Who really selected you? Insights into faculty selection processes: In top-ranked higher education graduate programmes

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Who really selected you? Insights into faculty selection processes in top-ranked higher education graduate programmes

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ABSTRACT
Over the past decade, the number of advertised tenure-track faculty positions in higher education institutions in the United States and abroad has steadily declined while the competition for these positions has become fierce. This situation has caused some scholars to seek perspectives into the factors that influence the tenure-track faculty selection process. This study investigates the elements that impact higher education graduate programme faculty searches. A total of 39 programme coordinators, department heads and deans who had previously participated in higher education programme searches were surveyed to explore their experiences and perceptions regarding the selection process. The findings indicate that the search committee’s faculty votes within the higher education hiring programme are more influential in selection decisions than the votes of either a programme chair or dean. Additionally, participants identified a candidate’s academic accomplishments, interview performance and presentation skills as the determining characteristics influencing their selection. These findings provide useful information to tenure-track job seekers who seek faculty positions at higher education graduate programmes in the United States and around the world.

Introduction
Little is known today about the tenure-track faculty selection process undertaken by search committees in higher education programmes. Freeman (2014) interviewed a total of 39 programme coordinators and department heads to determine strategies aspiring tenure-track faculty could employ to enhance their competitiveness in the job market. He found that grantsmanship, networking, presentation and publishing skills would help tenure-track position candidates be more competitive. Additionally, he discovered that potential faculty members should collaborate with other scholars and understand expectations of different programme types. Given this data, questions still remain regarding the actual selection process.

The purpose of this article is to answer these remaining questions. Two specific questions guided this study: (1) Who ultimately determines which candidate is selected for the post? (2) What factors influence decision-makers to select a candidate at their institution? Most faculty candidates, in the US and internationally, possess limited knowledge regarding the search and selection process, which usually consists of only anecdotal evidence from mentors and colleagues. As opportunities for full-time
tenure-track positions dwindle, this study seeks to provide a clearer perspective on what is generally a closed or non-transparent process (Waltman et al. 2012).

This research is the fourth part of a larger study that examines hiring practices of top-ranked higher education (HE) administration graduate programmes in the US (DiRamio, Theroux, and Guarino 2009; Freeman and DiRamio 2015). The first section of the larger study found that top-ranked programmes more frequently hired graduates from top-ranked programmes than graduates from lower and unranked HE programmes (DiRamio, Theroux, and Guarino 2009). The second phase of the study investigated the strategies graduates from lower and unranked HE programmes could employ to prepare themselves for faculty opportunities (Freeman 2014). The third phase of the study focused on why higher education programmes chose graduates from top-ranked schools over those who graduated from lower and unranked programmes (Freeman Jr. and DiRamio 2015). This fourth phase of the study will provide data that will enhance the understanding of tenure-track faculty selection processes in top-ranked graduate programmes. This information has the potential to enhance the preparation of individuals aspiring to such positions.

**Literature review**

The first stage of this study found that 70% of faculty in top-ranked programmes earned their doctorates from universities ranked similarly to those at which they currently worked (DiRamio, Theroux, and Guarino 2009). While most candidates for positions in top-ranked programmes graduated from highly ranked schools, there were also some candidates who graduated from lower and unranked graduate programmes (ibid, 9).

The fourth stage of this study will provide those aspiring to tenure-track faculty positions in top-ranked higher HE graduate programmes with the necessary tools for enhancing their candidacy for such spots. This section of the article provides an integrated literature review to look at current publications for information that can improve the ability of candidates from lower-ranking or unranked institutions to prepare for and secure positions at top-ranked schools, which will in turn be helpful to all potential candidates (Torraco 2005). Studies show that new domestic and international doctoral graduates possess little knowledge about what they will face in the job market. Furthermore, Herling has pointed out that this information is also relevant to those already employed by top-ranked institutions who are conducting searches for faculty recruitment.

**Known characteristics of faculty searches**

What is generally known about the tenure-track faculty position selection process is that selection and hiring are carried out by a committee rather than by an individual. Research by Shivley, Woodward, and Stanley (1999) suggests that the position is advertised and applications are collected for approximately three months. A faculty search committee then reviews applications and narrows the group to a selection of many candidates whose applications will undergo more detailed consideration by the entire faculty. Then, interviews by phone or in person are used to further narrow the field to between two and four candidates who are invited for on-campus interviews.

