, an aspect of social justice.

These cases, adapted from actual situations, can serve as catalysts for dialogue about challenges facing academic leaders.



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## Case Study 2

The department worked exceptionally hard for 3 years to hire someone in an area where they needed to expand their offerings. The faculty member hired is a rising star in the area. He was granted tenure on arrival and promoted from his Associate Professor rank at his previous institution to full professor here. One of the difficult parts of the hiring was the fact that he is a Muslim, and he was concerned about the climate for Muslims in this small Midwestern community.

The search committee and department head did an excellent job during the interviewing process to make sure the candidate and his wife were linked to people in the local Muslim community. The first faculty meeting after he had arrived on campus began, and as had become a customary opening to the meeting, a very senior member of the faculty, stood and gave a very Christian prayer stating the importance of saving the lost souls.

While several people were uncomfortable, no one said anything until after the meeting, when individually three people from the search committee came to the new hire and said he should not worry about the meeting starting with a prayer, the senior fellow who did it was just that way.

### NOTES:

## Case Study3

You are the department chair and have been aware that five senior faculty have been having a noontime Bible meeting in the conference room for at least the last 15 years.

You are aware that these faculty members always invite new faculty to attend, and that some do attend and some do not. Recently you hired a new faculty member from India, who is the first female faculty in your college.

You have no idea what her religious affiliation is, but you know she is single. You overhear one senior faculty member speaking to another about how he continues to invite her every week (for the last 30 weeks) to the noon-time Bible study. He also states that *we're not going to keep her if she stays single, so my goal is to get her to attend my church where there is a great singles group.*

### NOTES:

## Case Study 4

For years the department has been all male. Up until three years ago everyone who came into the faculty participated in the noontime basketball game. It was common joke among the faculty that they got far more business done on the court than in any of the faculty meetings.

Three years ago they hired a faculty member in a wheel chair. Several of them have had to change their normal instruction room and one even had to change offices so that this man could be accommodated.

The games still go on at noon, but no one has invited the man in the wheel chair to come. Some have said that they feel awkward about this as they walk past his office on their way to the gym.

### NOTES:



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### Case Study 5

After a long and difficult search for a leader for the strongest subsection of the department, an outsider is hired over a strong internal contender, who has been on the faculty for over 20 years. This internal contender was clearly very hurt that she was not favored by her colleagues.

It also turns out that the new hire is the first openly gay man the department has ever hired. After the new hire had been in place for just over a year, he made a decision that was supported as the best thing for the unit's progress by about 40% of the faculty, but strongly opposed by another 40%, including the internal contender for the leadership position.

The emails started to flow in volume among all the faculty, and the issue began to be lost among comments that were taking more and more of a personal note in their criticism of the leadership, or in objection to that criticism.

The contender sent a message in the mist of this stating that: *we should have never hired this man, his credentials were clearly established at a much weaker institution than our own, and he's a little too light on his feet, and even though that may be his orientation it does not make for good leadership.*

#### NOTES:

### Case Study 6

While you, the department chair, are on vacation the only African American woman in your department for the last 10 years comes to the associate department chair to report that she has a faculty offer from a leading institution. When asked if there was anything they could do to keep her here, she says yes.

The department chair could have done something a year ago. She asked him why she was the only one carrying a certain service load who was not granted the small stipend for this service (three men were given the stipend). When the associate department chair told you this when you returned from your vacation, you remembered the conversation, but thought she had understood that only three faculty could get the "service" stipend.

Further, you had explained to her that the more senior person, who had just had a stroke, was retiring this year and that you had wanted him to be supported in this final year. She seemed to understand this as an appropriate decision. You told the associate department chair to assure her, that although it was not stated in this year's appointment letters that she would get the stipend this year.

The associate department chair reports back that this appears to have made her very angry. She has scheduled an exit interview with the dean and the president of the university.

#### NOTES:

### Case Study 7

This year you are very proud that the first woman you helped hire into the department has not only achieved the rank of full professor, she has just been announced as a fellow of the major professional society of which she is a member.

As you enter the faculty lunch room with her, you hear one of the department's most distinguished faculty members loudly stating that the advantage of being a woman in engineering is that you get noticed for accolades so much more easily. Everyone knew when we hired her that we would have to tenure her and promote her or be labeled as bigots.

While this disturbs you, you say nothing as you both leave the room. Later you tell her how unfair it was and that you are sorry. This seems to annoy her even more, and she asks you if this is really the first time you have heard these comments, because she has been hearing them for the ten years she has been a member of the faculty. ■

#### NOTES: