

Towards Equitable Hiring in High Energy Physics

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Academic hiring (postdocs and tenure-track faculty and lab equivalents) typically follows a similar pattern of practices across institutions. Applicants are typically expected to provide a CV, research statement, and (where appropriate) a teaching statement while arranging for a number of letters of reference to also be submitted. Hiring committees are formed by faculty/laboratory staff who are primarily from the research area being sought in the position. A short list of candidates is chosen by evaluating those materials and a final candidate is chosen after in-person interviews which typically include a seminar presentation on the candidate's research.

The results of these hiring practices are unmistakable, with the physicists hired being non-representative in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and ability. US tenure-track faculty and laboratory staff in high-energy physics are, for example, overwhelmingly white cis-male even as students entering PhD programs are increasingly less so. Furthermore, emphasis on letters of reference heavily biases hiring towards candidates from "established" networks and institutions, further closing candidate pools.

The authors will study hiring practices in other academic disciplines as well as in the private sector that yield more equitable hiring. A focus on "journey traveled" rather than "established networks" will be researched and how this can be implemented in hiring. Research on how more equitable practices like applicant name, gender, and university affiliation removal from the hiring packet as well as de-emphasis of letters of reference will be studied. Lastly, research around whether or not implicit bias training is beneficial or detrimental to equitable hiring practices will be done. The results of these studies will yield a Snowmass white paper outlining how academic hiring in high-energy physics can be reformed to yield equitable outcomes. Such changes will also necessarily yield an influx of new ideas in the field as current practices over-select individuals from a narrow set of profiles.

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