After candidates have completed a full-day or multiple-day visits involving not only interviews with the committee, but also meetings with various other faculty, often a departmental seminar and sometimes a teaching seminar, the search committee votes on candidates in order to select those who would most address the particular needs of the department (Wakelee and Cordeiro 2006). Additionally, the department head individually makes a recommendation that is then forwarded to university administration, such as a dean, who is usually responsible for the final hiring decision (Shivley, Woodward, and Stanley 1999).

In assessing characteristics and qualifications of tenure-track candidates, there are no set criteria for identifying the desired characteristics and qualifications of a candidate (Canavan 2014). However, it is generally understood that selection is based on a combination of qualities (Slack 1979) often not
covered in the desired qualifications and description of duties detailed in the advertisement. Some of
these qualifications may be based on merit whereas others may suggest that privilege and status play
a significant role (Canavan 2014, 1).

Understanding specific aspects of the hiring process is useful. For example, it is important to be aware
of changes that are occurring in the field of HE. Traditionally, in the 450 academic degree programmes
offered both nationally and internationally, the study of HE, as an academic discipline, has been housed
within schools of education. Today, however, these programmes are expanding to include focuses on
business management and other related interdisciplinary studies. Candidates aspiring to positions in
these departments should consider skills beyond the field of education, including other disciplinary
areas such as business management, if they want to be competitive (Altbach 2014).

The role of candidate-based networking

Additional knowledge can be gained by examining the impact of social networking on securing faculty
positions. According to Rouhelo (2001), since some job vacancies are not advertised, applicants must
find job opportunities through informal channels, including contact networks. Even when a job is
advertised openly, studies have shown that networking through this secondary arena and an applicant’s
ability to market their qualifications can be a major factor in their selection for a position. Therefore,
additional knowledge can be gained by examining the hidden labour market and the impact of social
networking on securing faculty positions.

Mai, Liu, and González-Bailón (2015) pointed out that ‘mapping the network of academic recruitment ...
provides an alternative measure of academic prestige to traditional approaches that rely on subjective
ratings and measures of scholarly productivity’ (558). Their findings challenged the appropriateness of
‘using academic prestige, measured by scholarly productivity (e.g. number of publications from faculty
members)’ (560) rather than recruitment networks as a key contributing factor in candidate success in
the faculty selection process. This finding is also supported by recent research that suggests employers
make hiring decisions based on information drawn from their personal networks of colleagues and
friends (Granovetter 1995; Ioannides and Loury 2004; Mai, Liu, and González-Bailón 2015; Pennings
and Wezel 2007).

According to Mai, Liu, and González-Bailón (2015, 561),

[When institution A places a recent Ph.D. in institution B, an informational channel is created or reinforced between
the two. The Ph.D. can now provide information about graduates from institution B to a recruiting committee in
institutions A; in other words, the original hire will increase the likelihood of forming future hiring ties between the
two institutions.

This quotation demonstrates the role of social networking in how people are selected for these types
of position.

Austin (2002, 96) suggests that, ‘the literature on socialization implies that an individual’s under-
standing of the faculty career begins with the graduate school experience or even earlier, not with
the first faculty position’. Socialisation is a process by which an individual becomes part of a group,
organisation or community. The socialisation process involves learning about the culture of the group,
including its values, attitudes and expectations. Important aspects of this socialisation process include
observing, listening to and interacting with faculty, interacting with peers and interacting with family
and personal friends. Many participants in Kezar’s (2014) research study reported that their research
experiences gave them confidence in their ability to frame research questions, design studies and write
for publication. Kezar points out that,

even though social networks have become part of our daily consciousness and several visible, national higher
education projects utilize networks, there is little research in higher education on the way networks create change
or can be used towards change, particularly in the U.S. higher education literature. (92)
The role of the institutional mission statement

Another area of research is the role of institutional mission in potentially influencing the faculty recruitment and selection process. Fortunately, literature addressing the factors that define this curriculum are not exclusive to specific academic fields or institutions (Burke 1988; Caplow and McGee 1958; DiRamio, Theroux, and Guarino 2009; Mills 1956). This allows for exploration of areas outside HE as well within various types of institution.

