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Recruit Don't Search: Using Inclusive Strengths-Based Processes in Hiring

Daisy Benson
University of Vermont

Gary S. Atwood
The University of Vermont, gatwood@uvm.edu

Kate E. Bright
The University of Vermont

Amalia Dolan
The University of Vermont, amalia.dolan@uvm.edu

Laura L. Haines
The University of Vermont

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Daisy Benson, Gary S. Atwood, Kate E. Bright, Amalia Dolan, Laura L. Haines, and Kelli Kauffroath

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THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT LIBRARIES

Context

In 2021, the University of Vermont Libraries set out to hire two Health Sciences Librarians. At the time, our library was engaged in reimagining the work we did and had identified the need for new faculty to fill roles which included supporting systematic reviews, clinicians, students, and faculty in both the Larner College of Medicine and the College of Nursing and Health Sciences at the University of Vermont. Due to ongoing concerns about travel at the time and a desire to keep as many people in the pool for as long as we could, we elected to run a virtual search. This poster shares work done by the committee, perceptions of the process as experienced by the librarians whom we hired, and recommendations for conducting inclusive searches.
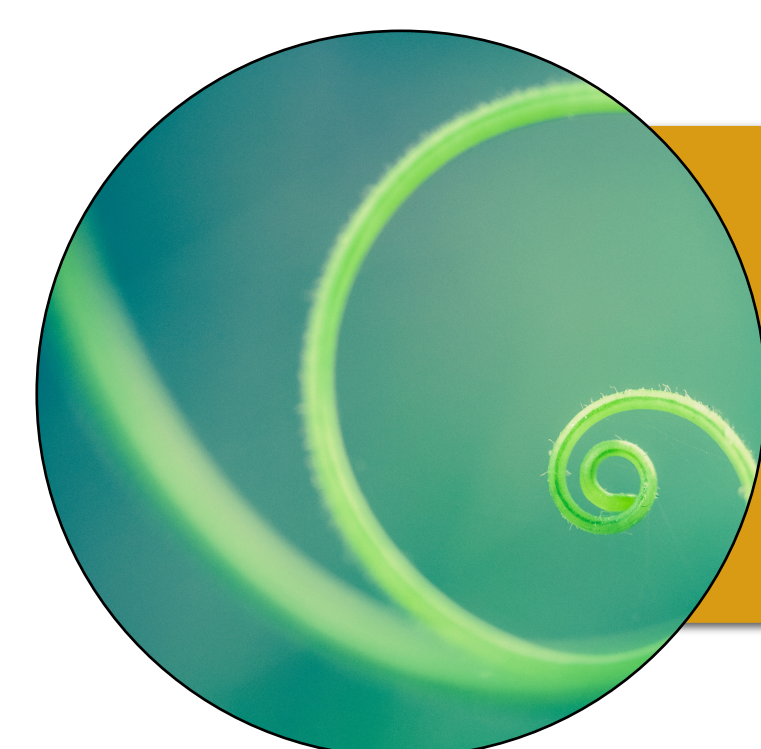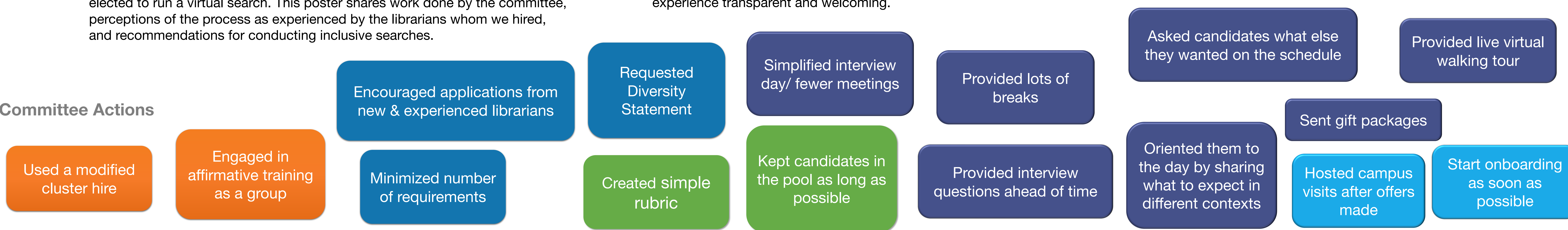
Philosophy

Based on the committee members' commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, we sought to shift the collective mindset for the search. Search committees often think of their job as being "narrowing down the pool." We worked hard to do exactly the opposite. We worked to see the strengths of every candidate rather than look for reasons to not move them forward. We also recognized that everything we did contributed to the candidate's experience, so, we sought to make that experience transparent and welcoming.
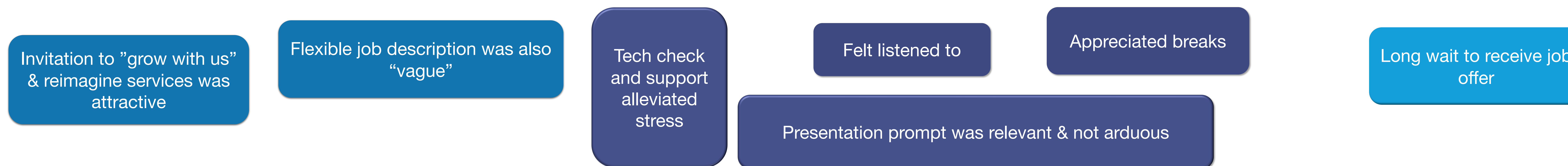
Next Steps

Many members of our committee also serve on the Libraries' Inclusive Excellence Committee and are drafting new recommendations for how search committees recruit, review, and engage with potential candidates. We look forward to making lasting changes to how searches at our institution are conducted.

Committee Actions

- Encouraged applications from new & experienced librarians
- Requested Diversity Statement
- Simplified interview day/ fewer meetings
- Provided lots of breaks
- Asked candidates what else they wanted on the schedule
- Provided live virtual walking tour
- Used a modified cluster hire
- Engaged in affirmative training as a group
- Minimized number of requirements
- Created simple rubric
- Kept candidates in the pool as long as possible
- Provided interview questions ahead of time
- Oriented them to the day by sharing what to expect in different contexts
- Sent gift packages
- Hosted campus visits after offers made
- Start onboarding as soon as possible

PREP → POSTING → REVIEW → INTERVIEW → HIRE

Perceptions of New Hires

- Invitation to "grow with us" & reimagine services was attractive
- Flexible job description was also "vague"
- Tech check and support alleviated stress
- Felt listened to
- Appreciated breaks
- Presentation prompt was relevant & not arduous
- Long wait to receive job offer

Recommendations: Implement Inclusive & Open Processes

- Help candidates see themselves in posting
- Minimize requirements so more people can apply
- Accept applications from individuals about to complete a degree
- Enable appointment at hire for range of faculty ranks
- Post position widely & use personal networking to get word out
- Share salary information up front
- Share information about institution & community upfront

Recommendations: Value Strengths & Minimize Bias

- Keep candidates in pool for as long as possible
- Consider & value what each candidate could bring to the job
- Use simple rubric rather than difficult & complex rubrics that focus on numbers
- Ask for feedback from those who interact with candidates that addresses strengths
- Committee regularly checks for bias in the process

Recommendations: Set Candidates up for Success

- Provide interview questions ahead of time
- Provide names & bios of all people talking with the candidate
- Provide time for their questions
- Be honest when answering their questions
- Provide time for them to recover & reflect during interview