

# POSITIVE AND PROBLEMATIC PRACTICES IN FACULTY RECRUITMENT

Adapted from University of Michigan ADVANCE Program's *POSITIVE AND PROBLEMATIC PRACTICES IN FACULTY RECRUITMENT*

Between 2008-2009, the University of Michigan conducted three interview studies of candidates and new hires for faculty positions in STEM. Two of the studies included candidates who turned down faculty offers, 11 from a UM science department in 2008 (8 women and 3 men) and 12 from the College of Engineering in 2009 (5 women and 7 men). Interviews were also conducted with new faculty hires from the College of Engineering in 2009. In both studies of declined faculty, respondents emphasized that they had good experiences while visiting the University, and that their decision to turn Michigan down was difficult. Nevertheless, the data provided some information about practices that created a positive impression for job candidates as well as practices that contributed to their decisions.

## Positive Practices

- Advertisements for the positions on website, trade journals and e-mail lists, etc. combined with word-of-mouth personal outreach from existing faculty.
- Warm attention from the department chair, including hosting of social interactions.
- Frequent and prompt attention (by phone and e-mail) from the department chair in the course of negotiations.
- Providing continual information about the timeline of hiring process to candidates, including explanations of delays.
- Opportunities to meet with both graduate students (lack of such meetings raised concerns both about their quality and their integration in department life).
- For women candidates: meeting with women faculty and postdocs (not meeting with them led to unresolved questions about the climate for women in the department), as well as meeting with ADVANCE representatives.
- Meeting with potential colleagues (in and outside the department) who work in the candidate's research area.
- Receiving information about dual career opportunities early in the recruitment process.
- Receiving information about family friendly policies and resources (e.g., child care).
- Having partner treated with respect, interest, and enthusiasm.
- Accommodating family members' needs during the visit.
- A sense that the department chair is negotiating with the candidate's long-term best interest as a primary consideration.
- Rapid resolution of negotiation, yielding a formal offer quickly.
- Introduction to the city, including city attractions, potential living areas, schools, etc.

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## **Problematic Practices**

- Contradictory information from the chair and other senior faculty members.
- Evidence of disorganization or lack of unity in the department's approach.
- Suggestions by department faculty that candidates are not being recruited for their scientific excellence (but based on some personal characteristic, like gender or race).
- Being asked questions about family issues before any offer is made (marital status, planning for a family in the future, etc.); these generated resentment that such questions are both irrelevant and illegal, and yield inaccurate information.
- Potential department faculty colleagues interacting with the candidate's partner in a way that suggests that the partner is not valued or desirable on their own terms.