A study by Foster (2015) found that graduate programme search committees placed more focus on excellence in research, while undergraduate programme search committees placed a greater focus on excellence in teaching, academic achievement and vocational and skill development. The study further stated that,

searches for faculty at research institutions focus on identifying individuals who can conduct or oversee research projects in addition to and sometimes in lieu of teaching [whereas] institutions that offer 2 and 4 year degrees are primarily seeking faculty for the purpose of teaching. (19)

Moreover, candidates emphasising teaching, rather than research, are better served by applying for positions at institutions that focus more on instruction and teaching than researching and publishing (Foster 2015). These findings indicate that an institution's mission statement, not the use of a particular candidate’s personal credentials, is becoming a better barometer of faculty quality and faculty selection in HE. This is supported by Twombly (2005), who found that ‘search and hiring is not driven by status and prestige of institutions and candidates’ (442).

Morphew and Hartley (2006) also suggest that candidates should review these mission statements on a continual basis and found that ‘80% of all colleges and universities were making major revisions in their mission statements, goals, curricula, and general education courses’ (456).

The contrast between faculty selections in lower-ranked or unranked graduate programmes and top-ranked graduate programmes helps candidates distinguish the similarities and differences in criteria used at both levels of recruitment and selection. This information can be useful in guiding the prospective candidate to assess their credentials and qualifications to determine whether they are aligned with the criteria of a top-ranked HE graduate programme focused on research and publication, as opposed to a lower-ranked or unranked HE programme focused on teaching. Candidates should understand these contrasts as they hone in on the type of skills that they want to emphasise in their job application packages. They should distinguish their strengths, since studies have found that few candidates excel simultaneously in teaching, publishing and research areas (Woods, Cho, and Schmidgall 2009).

The influence of international HE programmes

Iran

The intricacies of the selection process are also revealed by looking at graduate programmes in HE programmes outside the US. They comprise an important source of information, since approximately half of all programmes in HE are located abroad (Altbach 2014; Francois 2014). Sepehri, Mashayekhi, and Mozaffar (2004) present an alternative model used in Iran for the recruitment and selection of faculty using the business process reengineering (BPR) concept initially introduced by Hammer and Champy (1993) to revive many service and manufacturing companies throughout the world. A similar effort in academia would involve reengineering the hiring process for academic faculty, rendering them more efficient by streamlining the process in a way that would, for instance, reduce total time from application to contract (Sepehri, Mashayekhi, and Mozaffar 2004). Abdous (2011) identified a four-phase framework for business process reengineering in HE: initiation, analysis, reengineering, implementation and evaluation.

Brazil

In Brazil, researchers have proposed applying multiple-criteria decision-making (MCDM) to help standardise the selection process in accordance with the values suggested by the higher education institution
(HEI) and in a way that conserves time and money. Hiring the wrong candidate is economically ineffective and undermines the target institutional programme (Salomon et al. 2009). Yu, Lee, and Stam (1985) suggest that MCDM involves four elements: (1) a set of alternatives from which to make a decision, (2) a set of criteria associated with making a good decision, (3) the outcome of each decision based on the same criteria, and (4) preference structures of the decision-maker in making a decision one way rather than in another. Studies of international HE programmes are valuable as they present options for programmes faced with the dilemma of needing to increase numbers of highly qualified candidates while having a limited interview budget (Millet and Smith 1973). These studies are also invaluable since ‘American universities are increasingly models to the rest of the world’ (Scott 2006, 1).

The role of the search committee

Russia

Additional information about the selection process can be gained by taking a closer look at how search committees are formed. In theory search committees are often assembled to ensure procedural fairness by providing different stakeholders with an opportunity to express their views and to give a nod to shared governance, which calls for collective decision-making on certain appointments (Vaillancourt 2013, 1). A Russian study by Zryumov (2010) points out that members of a search committee may themselves be limited since they do not necessarily share the knowledge in an exact area of a candidate’s specialisation and adds that,

even if [the search committees] rely on the outside knowledge such as reference letters, they can use the information provided by the outside experts only to some extent; the limit again, being their own depth and breadth of knowledge in the area. (1)

As a result, whether a candidate’s particular specialisation factors in their selection depends on how knowledgeable the search committee may be in the candidate’s area of specialisation.

