

HIRING IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: I thought community colleges were required to hire faculty that reflect the ethnic make up of their students.

A: That is not correct. It is illegal under California's Proposition 209 to consider ethnicity, race, gender or religion as a factor in making hiring decisions.

Community colleges are required to hire staff that have a demonstrated *sensitivity* to the diverse backgrounds—ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, age, disability, religious, etc.—of the diverse student communities that make up the California community colleges. That sensitivity can be demonstrated in a variety of ways such as fluency in other languages, experience teaching in under privileged communities, experience working in other countries, expertise in areas of study that consider issues of multiculturalism, etc. Considering these sorts of “race-blind” criteria may also attract a more diverse group of applicants, but the focus is on job-related criteria that demonstrate “sensitivity” to diversity, and any person—regardless of race/ethnicity—may have this valued attribute.

Q: Are community colleges allowed to take steps to create a more diverse staff?

A: Yes. Not only may we, the law requires that we take steps to increase the diversity of our academic and classified staff.

Q: How do you take steps to increase diversity, if you aren't allowed to consider a person's race, ethnicity or gender?

A: There are a variety of lawful steps that community colleges can take. These can be broken down into 3 basic categories:

- 1) Campus culture. Districts can, and should take steps to create a campus life that welcomes and appreciates diversity. These steps serve both to attract applicants from different backgrounds, and retain them once they join a college community. Steps can include sensitivity training, encouragement of professional groups and clubs, mentoring programs, and opportunities for professional development.

- 2) Job definition. Where appropriate, job descriptions should be revisited and modernized to reflect relevant and job-related qualifications and skills that recognize how issues of diversity impact the function of the position or the academic discipline.
- 3) Recruitment. Every effort should be made to attract a highly diverse group of applicants, from which to select the most qualified candidate. While the ultimate selection is, and should, be based on who is the most qualified, the more diverse the applicant pool, the more likely that hiring will be come more diverse over time.

Q: Doesn't diversity in hiring mean creating a staff that reflects the ethnic make-up of the student body?

A: No. Community Colleges are expected to take steps to continue diversifying academic and classified staff. However, staff diversity isn't measured in terms of student demographics. Rather, community colleges are expected to hire from diverse pools of qualified applicants. A pool is considered sufficiently diverse *not* when it mirrors the student body, but when it mirrors the demographics of the pool of individuals considered available for the position. Depending on the position, this pool of available individuals may a regional, statewide, or national group.

Q: Don't you end up lowering standards when you have diversity as a goal in hiring?

A: No. A commitment to diversity is based on the belief that there are highly qualified male and female candidates for our positions that come from wildly diverse backgrounds including race, ethnicity, religion. Effective hiring strategies focus more on attracting a highly qualified and diverse group of candidates from which to make a final selection—with the most qualified candidate getting the position.