Overview

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is committed to building and maintaining a faculty that is excellent in many dimensions. The Office of the Provost supports three programs in which partial or total central financial support for academic positions may be provided: the Faculty Excellence Program (see Communication No. 4); the Targets of Opportunity Program, described here, and the Dual Career Program, (see Communication No. 8).

We require all appointees to faculty and academic staff positions to meet the highest standards in teaching, research and service. Normally, faculty and academic staff members meeting these criteria are best identified though the regular recruitment and search processes, funded through departmental and college procedures. In special circumstances, however, the Provost may provide funding (as described below) for a position and/or authorize a waiver search when a special recruitment will contribute to the university’s excellence through attraction of highly qualified individuals whose recruitment supports strategic objectives and institutional priorities.

Further criteria for different categories of TOP requests are described below. Decisions on requests for financial support and/or waivers of search under this policy are made by the Provost in the best interests of the University. Decisions of the Provost are final.

Targets of Opportunity Program: Recruiting Members of Underrepresented Groups

The mission of the University of Illinois is to transform lives and serve society by educating, creating knowledge and putting knowledge to work on a large scale and with excellence (http://www.uillinois.edu/about/mission.cfm). In serving that mission, one of the values that guides the University of Illinois is inclusiveness. On the Urbana-Champaign campus, we are committed to the principle that a diverse community adds to and enhances our educational environment. We strive to incorporate diversity in every aspect of university life from student affairs, to academic units, to research activities, and to public engagement. Illinois is determined to achieve the next level of excellence in education, scholarship, and public engagement by fostering and sustaining a diverse and inclusive academic environment.

The Targets of Opportunity Program (TOP) is designed to support recruitment of outstanding faculty members who will enhance our institution’s strategic goals and build on our reputation as a leading public research university. The goal of the program is to attract leading faculty members among groups that are underrepresented by race, ethnicity, gender, disability, and veterans’ status in specific units on campus. All students benefit from a learning environment that is enriched by a diverse faculty. The University has a strong interest in promoting the recruitment and retention of a diverse student body. A faculty with diverse backgrounds also assists the University in strengthening its relationship and service to the citizenry of Illinois.
Program Criteria

1. TOP nominations are accepted for entry-level, highly tenurable, and tenured faculty prospects. TOP nominations also may be accepted for high-level academic professionals if a unit can demonstrate that the position will directly enhance the educational mission of the campus.

2. For faculty positions, the nominee must demonstrate excellence and promise in the specified field based on an established research agenda, publication record, grants, awards, etc. The candidate also should have a record of teaching excellence and experience.

3. The faculty nominee also must support the strategic excellence of the requesting unit. The request must address how the proposed hire will (a) assist the unit in promoting its strategic goals, (b) enhance the excellence of the unit, (c) address specific needs within the unit and/or across campus, and (d) contribute to the diversity goals of the unit. Overall, the request must articulate the match of the proposed hire with the unit and the campus strategic plans and initiatives.

4. For academic professional positions, nominees will be reviewed based on a variety of factors, including: (a) underrepresentation based on data from the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access; and (b) level of engagement with the campus (i.e., the visibility and nature of the position).

5. In evaluating the appropriateness of this program for a unit, the Provost’s Office will consider whether the use of the program furthers the campus’ commitment to diversity and whether the use is supported by the most recent availability and peer comparison data in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access’ Faculty Report. By college and department, the OEOA Faculty Report compares the representation of tenured and tenure-track faculty within a unit based on race, ethnicity, and gender to the representation at peer institutions and to a national pool of tenured and tenure-track faculty. In general, African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, Native Americans (that is, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians), and mainland Puerto Ricans are significantly underrepresented in the faculty at Illinois relative to their representation nationally. Additionally, women are underrepresented in specific STEM fields. Underrepresentation also exists on campus with respect to veteran status and persons with disabilities.

6. Nominees for TOP recruitment are typically U.S. citizens or permanent residents. In very exceptional circumstances, scholars and academic professionals who are not U.S. citizens will be considered.

7. Requesting units should have a demonstrable record of promoting diversity (e.g., success in making diverse hires, a Diversity Plan for the unit).
Approval Process and Funding

The Office of the Provost will support the hiring of TOP candidates in two ways: (1) through the traditional search process and (2) through a search waiver. Consistent with our campus goal of enhancing diversity within the standard search process, the majority of positions will be funded through traditional searches. However, occasionally a unit may identify an excellent candidate from an underrepresented group outside of the traditional search process. In those instances, the unit may petition for a search waiver. The two processes are outlined below.

- **Through a Traditional Search Process**

  Regular searches are vetted and approved by the colleges, so campus-level support for TOP hires within this process requires minimal review. If a unit identifies a person from an underrepresented group as the selected choice for a position, the unit can apply for TOP funding to support up to $85,000 in recurring salary. Alternatively, the unit may apply for assistance with start-up funds in lieu of salary support if that is a greater need.

  In some instances, a search committee may identify two highly qualified candidates, one of whom may further the campus’ diversity objectives. If there is such a candidate from an underrepresented group, a unit may apply for partial TOP funding to support an additional position from a single search. This second position must be vetted and supported by the dean of the college and should be approved only if the unit has a strategic need for additional faculty (e.g., large number of undergraduate majors, large amount of service teaching for the campus, strategic excellence in the college). In the case of a second position, the Provost’s Office will support up to $60,000 in recurring salary.