Jenkins (2010) suggests additional factors affecting and impacting recruitment and selection by a search committee. These include a tendency to favour internal over external candidates, personal agendas of the committee members themselves, committee infighting among members, administrative interference and bias, and the numbers of individuals competing for the position. While each committee is usually unique in composition, this information presents a basis for candidates to better understand the various factors that can influence each search committee’s recommendation of a particular candidate. Keeping such factors in mind can only improve the candidate’s presentation.

The role of diversity

The last area of information to be considered regarding the recruitment and selection of faculty candidates involves understanding the commitment made by institutions to recruit and select diverse candidates (i.e. gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, religion and disability status). This can be achieved by increasing the diversity of candidates in early stages of the faculty search process (Bilimoria and Buch 2010). One proposed means of increasing diversity is to widen the applicant pool to increase the number of prospective candidates with diverse backgrounds so as to increase their opportunity to be shortlisted and brought to campus for interviews. For instance, to widen their prospective applicant pool, community colleges have chosen to broaden their advertising from regional to nationwide markets. Other larger institutions and graduate programmes have opted to expand from the current criteria, such as prestige and research, to consider other criteria.

Ware (2000) suggests that, when developing lists of candidates’ characteristics and qualities, institutions should ensure that they do not exclude certain groups of individuals from consideration. Ware (2000) further states that,

[H]iring committees that apply these current criteria are not only excluding minority applicants who might have become outstanding scholars and teachers; they are exposing their institutions to liability under federal anti-discrimination laws. (56)
Practices such as these, according to Ware, violate Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act via the disparate impact theory. In connection with this theory, Ware elaborates, ‘neutral selection criteria that exclude a disproportionate percentage of minority applicants are unlawful unless they are supported by a “business necessity” need’ (62). This means that the qualifications must bear a demonstrable relationship to successful job performance. Ware found that, often, while a large portion of the hiring committee’s selected standards are intended to be non-discriminatory, they are in fact discriminatory in that they ‘reflect an individual’s economic status and social background rather than act as an accurate measure of potential’ (75).

McGee (1997) has shown that a PhD or equivalent was considered the most important basis for selecting a faculty candidate, followed by publication and research. If the PhD requirement were a valid indication of knowledge and ability, having a PhD would make sense. The author suggests that a problem with PhD programmes in some areas is that substantially less than half of the coursework is in the subject area of the PhD. Another issue identified by McGee is the publication requirement, since ‘professors who publish a lot or who publish in the “top” journals are perceived to somehow be more qualified than those who do not publish, or than those who publish in second-tier or (God forbid) practitioner journals’ (9).

Yet, as McGee (1997) states, there remain those who argue that ‘one cannot choose the best candidates if criteria other than merit are employed’ (7). Using criteria beyond current requirements, such as publication and holding a terminal degree, McGee adds ‘creates animosity among faculty … [because] one can never be sure whether the person hired was hired because he or she was the best qualified’ (7). Much of this stems from a misunderstanding that the legal objectives of both the case law and statutory intent of Title VII are not to remove traditional requirements, but to supplement them with other options, thereby making the process inclusive for all prospective applicants. The critical point is that criteria such as where one went to school cannot be used as the exclusive means of screening applicants. Moreover, other equally effective ways of selecting faculty exist. Ware points out that faculty members who cling to the traditional qualifications are doing more than excluding minority candidates who might have been outstanding teachers and scholars; they are exposing their institutions to liability under Title VII’ (68).

Salomon et al. (2009) suggest that alternative selection criteria for increasing diversity should include choosing faculty ‘based on personal indication, interviews or even the observation of the candidate in classrooms’ (2). Others, such as Wakelee and Cordeiro (2006), propose creating criteria based on the institution’s mission statement, including topics such as experiential learning, international perspectives, multicultural perspectives and interdisciplinary approaches. In another case, Slack (1979, 64–68) suggests the focus could be on a group of abstract characteristics, including personality, preparation, professionalism, scholarship, teaching skills, interrelationships between student and teacher, and orientation to the targeted type of HE institution (four-year university, two-year community college or other type of postsecondary setting). Marschke et al. (2007) present additional suggestions for increasing diversity, including ‘taking steps to identify potential candidates and contact them personally to ask them to apply for a position as well as expand job descriptions to broaden the pool of applicants’ (22).

The role of tenure

Another area that is key to better understanding the role individuals play in the selection process of candidates for faculty positions in top-ranked HE programmes is understanding the priorities of tenure-track faculty versus non-tenure-track faculty on a search committee. This distinction may influence the factors committee members consider when deciding whether to advance a particular candidate for a prospective faculty position.

