

## Search Advocate—Background

**Piloting the Search Advocate Model at UO.** Oregon State University currently offers a robust Search Advocate Program. As stated on their website, “Search Advocates are trained, external search committee members who promote equity, validity, and diversity on OSU searches.” UO has recently been exploring ways to incorporate OSU’s successful program into our search processes. Anne Gillies, Search Advocate Program Director, Oregon State University has led search advocate training workshops (February, April) for a range of UO staff and faculty members. We now have a corps of more than 50 trained Search Advocates on campus.

The Search Advocate training curriculum prepares faculty and staff to serve as advocates on search committees. Each Search Advocate is a consultant/participant who advances inclusive excellence by asking questions to help committee members test their thinking, identifying and promoting practices that advance diversity and social justice, and minimizing the impacts of cognitive and structural biases. As external committee members, advocates are able to explore assumptions, norms, and practices that an internal member might not question. The search advocate typically plays a vital role in position development, recruitment, screening, interviews, references, evaluation, and integration of the new faculty or staff member into the institution. In partnership with the search chair, search committee members, and hiring official, the search advocate affirms UO’s commitment to inclusive excellence.

### Role of Search Advocate (in brief):

- Provide impartial guidance to the hiring manager, search committee chairs and members throughout the search process
- Create a criteria matrix and ensure it is used throughout the process
- Facilitate *up-front* discussion and ground rules for how to handle *known applicant* issues
- Facilitate up-front discussion and ground rules for how to handle *conflicts of interest*
- Ask questions to help committee members clarify their thinking
- Serve as process advisor watching for things such as negativity bias, halo effects, proxy qualifications, references to “good fit”, and airtime issues.

### Further Background

How to do a Better Job of Searching for Diversity, The Chronicle of Higher Education:

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-to-Do-a-Better-Job-of/237750>

Search Advocates-Promoting Diversity and Mitigating Bias on University Search Committees

<https://vimeo.com/218043456>

Reviewing Applicants – Research on Bias and Assumptions -

[http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/BiasBrochure\\_3rdEd.pdf](http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/BiasBrochure_3rdEd.pdf)

Benefits and Challenges of Diversity in Academic Settings -

[http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/Benefits\\_Challenges.pdf](http://wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/Benefits_Challenges.pdf)

Before Starting a Faculty Search, Take a Good Look at the Search Committee -

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/Before-Starting-a-Faculty/34954>

UO Search Advocate Pilot Activity/Initiative	Who/Timing
Search Advocate Workshop #1 (February 2019) (22 people certified as Search Advocates)	Anne Gillies, OSU Maeve Anderson
Search Advocate Workshop #2 (April 2019) (~30 people certified as Search Advocates)	Anne Gillies, OSU CMGallagher
Search Advocate Workshop #3 (July 15, 16 2019)	Anne Gillies, OSU CMGallagher
Search Advocate Workshop #4 (September 2019)	Anne Gillies, OSU
Series of 3-4 Search Advocate Workshops 2019-2020 W, S, S, & F terms OSU trainer is interested and available to do additional workshops during the 2019-20 academic year.	Anne Gillies, OSU
Active Recruitment for Tenure Track Searches --Active Recruitment Team (ART) I	Melanie Muenzer, lead
Pilot Program Report: Introducing the Search Advocate Program at UO	CMGallagher
Draw findings from Pilot Program Report into ADVANCE Institutional Transformation Grant application	CMGallagher

### Frequently Asked Questions about Search Advocate Program

#### **Q1. Does the Search Advocate read all of the candidate files?**

A: Yes, the advocate will do the same review that the other committee members perform, in order to be able to ask appropriate questions about individual candidate screening decisions.

#### **Q2. How does serving as a Search Advocate get built into promotion and tenure and merit review?**

A: This will be an area for UO to consider. OSU's experience with this follows:

In 2015, OSU's Faculty senate approved a revision to the promotion and tenure guidelines that explicitly recognizes equity, inclusion, and diversity contributions. A number of deans/colleges are working with departments/faculty to include explicit expectations about equity, inclusion, and diversity work. Completing SA training and serving as a SA is one way of meeting those expectations. Realistically, it takes longer for P&T culture to change than it does for P&T guidelines to change since candidates are evaluated at multiple levels of the institution in the P&T process.

#### **Q3. Have there been any inequities observed with the Search Advocate Program at OSU in terms of who gets certified...has this work also tended to fall to underrepresented people?**

A: Actually the SA program is intended to—at least somewhat—equalize this workload.

In OSU’s experience, out of approximately 1400 individuals currently at OSU who have completed the SA training, there are about 33% who are currently eligible, and 27% who have indicated a willingness to be included in the active directory. Among the current eligible and willing advocates, about 68% are women and slightly less than 10% (est) are people of color.

***Q4. What are the limits for how a Search Advocate can intervene in a search? Can they stop a search?***

A: Advocates don’t directly stop a search. They are expected to address problems they see as significant, and to seek assistance/intervention from outside the search committee if needed. They have the right to resign from a committee if they believe it is violating integrity, and they are encouraged to explain their reasons to the hiring official and HR contact. We want the committees to learn from advocates, so expect them to approach this in a collaborative manner. Advocates have been very successful in “offering” to check particular practices with HR.

