

Transitioning from Passive to Active Diversity Recruitment Strategies

A Case Study

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The *2017 ALA Demographic Study* reveals that a significant majority of credentialed librarians, 86.7 percent, identify as white, with only 13.3 percent of the profession identifying as any racial or ethnic minority.¹ The numbers are even more stark in the area of disability status, with only 3.7 percent of credentialed respondents in the same survey identifying as having “limited” physical ability.² While significant time, research, and funding support has been dedicated to increasing diversity within the profession both before and after the release of “Diversity Counts” and its updates,³ a great deal of the available research on the topic emphasizes major initiatives, funding opportunities, or scholarship programs designed to address the perceived “pipeline problem.”⁴ Less attention has been paid to the efforts of individual institutions, particularly efforts spearheaded by individuals who do not occupy upper-level administrative positions. This chapter will address initiatives at a single institution to increase the recruitment of

diverse candidates between 2017 and 2019. Most of the initiatives described originated from individuals in middle management or nonmanagement roles, illustrating that while moving an organization forward in the area of diversity recruitment requires intentionality, it does not necessarily require organizational leaders to spearhead change.

This case study explicitly examines changes to recruitment efforts over a two-year period. In doing so, the author is aware that this chapter may be perceived by some as an exercise in diversification only and acknowledges Clara Chu's 1999 assertion that "representation alone cannot solve the problem of white privilege in LIS any more than (self-) congratulatory visions of inclusive multiculturalism can defeat historical legacies and institutional manifestations of racial discrimination."⁵ Given this, the author is keen to note that this chapter serves only as a record of how their home institution proactively sought to increase the presence of diverse candidates within its applicant pools and the organic nature in which changes were envisioned, recommended, and enacted within the specific context of recruitment. It is not intended to imply that the presence of diverse individuals indicates that a state of equality has been achieved or that recruitment can be permanently uncoupled from concerns associated with retention, equity, or true inclusion.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the UNLV University Libraries

Established in 1957, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, is a large metropolitan research university located only 1.7 miles away from the world-famous Las Vegas Strip. Recently designated R-1, it serves approximately 30,000 students⁶ and has been identified as both the best college in Nevada for LGBTQ students and among the most diverse colleges in the nation,⁷ with 61.1 percent of students identifying as racial or ethnic minorities.⁸ Additionally, UNLV has been designated both a Hispanic-Serving Institution and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution. UNLV employs 1,190 tenured and tenure-track faculty,⁹ but this population is less racially and ethnically diverse than the students that it serves.

The UNLV University Libraries consists of one main library and four branch libraries spread across both the Maryland Parkway campus (main campus) and

the growing Shadow Lane Campus (medical campus) on the city's north end. In addition to numerous student employees, the University Libraries employs 135 individuals in tenure-track academic faculty, non-tenure-track administrative faculty, and classified professional roles.¹⁰ While more ethnically and racially diverse than the national averages defined in "Diversity Counts," the employee pool of the UNLV University Libraries is still majority white and fails to fully reflect the diversity of the student body that it serves.

Enhancing Existing Passive Recruitment Tools—Refining Job Ads and Qualifications

In fall of 2017 Amy Tureen (head, Library Liaison Program) was charged with drafting advertisement material for an upcoming music and dance librarian vacancy in her department. Because she was new to the organization, Tureen was provided with text from past vacancies and instructed to adapt the content as she saw fit. In addition to providing the expected updates to portions of the job ads that detailed the assigned position responsibilities, Tureen elected to update and enhance language in the pre-populated Commitment to Diversity subsection appended to all UNLV University Libraries advertisements. Tureen reviewed similar statements found at other institutions both within the Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA), of which the UNLV University Libraries is a member,¹¹ as well as key Canadian institutions such as the University of Toronto, the University of Calgary, the University of Alberta, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Victoria, which Tureen identified as being particularly progressive in their diversity statement construction.¹² Based on this comparison, Tureen adapted the Commitment to Diversity boilerplate statement to note that the UNLV Libraries "especially welcomes applications from women, persons of color, persons with disabilities, persons of minority sexual orientation or gender identity, and others who contribute to diversification."¹³ In that same music and dance librarian advertisement, Tureen also included a preferred qualification that was new to UNLV Libraries advertisements. The new qualification called for "competence and sensitivity in working at a university in which students, faculty, and staff are broadly diverse with regard to many facets

of identity, including but not limited to gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, and religion.”¹⁴