The first consideration concerning the influence of tenure on the selection process involves gaining a better understanding of the importance of tenure in the faculty recruitment and selection process. Davidovitch, Soen, and Sinuani-Sern (2011) state that offering a tenure-track position compared to a non-tenure-track position enables educational institutions to recruit faculty, since a tenure-track...
position ‘supplies almost complete job security, and it also rewards dignity’ (364). Gonzales and Rincones (2011) add that tenure-track positions also provide symbolic power from various forms of capital that intersect and reinforce one another, including social network, linguistic capability, renown and prestige as measured by publication record and funded research. Bogler and Kremer-Hayon (1999) point out that, because tenure is based primarily on a junior professor’s publications (quality and quantity), the motivation to invest in being an effective instructor is deemed to be of secondary importance. Consequently, Bogler and Kremer-Hayon add that a junior professor’s ‘image of the ideal type of professor, which is based on the attributes of a good teacher and good researcher, gives way to an image in which the aspect of research has high priority’ (33–34). This image is also likely a factor in selection committees placing greater emphasis on candidates’ research abilities than their teaching abilities. While these findings focus on US data, research on faculty in other countries, such as those in Israel, demonstrates that ‘this emphasis on research has been perpetuated in the appointment and promotion procedures of academic faculty in the universities, leaving teaching as a secondary mission’ (Bogler and Kremer-Hayon 1999, 33–34).

The second consideration in understanding the role of tenure is comprehending the increasing presence of non-tenure-track faculty at HEIs. Kezar and Maxey (2012) point to the study conducted by Gappa and Leslie (1993), in which non-tenured faculty were so few in number as to be referred to as ‘the invisible faculty’. Today, however, ‘with two-thirds of the faculty now off the tenure track across higher education it is hard to ignore the new majority’ (47). Kezar and Maxey point out that, ideally, non-tenure faculty remain current and publishing in their content area and socialise with other faculty, whereas in reality, there is only the necessity of being an effective teacher and meeting one’s teaching obligations, which often involves carrying a heavy teaching load at multiple campus locations. A non-tenure-track individual on a search committee is likely to place a higher emphasis on selecting candidates based on their teaching ability rather than research skills.

The third consideration is to be aware of possible differences in values between tenured and non-tenured faculty. While there is an increase in the number of faculty who are non-tenure-track, most of the faculty serving on search committees remain tenured or tenure-track faculty. Furthermore, great emphasis remains on promoting and rewarding teaching excellence as criteria for faculty selection. Palmer and Collins (2006) have presented a possible model for recognising and rewarding teaching excellence in HE. In addition, Palmer and Collins point out that current faculty members serving on search committees, regardless of whether they are tenure track or non-tenure-track, likely place an equal emphasis on both research and publication as well as excellence in teaching, since most individuals who are non-tenure-track strive to become tenure-track faculty.

What we do not know about faculty searches

Despite the previous considerations, there remains a lack of consensus regarding the extent to which particular factors impact the tenure-track faculty selection process. Wakelee and Cordeiro (2006) state that this illusiveness often baffles those seeking employment in the HE field. Foster (2015) points out that, despite tenure-track faculty selection being an integral part of an HEI’s success, there appears to be little written on the topic of faculty selection. Therefore, HEIs, both in the US and abroad, should endeavour to identify characteristics and professional qualifications that should be present among prospective candidates. Salomon et al. (2009) add that failure to do so not only results in wasted time and money but also leads to undermining the institutional or programme mission as a result of dysfunctional departments and dissatisfied students.

Theoretical framework

A participatory leadership model in decision-making theory (Kezar 2001) aligns with this article’s participant categories identified in considering the collective decision-making process for tenure-track faculty selection in top-ranked HE programmes. Kezar points out that a participatory leadership model is based
on several assumptions, including: ‘(1) team, group or community instead of individual leadership; (2) empowerment rather than power and control; and (3) tenure-track as well as positional leadership’ (88). This type of decision-making theory is applicable to this article because, traditionally, faculty searches encompassed multiple constituencies including programme faculty, department faculty, the chair and the dean. This theory, according to Kezar, is more applicable than traditional hierarchical approaches and reflects changes away from traditional, pyramid-shaped organisational structures that put the president on top. An alternate model has emerged which places the traditional leader, such as a president, dean or chair, at the top but on the sidelines, much like a coach or coordinator (Kezar 2001). This participatory model also reflects a more global perspective than a traditional US model based on individualism and self-reliance.