***Q5. Do Search Advocates have a vote in deciding what candidate is selected?***

A: This will be an area for UO to consider. At OSU some do and some don’t, based on established departmental practice and individual advocate preference. OSU asks committees to use consensus rather than voting, which makes “voting membership” much less of an issue.

***Q6. Does the Search Advocate replace another committee member or are they in addition to the search committee?***

A: The search advocate is an additional role, and can’t be combined with any other role.

***Q7. Is it a requirement to have a Search Advocate on every search committee at OSU?***

A: The OSU president and provost require that a search advocate participate in any [Provost's Hiring Initiative](#) and [Tenured Faculty Diversity Initiative](#) search. They have committed to ensuring that designated search advocates also be included on leadership search committees. Many administrative and academic divisions have adopted policies requiring search advocates on certain types of committees as well. These leadership decisions show their trust in the quality of OSU's Search Advocate program and their desire to have these searches benefit from search advocate contributions.

Further, all OSU Deans reported last year that they are requiring outside advocates on their tenure/tenure-track searches, and some are also asking that search chairs complete advocate training so they can better collaborate with advocates.

***Q8. This all sounds great, but is it another program that increases the “tax on minorities” where underrepresented people do the work for no added compensation? If they don’t have the power to stop a search, where is the muscle in this program?***

A: Twelve hours of training does not provide the kind of awareness that a lifetime of being part of a minoritized group does. Most advocates are White as you see in the answer to question 3. The question of cultural taxation is one that isn’t limited to this kind of service—and to some degree this program works to reduce that impact by having advocates serve formally in a role that was previously performed by faculty of color informally.

***Q9. Regarding the idea that this work should happen out of a “community of practice” and not be monetarily compensated, are there still ways that we could value this work such as providing course release time?***

A: This will be an area for UO to consider. OSU has opted not to compensate or incentivize any more than they do for any other type of institutional service on committees, etc.

***Q10. Can you provide some scenarios of how Search Advocates have shifted the course of searches in a positive way—examples of added value?***

A: This is largely a culture-change initiative – and is most effective at accomplishing demographic shifts when combined with other institutional initiatives. At OSU, search advocates and search committees report more thoughtful, analytical searches with fewer issues about conflict of interest, known candidates, etc. Faculty say the conversations on search committees are different now. The use of tools like the criteria matrix makes the process more careful and systematic. Part of the Search Advocate Workshop involves a panel of current search advocates discussing how they feel they’ve added value to specific searches. They also speak to the culture change aspects of adding value to the institution.

***Q11. How can we incentivize faculty attendance at a two-day Search Advocate workshop, especially given teaching schedule conflicts?***

A: This will be an area for UO to consider. At OSU more of the search advocates are professional faculty (OA’s); when academic faculty serve it is considered institutional service and work to advance equity/inclusion/diversity. We need advocates who WANT to be advocates—who care about the role.

***Q12. How can the Search Advocate certification be used/packaged/leveraged as a professionalization of a person’s diversity, equity inclusions skillset?***

A: This will be an area for UO to consider. At OSU the search advocate workshops have been approved for continuing education credit for some of the HR professional organizations (on an individual workshop/participant basis). If a person actively serves on search committees as an advocate as intended, the experiences gained will be invaluable to deepening both philosophy and skills in the area of diversity, equity and inclusion.

***Q13. Could participation in the Search Advocate Program be incentivized specifically for those underrepresented people who wish to be involved to ensure that they are not overtaxed?***

A: When someone in a minoritized group is asked to serve as an external representative on a committee “for diversity” WITHOUT a defined and supported role, they are being overtaxed and have less support than they do with the defined search advocate role. Cultural taxation is a problem across our institutions that we need to address more comprehensively. We need to resist the assumption that the only people who are expected to advocate for diversity/inclusion are people of color—this is *everyone’s* responsibility.

***Q14. What kinds of things are done/discussed at the monthly Community of Practice meetings convened at OSU with people who have been trained as Search Advocates and who are serving on searches?***

A: Usually the meetings are open discussion about current issues advocates are facing. Sometimes there are invited speakers (EOA Director, panel on veteran's preference implementation, workshop on micro aggressions, etc.) but advocates seem to prefer the open dialog.

***Q15. How important is it to have university-wide (President and Provost) endorsement and investment on this from the outset?***

A: It is one important factor in whether or not advocates will have any sway with committees...and whether your program will be sustainable. OSU opted not to advocate for a policy mandating this until it had become more universally accepted as an institutional practice. There are upsides and downsides to this as well. This will be an area for UO to consider.

***Q16. What have the outcomes been at other universities—is there a way to tell whether having search advocates helps to change campus demographics?***

A: National Science Foundation ADVANCE program research suggests that no one program is a silver bullet—institutions that are successful at changing hiring demographics use multiple direct and indirect strategies together. Search advocacy is one specific tool.

Questions? Comments?  
Contact Charlotte Moats-Gallagher, Division of Equity and Inclusion @  
[cmoatsga@uoregon.edu](mailto:cmoatsga@uoregon.edu)