  For TOP candidates identified through the traditional search process, the unit should submit the request with a brief rationale outlining the candidate’s excellence and strategic fit within the unit as well as the contributions to diversity in the unit/college (see Attachment 1).

- **Through a Search Waiver**

  The search waiver method is the approach that has been used most often for TOP hires since the program’s inception. We will continue to support this approach, although our goal is to reward and incentivize most of our diversity hires through the traditional search process.

  There are times when an exceptional faculty candidate from an underrepresented group is identified as recruitable outside of a traditional search. Such opportunities are typically time-sensitive and require flexibility outside the routine hiring cycle. Two separate approvals at different stages in the process are required, each catalyzed by a request from the unit.

  **Stage 1** involves requesting approval from the dean for funding to bring the candidate in for a visit (see Attachment 2). Such requests should be based on the following criteria: (a) strategic fit of the candidate’s research and teaching expertise with unit’s goals; (b) the need for additional faculty in the unit, based on size of the major and/or amount of service teaching; (c) candidate’s
fit with the strategic priorities of the college and campus; (d) the diversity of the current faculty and student body in the unit; and (e) data from the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access’ Faculty Report.

It is important to be careful in representing our institution properly in this initial stage of the potential recruitment process. At this earliest stage, it may not be necessary or appropriate to identify the efforts as related to recruitment; a simple invitation to make a presentation on campus and to visit with faculty and students in the unit can be very effective without asking a potential candidate to commit to interest in a position. Clearly, no commitments regarding availability of an appointment should be made.

**Stage 2** involves requesting a search waiver from the campus (see Attachment 3). Second stage approval is requested only after the unit has completed its evaluation of the candidate.

If the unit and the dean agree that the candidate would be an exceptional hire, the unit may apply for a search waiver and campus-level support. Stage 2 requests for hires will be reviewed by the TOP Advisory Committee, chaired by the Vice Provost. Requests will be reviewed in three cycles, two in the fall (due by October 1 for first cycle, due by December 1 for second cycle), one in the spring (due by March 1 for the third cycle). If a request is time sensitive, a unit may send it forward at an off-cycle time but it is preferable that requests be assessed collectively within these three time frames. It is important to note that the Provost’s Office will approve a limited number of search waivers and funding for such targeted recruitments so there is no guarantee that Stage 1 approvals from the deans will translate into approved hires.

If a search waiver is granted, the campus will support up to $85,000 in salary support for up to three years. After that time period, the unit will need to take over the entire salary for this additional position. Alternatively, the unit may apply for assistance with start-up funds in lieu of salary support if that is a greater need.
Please refer to Attachment 1 (for traditional searches) and Attachments 2 and 3 (for search waivers) for various stages of approval for appointments funded under the Targets of Opportunity Program.

Tenure Review Process

If tenure is involved in a TOP hire, the unit will need to submit the appropriate materials to the Provost’s Office for review by the off-cycle Promotion and Tenure Committee as part of the hiring process.

Funding Limits

The campus’ contribution for TOP hires normally will not exceed $85,000. Funding at a higher level may be requested, but will not necessarily be approved. Upon the resignation, termination, or retirement of the faculty member, the funds allocated by the campus to the unit (including any campus funds used for salary increments) will revert to the campus.

Start-Up Discretionary Funds

Note: This is a separate request from the TOP process.

Discretionary research support is available through the program of Assistance in Recruiting Underrepresented Minority Faculty offered by the University System Vice President for Academic Affairs (http://www.vpaa.uillinois.edu/Policies/minfaculty.cfm). Awards in this...
program provide up to $10,000 per year for the first three years of service on the faculty. The VPAA provides the first year’s funds, to be matched on a 2:1 basis by campus sources in years two and three. The Office of the Provost will provide $10,000 to complete the match. Proposals for recruitment awards should be made through the dean of the college to the Provost. If approved by the Provost, the proposal will be forwarded to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for final approval. Questions about this program should be directed to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (333-3077). This program is intended to enhance minority recruitment, so requests under this program should be made at the same time that required paperwork to offer the position is being completed. This timetable allows departments to offer the research funds at the same time they are offering a position.

Requests for research funds also may be requested from the Vice Chancellor for Research. Questions about these funds (http://www.research.illinois.edu/rar/) should be directed to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (333-0034).

**Assistance**

There are several helpful websites that identify potential candidates for faculty positions who are members of groups underrepresented in higher education. These include the following:

- Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) Doctoral Directory  

- Diversifying Higher Education Faculty in Illinois (DFI) Directory of Graduates  
  [http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/DFI/directory.htm](http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/DFI/directory.htm)

- National Registry of Diverse & Strategic Faculty (The Registry)  
  (Please contact OEOA for user name and password).

For additional assistance with special recruitments in support of institutional priorities, please contact the Office of the Provost (333-6677).

**Attachments**

*Transmittals for:*

- Approval for TOP funding through a traditional search (Attachment 1)
- Approval for TOP funding through a search waiver (Attachments 2 and 3)