



Positive and Problematic Practices in Faculty Recruitment

At the request of one UM science department, ADVANCE Program staff interviewed 11 individuals (8 women and 3 men) who had been recently offered positions at UM, but had not accepted them. All of those contacted agreed to be interviewed. All 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 as well as practices that contributed to the negative outcome.

Positive Practices

- 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
- Meeting with both graduate and undergraduate 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)
- 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
- 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

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 yielded 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 his or her own terms

For more information or additional copies of this resource, please contact the ADVANCE Program at 734 647-9359 or advanceprogram@umich.edu, or visit the ADVANCE Program's Web site at <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/advance>.