Methods

Population and sample selection

A five-item survey was created containing questions about the impact that each position has on a faculty selection committee member in deciding how to advance a candidate. The survey was closed and not open-ended for comments by respondents and used a Likert scale method whereby 1 = not very important and 5 = very important. In an effort to create a reliable and valid sample, a list of individuals was compiled from the top 20 HE programmes identified by the *U.S. News and World Report Best College 2011 Edition*. This list included faculty members who have the capacity, based on their position, to serve on faculty selection committees, including programme coordinators, department heads and deans who play roles in hiring new faculty. An email with a link to the online survey, generated using SurveyMonkey, was sent to each of these individuals. Analysis of the information requested from respondents confirmed that the sample was representative of those who would likely serve on these types of committee.

The survey items used in this study confirmed that the respondents were representative of those who could serve on faculty selection committees, and confirmed that the respondents represented the range of types of position that do serve in this capacity. The first item asked for individuals to identify which type of position they hold in the university and included dean, chair, academic coordinator and professor. The second item identified whether the individuals have recently served as part of a faculty selection committee. If the respondents selected ‘yes’, the committee member was directed to the third item, which asked them to identify if the candidate they selected in that previous search had been their first or second choice. The fourth item asked for the respondent’s opinion regarding how important they viewed each type of role (dean, chair, academic coordinator and professor) when selecting a faculty candidate. The fifth item asked each respondent to rank the importance of six characteristics used in evaluating a candidate.

Limitations

Several limitations existed in this study. First, this was an exploratory study, which was an initial inquiry. Even though this was an initial study, it still can offer individuals who seek to attain faculty positions in top-ranked HE graduate programmes information about the roles members of a faculty selection committee play in selecting and advancing prospective candidates to fill these positions (Trochim and Donnelly 2008). This study did not attempt to generalise the faculty selection of all individuals from HE programmes and did not include other non-graduate programmes, such as community college programmes, but was limited to individuals from graduate programmes. Second, this study presented only closed-ended quantitative inquiries without opportunity for open-ended responses or deeper qualitative-based questions. Third, the sample pool was limited to 39 US respondents out of a pool of 75 prospective respondents serving in similar positions in HE graduate programmes throughout the world. Fourth, the study did not receive responses from all 39 respondents; 5 individuals did not respond
despite resending the survey to these individuals twice. Fifth, this study included only participants in US-based HE programmes and did not involve participants in HE programmes outside the US. Despite this limitation, the findings of this article can be useful for both domestic and international candidates seeking to secure faculty positions in top-ranked educational programmes (Creswell 2011).

**Findings**

The responses from this survey generated a large number of findings extending well beyond the focus of the study. Therefore, the results of this article are centred on understanding which members of a faculty committee are most influential in the selection process for tenure-track faculty positions in top-ranked HE graduate programmes.

The results of this study show that the primary position of faculty selection committee members varied from dean to chair to academic coordinator to professor. The first finding, described in Table 1, showed that professor was the predominant position of those sitting on these committees – 34 of the respondents (87%) held this post. The remaining respondents consisted of two deans (3%), two academic coordinators (5%) and one chair (3%). The significant presence of faculty members on these committees suggests these committees are possibly built more around group-based decision-making than individual decision-making (Kezar 2001).

The second finding, described in Table 2, was that approximately two-thirds, or 22 participants (65%), had served as part of a faculty selection committee within the last three years, compared to the remaining one-third, or 12 participants (35%), who had not served on a faculty selection committee within the past three years.

The third finding, described in Table 3, was that, of the 22 respondents who had recently served on a faculty selection committee, 17 (77%) reported that their first-choice candidate was selected for an

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<td>Academic coordinator</td>
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<td>Professor (assistant, associate, full)</td>
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<th>Table 2. Have you served as part of a faculty selection committee within the last three years?</th>
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<th>Table 3. In your last faculty search, which candidate was ultimately selected?</th>
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<th>Table 4. In your opinion, how important is each of the following factors in selecting a faculty candidate?</th>
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offer compared to 5 (23%) who reported that their second-choice candidate had been selected by the committee for an offer.

