

TARGETS OF OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM (TOP)

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
COMMUNICATION NO. 7

Overview

The University of Illinois 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 through 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 of 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.

Except in rare circumstances as noted below, financial support and waivers are not available through these programs when a candidate is identified through a search that has been approved, funded and initiated at the school or college level.

The overriding criterion for granting financial support and/or a waiver of search is whether the request contributes to academic excellence in the unit, as measured by usual standards for hiring and as outlined in the strategic goals of the unit, college, and campus.

Further criteria for different categories of 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 (see Attachments 1 and 2)

The Targets of Opportunity Program (TOP) is designed to support the special recruitment of outstanding faculty members among groups that are underrepresented in specific units on campus. The University has a strong interest in promoting the recruitment and retention of a diverse student body, which in turn is facilitated by recruiting a diverse faculty. A faculty with diverse backgrounds also assists the University in strengthening its relationship and service to the citizenry of Illinois. However, race, gender, or disability shall never be the sole determining factor in deciding whether to recruit a particular person. The candidate must have an outstanding record of academic accomplishment to warrant recruitment under this policy.

Requests for funding and waivers of search will not be approved when the requests seek to serve as a replacement for the regular search and selection process. That is, if a member of an underrepresented group is identified through an approved and funded search, waivers and funding under this program generally are not available.

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PROGRAM CRITERIA

1. TOP nominations are accepted for entry-level, highly tenurable, and tenured faculty prospects. The term “highly-tenurable” applies to individuals who are currently holding assistant professorships elsewhere and have begun to establish a substantial record, but who are deemed not quite ready for a tenured appointment. TOP nominations are also accepted for high-level academic professionals. Academic professional nominations will be reviewed based on the following criteria: (a) underrepresentation in the unit, and (b) level of engagement with the campus, i.e., the visibility and nature of the position.
2. The requested waiver must support the 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, and (c) address specific needs within the unit and/or across campus. Overall, the request must articulate the match of the proposed hire in the context of the unit, and with regard to unit and campus strategic plans and initiatives.
3. When TOP nominations are reviewed, particular consideration is given to the need and make up of the unit, with the aim of using TOP to expand diversity in areas of greatest need on the campus. In addition, the extent to which the nominee will promote the excellence and advance the strategic agenda of the unit and campus is considered.
4. 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.

RECRUITMENT

It is important to be careful in representing our institution properly in the recruitment process. At the earliest stages, it may not be necessary to identify the efforts as related to recruitment; a simple invitation to make a presentation on campus can be very effective without asking a potential candidate to commit to participation in the process. Clearly, no commitments regarding availability of an appointment should be made.

APPROVAL PROCESS AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

Commitments to TOP candidates require two separate approvals at different stages in the process, each catalyzed by a request from the unit:

1. Request for approval to recruit: the unit requests approval to invite the individual to campus for an interview. As indicated above, units should approach candidates without seeking a commitment from the candidate or offering it on behalf of the unit or the university. After the Provost’s Office approves the Stage 1 request, a copy of the approval will be forwarded to the respective Dean and the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research.
2. Request for approval to make an offer of an appointment and for funding: the unit requests approval to make an offer to the candidate (includes request for campus funding). Second-stage approval is requested only after the unit has completed its evaluation of the candidate.

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In the case of an individual who has been on a visiting appointment at Illinois or who has had contact with the unit under other special circumstances, a unit may have gathered all the required information and evaluative materials, seen the candidate, and become convinced the candidate has credentials appropriate for an appointment in the unit. The unit may now wish to make an offer of a permanent position based on the evaluative materials alone. The Provost will entertain requests to proceed with an offer and commitment of funding outside the normal two-stage process. However, this should not be considered the norm.

Refer to attachments 1 and 2 for both stages of approval for appointments funded under the Targets of Opportunity program.

REVIEW PROCESS

The decision at the campus level is made by the Provost after consultation with the Chancellor, the Associate Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor for Research, the Dean of the Graduate College, and, if tenure is involved, the Chair of the Campus Committee on Promotion and Tenure.

FUNDING LIMITS AND SOURCES

Subject to the availability of funds, the campus administration will provide recurring funding for the salaries of approved TOP nominees. The campus' contribution will normally not exceed \$75,000. 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 plus any salary increments that have accrued against the line will revert to the campus.

START-UP FUND POSSIBILITY

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

While the Office of the Provost will not cover start-up costs, 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 toward the required match. The appointing department and college must provide \$10,000 to complete the match. Proposals for recruitment awards should be made through the dean of the college to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. 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

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

OTHER TOP POSSIBILITIES (IDENTIFICATION OF CANDIDATES THROUGH THE REGULAR SEARCH PROCESS)

Occasionally, TOP prospects may surface during regular searches. Should that occur, then the unit may make the case to the Provost for funding a portion of the line. The department will be expected to pay at least one-third of the salary and to present a plan for eventually absorbing the entire cost over a determined period of time. However, by no means should TOP become the only route for appointment of faculty from underrepresented groups. Regular searches are to comply with the letter and the spirit of equal opportunity.

Assistance

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

Attachments

Transmittals for:

Stage 1 Approval for TOP (Attachment 1)

Stage 2 Approval for TOP (Attachment 2)