

Department of Applied Mathematics  
University of Washington  
Seattle, WA, 98105

May 05, 2020

Subject: Request for formal graduate student participation in faculty hiring

Enclosure 1: List of students endorsing request

Dear Faculty of the Department of Applied Mathematics,

1. Graduate students in this department want to contribute their effort and perspective to the important work of hiring new faculty. We love our department and are invested in its future success, and we believe that it has the capacity to be an even greater place for students of all backgrounds to learn and become distinguished applied mathematicians. While graduate students have informally been a part of past hirings, we are requesting a more formal role in future hirings. In particular, we ask that:
  - (a) one (or more) PhD student(s)<sup>1</sup> be a member of all future faculty search committees and contribute to writing evaluation rubrics,
  - (b) the department share non-privileged application materials with the graduate student body, and
  - (c) the department share summary demographic statistics of applicants with the graduate student body.
2. In allowing graduate student participation on faculty hiring committees, the department would not be alone. Indeed, this practice is becoming increasingly widespread, and is recommended by university level offices at many institutions, including the University of Washington.<sup>2</sup> Other departments within UW who use such practices allow for the graduate committee member to participate in drafting the position advertisement, attend hiring committee meetings, read applications, and participate in discussion.<sup>3</sup> In fact, some departments make available to their graduate students a range of additional information such as, evaluation rubrics, summary demographics of applicants, and candidate application materials such as CVs, cover letters, diversity statements, and other similar documents.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Selected by vote of the graduate student body.

<sup>2</sup>The University of Washington Handbook of Best Practices for Faculty Searches. UW Office for Faculty Advancement. 2019. Guidelines for Departmental Policy: Creating an Effective Faculty Search Process. UC Berkeley Office for Faculty Equity & Welfare. 2016. Best Practices for Conducting Faculty Searches. Harvard Office of Faculty Development and Diversity. 2016.

<sup>3</sup>Personal correspondences with Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement, Associate Dean of Diversity & Access, and students and faculty in the departments of Atmospheric Science, Biology, Chemical Engineering, Geography, Human Centered Design and Engineering, Sociology, and School of Marine and Environmental Affairs.

<sup>4</sup>Personal correspondences with students and faculty in departments of Geography, Human Centered Design and Engineering, schools of Computer Science and Engineering, Marine and Environmental Affairs.

3. Increased student participation in faculty hiring is obviously in the interest of students. However, it also adds value to the department.
- (a) The department seeks professors who will mentor students, and we add the invaluable perspective of mentees. We can more readily evaluate a candidate's ability to motivate, encourage, and reflect our values.
  - (b) Many of the current students will apply for faculty positions in a few years, thereafter contributing to a hiring process at another institution. The professional experience gained by students in the department who are involved in hiring processes will make them more attractive hires in the future, which further bolsters the department's reputation.
  - (c) The joint participation of faculty and students in the hiring process provides an avenue for student service and would inculcate a sense of pride and responsibility among students for the success of the department. Having application materials in advance would also get students more invested in and more students involved in the process by improving the value of students meeting with faculty candidates and attending candidate talks.
  - (d) Adding a student to the hiring committee could improve the department's ability to hire top women and underrepresented minority (URM) faculty. It is becoming more widely recognized that "conventional search practices are not enough for consistent success in hiring top women and URM faculty."<sup>5</sup> Going further, the University of Washington's Office for Faculty Advancement explicitly suggests that such improvement can come from the "range of different perspectives and expertise" that students bring to the hiring committee.<sup>6</sup>
4. Therefore, we request further involvement in the hiring process, as outlined in Section 1. We recognize that the work done by search committees is not easy, and that this would constitute a significant change to the department's current hiring practices. However, we feel a sense of responsibility towards our fellow students and to the department, and believe that increased student involvement in the hiring process will be beneficial to both students and the department.

Sincerely,

The undersigned students

---

<sup>5</sup>Searching for a Diverse Faculty: Data Driven Recommendations. University Of California, Berkeley. 2018.

<sup>6</sup>The University of Washington Handbook of Best Practices for Faculty Searches. UW Office for Faculty Advancement. 2019.