Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

Hiring for Mission, Diversity, and Excellence

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HIRING FOR MISSION, DIVERSITY, AND EXCELLENCE

Do We Know What These Mean?

By John McLaughlin

Introduction

About a year ago, events in my work at Boston College gave me the chance to do a comparison that the reader might find interesting. In my professional capacity as a programmer in the information technology department at Boston College, I was working with a team to add some functionality to the software used for hiring new employees to non-faculty positions. This functionality was focused on enabling hiring units throughout the university to address the issue of underutilization of AHANA (people of African-American, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American descent) and/or female applicants. This is known as 'hiring for diversity.'

At about the same time, I was working in an advisory capacity to the Boston College office of mission and ministry. Here the office was focused on two things: how to be more effective in engaging university employees in understanding what it means to be a Jesuit and Catholic university; and how to encourage employees to participate in ensuring that the objective of being a Jesuit and Catholic university is accomplished. A very important issue in this area is *hiring for mission*. As one Jesuit put it to me, *hiring for mission* is the *sine qua non* of Jesuit higher education. For those of us who don't use Latin phrases so easily, this means that hiring for mission is the *essential component* to the enterprise. Without it, there really is nothing.

It's useful to note that the term *hiring for mission* may be better understood as shorthand for *hiring for the Jesuit and Catholic dimensions of mission*. This distinction allows the recognition that any time an

The comparison

	Hiring for excellence	Hiring for mission	Hiring for diversity
Does a definition exist?	☑ 1	☑ 2	☒
Do applicants self-identify?	☑ 3	☑ 4	❓ 5
Do metrics exist to measure attainment of goal?	❓ 6	☑ 7	☒
Are managers held accountable?	☑	☑ 8	☒
University department(s) oversee this?	☑	☑ 9	☒

1 Each department defines this.
2 For employees at Boston College, diversity is defined as: AHANA and women.
3 Initially, yes. The hiring process is basically a verification of these claims to expertise.
4 Yes. If they don't, then hiring managers are encouraged to take their best guess after they interview them.
5 Applicants could do so in their resumes. But there is nowhere in the application process that specifically asks applicants about this.
6 This is job-dependent. While some might have metrics, all have standards specific to each job type.

7 Yes. These metrics include information about race and sex for applicants, all employees, for types of jobs, and for corresponding potential pools of applicants. Calculations are performed on every job opening for whether the job is "underutilized" for AHANA and/or for women. If it is underutilized, then hiring managers are expected/required to do as much as they can to increase the numbers of AHANA and/or women in the applicant pool.
8 Yes. And so are Vice Presidents of each area.
9 The Office of Institutional Diversity oversees this.

employee is hired and carries out her duties well the overall mission of the university is advanced in a general and very good way. Our concern here is to focus more specifically on the Jesuit and Catholic dimensions of the mission.

Because I was immersed in these two areas of concern, I was able to compare the two hiring goals of 'hiring for diversity' and 'hiring for mission' with respect to the information necessary to accomplish both. As I began the comparison, it became evident that the third element of 'hiring for excellence' or 'hiring for professional expertise' should be included because this is the traditional means by which hiring was and is done. The results of this analysis are presented in the accompanying Chart.

Question

One can see from the chart above that the individual pieces required for hiring for diversity have been worked out. While many would argue about various definitions involved, the effectiveness of the mechanisms, and the limits of this effort, the point remains that a fairly elaborate structure does exist to move the university toward this goal.

A question that naturally arises next is, "Does how we hire for diversity suggest some things for hiring for mission? Are they similar enough for one to learn from the other? Have we gained enough insights from the hiring for diversity model to apply them to a hiring for mission model?"

Clearly there are challenges in dealing with the issues that hiring for mission brings up. It won't be easy or simple to make a definition, to have would be employees inform us of their interests and qualifications thereto, to develop internal and external metrics, to have managers be accountable, and to create a university department to oversee it. But let's recall that as a society and an institution, we've figured out ways to do all these things for diversity. Mission is certainly no less important than diversity. It is mission which has carried us thus far. Which brings me to my final question: "In light of all this, is there any reason *not* to do these things for hiring for mission?" ■

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