

CCAS case study for inclusion in New Deans Seminar

A Question of Equity in Hiring

It's a crisp March day at Kudzu State University when Dean Ida Newbie receives a phone call from Chemistry Department Chair Hugh DeMann, informing her that the unit's one continuing organic chemistry faculty member has just tendered her notice of resignation. DeMann is distressed, as the department's other organic chemist will retire in two months. Although Chemistry is undertaking a search for a tenure-track Assistant Professor to replace the retiring faculty member, meeting the institution's demands for organic chemistry instruction requires two full-time individuals. As well, Chemistry has a well-subscribed graduate program, and the chair is concerned that the staffing changes will be very disruptive to the several students whose research focus is organic chemistry. After establishing that the job description for the current search was written broadly and that the search committee is still in the screening stage, Newbie and DeMann decide to approach the Provost for permission to make two hires from the existing search. Citing the area's instructional demands and the savings associated with avoiding a second search, the Provost's approval is secured. Newbie's one concern about the plan is identifying sufficient funding for start-up packages for two scientists.

One month later, the search committee has identified four proposed interviewees. Mindful of the start-up issue, Newbie instructs DeMann to contact each of the four, identify the amount of start-up funds available and, having shared that constraint, verify the candidate's continuing interest in the position. After affirming their interest, the four are invited to campus. During the interviews, both the dean and chair reiterate the limitations on start-up funding. Subsequent to the campus visits, the department quickly reaches consensus on two candidates, Piper Prime and Steve Segundi, choices that Newbie endorses. As part of the negotiations, both individuals are offered the same salary and asked to submit an itemized start-up request. Prime forwards her list, staying within the funding amount DeMann had discussed with her, while noting several unmet needs due to the budgetary constraint. However, Segundi's list totals twice that amount, well above the funds Newbie can supply. In contrast with Prime, Segundi counters with a salary request that is several thousand dollars more than was offered, noting he is weighing another offer at that amount. DeMann is anxious to secure quality hires – it is late in the recruitment season, and no other interviewed candidate was considered viable – and urges Newbie to work with the Provost to meet Segundi's requests for an increased salary and start-up allocation. Newbie responds that the salary must be maintained, given the two candidates' similar qualifications, but she will pursue the possibility of a modest increase in start-up funding. To that end, a meeting with the Associate Provost and Director of Research is swiftly arranged, and owing to a conflict in Newbie's schedule, she assigns Acting Associate Dean Augie Ressive to attend in her stead, after discussing with him her desired outcome. Newbie is therefore stunned when Ressive triumphantly informs her that, in response to his and DeMann's advocacy, the other offices have committed to supplement the college's resources in order to fund fully Segundi's start-up request. With that commitment in hand, DeMann - thrilled at the opportunity to make a strong hire and substantially augment Chemistry's research equipment - has already contacted Segundi with the good news, absent a conversation with the Dean. The candidate is now pondering his response.

Newbie considers the implications of making two hires from the same search in which one candidate – the male candidate – will receive twice the research support of his female colleague, a prospect that makes her very unhappy. Given that negotiations with Prime have been finalized, how should Newbie proceed?

Questions:

1. If Segundi accepts the position as offered by DeMann, what negative consequences might result from the disparities in the two chemists' hiring packages?
2. Are there any actions that you recommend Newbie take prior to Segundi's response to the offer?
3. How might gender dynamics have entered into this scenario?
4. What follow-up conversations do you recommend Newbie have with Rensitive and DeMann?
5. What actions might Newbie have undertaken to avoid the current situation?

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