

Sense of the Senate: Statements on Contributions to an Equitable and Inclusive Community in Faculty Hiring at Lehigh

Lehigh has repeatedly articulated that a priority of the University is to cultivate a community built on diversity, inclusion, equity, access, and belonging. [The Principles of Our Equitable Community](#) state that “every member of our community has a personal responsibility to acknowledge and practice” the maintenance of “an inclusive and equitable community”. The current Lehigh University strategic plan “[Inspiring the Future Makers](#)” commits to “enhance access and equity, develop trust and ensure a sense of belonging for all members of the Lehigh community”. The [2021-2026 Lehigh Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Plan](#) pledges “to further our efforts and commitment to address diversity, inclusion and equity issues in institutional policies, procedures, practices and daily operations” and “to embrace and deploy real and sustainable change in policies and practices that may overtly or covertly contribute to racial hierarchies, inequities and injustices”.

Departments and colleges at Lehigh University routinely assess knowledge, skills, accomplishments, and future plans in other domains (Research, Teaching, and Service) via independent statements, CVs, and other requested materials. However, the university as a whole currently does not require that candidates for open faculty positions submit a statement describing their knowledge, skills, accomplishments, and future plans in regards to the university prioritization of an equitable and inclusive community. The Lehigh University ADVANCE Center advises on the benefits and approach to requesting and assessing such statements as outlined in their [Faculty Candidate Contributions to Diversity, Inclusion and Equity \(DI&E\) Guide](#).

Furthermore, the ways that an individual contributes to an equitable and inclusive community in their research/scholarship, teaching, and service can vary greatly between individuals and disciplines. This should be taken into account in the review of any statements during the hiring process.

In addition, one method of advancing an equitable and inclusive community is by centering accountability and transparency, which should be upheld in any hiring process.

Therefore, the Lehigh Faculty Senate recommends the following:

- 1.) All faculty searches should require from each candidate a statement of contributions to an equitable and inclusive community that describes their knowledge, skills, accomplishments, and future plans to contribute to an equitable and inclusive community.
- 2.) These statements of contributions to an equitable and inclusive community should be given consideration as part of a holistic review of each applicant, as they are a method to account for faculty work in this domain.
- 3.) Prior to reviewing applications, a written rubric shall be determined for the evaluation process of these statements of contributions to an equitable and inclusive community, which can be individualized to the position, or based on or adapted from a standardized rubric. One such example rubric can be found in the guide provided by ADVANCE.
- 4.) The evaluation process for statements of contributions to an equitable and inclusive community will not enforce adherence to one particular university-wide approach, but rather be adapted to the needs of the department.
- 5.) In the evaluation of these statements, departments and search committees should recognize that there are many paths to creating an equitable and inclusive community and that there are different approaches within disciplines and among candidates. Evaluation of these statements should not be used to prescribe or enforce a particular approach to creating an equitable and inclusive community, nor should they be used to select for a particular set of viewpoints among candidates.
- 6.) The rubric for statements of contributions to an equitable and inclusive community must be approved by the office of the appropriate dean(s) before review of the candidates commences.
- 7.) Departments should be transparent with how these statements of contributions to an equitable and inclusive community will be assessed within the search process.