The fourth finding of the study, described in Table 4, concerned the perceived impact of each member of the search committee based on the position they held at the university. Here, 29 participants perceived that votes from HE faculty and department chairs were the most impactful while 21 respondents perceived a dean's vote to be most impactful. This research found that the highest ranking, 4.6, was given to HE faculty as being the most impactful, followed by votes from department chairs and deans as the second most impactful (both groups with an average rating of 3.5). This supports the assumption identified by Kezar (2001) that the vote by tenure-track HE faculty, rather than the vote of the dean or chair, is more influential in the final selection of candidates for tenure-track positions. This also adds credibility to the assumption that the power and control held by the dean and the chair are deferred to HE tenure-track faculty so that they may be empowered with the strongest voice in the selection process.

The fifth item of this survey, described in Table 5, addressed which characteristics were most important to the evaluation of a candidate. The same Likert scale was applied to this item. It was found that a candidate's academic accomplishments were the most impactful, with a 4.93 average rating, and the reputation of the candidate's major professor the least impactful, with a 3.59 average rating. Average ratings were assigned for the other characteristics in the following order: candidate's interview (4.81), candidate's presentation skills (4.41), reputation of candidate's graduate institution (3.97) and reputation of candidate's graduate department (3.94). The focus on personal accomplishments and skills rather than prestige also points toward items that would likely be more aligned with what other faculty would look for in a candidate and might differ from considerations if the decision was non-participatory and individually made by either the chair or the dean.

Results from this study support findings by Kezar (2001) suggesting that new faculty selections are not autocratically made by a dean, and that faculty selection decisions are a product of consensus among other faculty members, particularly faculty affiliated with the department of HE. These findings demonstrate that the decision-making was carried out through a shared process that involved the collaborative effort of the group rather than a decision made by a solitary individual who was in control.

**Discussion**

Many candidates for tenure-track faculty positions are new to the process and are insufficiently informed about the criteria applied by the interviewers in relation to the prospective position (DiRamio, Theroux, and Guarino 2009). Often candidates focus their applications on one area, but the chosen area may not have sufficient influence on the search and selection process. The findings from this study underscore the need for candidates to do as much research as they can into the process of recruitment and selection for tenure-track faculty positions at that particular institution, and as early in the process as possible. This is especially true for candidates who are coming from lower-ranked or unranked institutions and seeking to secure positions in top-ranking graduate programmes.

In addition, candidates should understand that, while the institutional prestige of one's educational background, research experience and publication record can be beneficial in a job search, Foster (2015) suggests that candidates who may exhibit and excel at the current criteria but do not diversify their skill set and make an effort to gain more experiences that are considered valuable for positions at
lower-ranked or unranked institutions may be at a disadvantage compared to candidates with more diversified backgrounds and more teaching expertise.

**Areas for future research**

Ware (2000) helped bring attention to the need for the selection of faculty to move beyond the current criteria and create more inclusive pools of candidates from which to choose. A future qualitative study could be conducted to discover how criteria are being used to include more prospective candidates with diverse backgrounds based on gender, ethnicity, race, religion and disability status.

Another area of potential research is to explore ideas presented by Zryumov (2010) and to identify the differences in candidate success when they are evaluated according to these criteria. A qualitative study could be useful for asking more detailed questions in interviews or focus groups in order to better understand how participatory decision-making guides the faculty selection process. Additionally, a questionnaire could be included to triangulate the findings of this follow-up study. We also recommend that this study be replicated engaging a sample of participants from unranked institutions to see if their perceptions are the same as or different to those of the participants in this study.

**Concluding thoughts**

There is a current need to develop criteria that can be used to create a more inclusive pool of candidates for faculty positions in HE. In turn, this expanded group of potential candidates can result in more inclusive faculty at HEIs. New, inclusivity-encouraging criteria can be seen in the presence of participatory decision-making carried out by faculty members.

Continued study of alternative criteria used by tenure-track faculty members as well as by deans and chairs to collaboratively select faculty should help create a more unified list of criteria that doctoral candidates can use to become more knowledgeable prior to beginning a tenure-track position search. This information should be available to both US and international students transitioning out of their doctoral programmes who are otherwise unaware of the dynamics of the process. In this manner, students can better prepare themselves as candidates for these highly competitive positions.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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