Subsequent searches conducted by Tureen, Amanda Melilli (head, Teacher Development and Resources Library), Melissa Bowles-Terry (head, Educational Indicatives), and Mellanye Lackey (director, Health Sciences Library) resulted in an organic, undirected replication and refinement of Tureen’s new language. By January of 2019 nearly all advertisements for vacancies in the UNLV University Libraries replicated the new Commitment to Diversity language. Meanwhile, the competence and sensitivity requirement had been updated from its 2017 structure to call for “competence and sensitivity in working at a university in which students, faculty, and staff are highly diverse with regard to many facets of identity, including but not limited to gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, *income, level of educational attainment*, and religion [emphasis added].”¹⁵ Additionally, the qualification rapidly transitioned first from the “preferred qualifications” category to the “required qualifications” category and then rapidly ascended the list of required qualifications. So valued was the capacity to behave with competence and sensitivity in a diverse environment that in some cases it took primacy over even the ALA-accredited MLIS requirement that is universal to all UNLV University Libraries faculty postings. Anecdotal evidence indicates that these changes were valued by applicants, many of whom reflected positively on the inclusiveness of the language used in UNLV University Libraries job ads. The employee-driven changes, as well as applicants’ positive feedback, were ultimately noted and codified by the UNLV University Libraries’ Leadership Team, which formalized the changes of Tureen, Melilli, Bowles-Terry, Lackey, and others in a new and more inclusive job advertisement template that was finalized in mid-2019.¹⁶

During this same period, advertisements for the UNLV University Libraries began to feature significantly slimmed-down lists of required qualifications. This transition to being more conservative when quantifying the skill sets an incoming employee would be required to have upon arrival was largely driven by nonsupervisors, who used the mandatory faculty advertisement review process to question why some skills could not be learned on the job and advocated for job ads that would encourage a broader pool of applicants to apply. While the final text of all job ads remained in the hands of individual supervisors, comparisons of advertisement text before and after faculty review show that either refinement of qualifications overall or a transition of previously “required” qualifications to “preferred” qualifications occurred in the majority of advertisements.

From Passive to Active Hiring Practices—Getting Ahead of Potential Employee Concerns and Advertisement Locations

One of the most lamented challenges of recruitment at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, is the belief that candidate preconceptions about or bias against the city of Las Vegas prevent people from applying. Turn-away data for job postings does not exist, much less turn-away data that reveals a candidate's personal reasons for declining to apply, but the fear of Las Vegas's reputation as "Sin City" still looms large among recruitment officers and search committees. Demonstrating within the confines of a one-to-two-page job announcement that Las Vegas consists of more than the 4.2 miles of casinos known colloquially as "The Strip" presents even more challenges. In 2018 Amy Tureen and Lateka Grays (hospitality and career services librarian) sought to address this challenge by developing a LibGuide focused on Las Vegas amenities and services beyond The Strip.

The "Living in Las Vegas" guide, as it was eventually titled, was originally intended to be shared with on-campus candidates for vacancies solely within the Library Liaison Program. It identified fourteen areas of potential interest to candidates who were considering relocation and provided both general information and links to further resources. Areas of focus included community engagement and volunteerism (see figure 1.1), Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) resources, education, entertainment, fitness, food and beverage, government, hair care and grooming, health care, history, the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), local libraries, local news sources, and area neighborhoods.¹⁷ In addition to providing significant resources that articulated life and leisure opportunities that did not center around gambling and resort hotels, Tureen and Grays also sought to identify resources that might be of interest to candidates from minority backgrounds and that gestured toward the diversity of the Las Vegas citizenry. These resources included everything from affinity organizations in the community (LGBTQ Center of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas Indian Center, Jewish Community Center of Southern Nevada, etc.) and on campus (Women's Council, Council of African-American Professionals, UNLV Latina/o Faculty Alliance, etc.), to salons that employed stylists familiar

Living in Las Vegas: Community Engagement & Volunteerism

Resources for new residents of Las Vegas and its surrounding communities


Search this Guide Search

Welcome |
 Community Engagement & Volunteerism |
 Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) |
 Education |
 Entertainment |
 Fitness

Food & Beverage |
 Government |
 Haircare & Grooming |
 Healthcare |
 History |
 Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority |
 Libraries

Local News Sources |
 Neighborhoods |
 Insider Tips

Community Engagement & Volunteerism in Las Vegas



Designed by Peoplecreations

Affinity Organizations in Las Vegas

- 100 Black Men Las Vegas 1
- Asian Community Resource Center 1
- Asian Cultural Alliance 1
- The Center (LGBTQ+) 1
- Jack & Jill Las Vegas 1
- Jewish Community Center of Southern Nevada 1
- Las Vegas Indian Center 1
- Latino Network 1
- League of Women Voters of Southern Nevada 1
- Les Femmes Douze 1
- National Organization of Women Las Vegas 1

UNLV Organizations to Consider

- American Indian Alliance 1
- Council of African-American Professionals 1
- Group Fitness Classes 1
- Intramural Sports 1
- Mentoring Groups 1
- Organizations A-Z 1
- Orgs That Need an Advisor 1
- Outdoor Adventures 1
- Sports Clubs 1
- UNLV Latina/o Faculty Alliance 1
- Women's Council 1

Volunteer Opportunities

- VolunteerMatch 1
- Marjorie Barrick Art Museum 1
- Mob Museum 1
- USO Volunteer 1
- Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth 1
- Neon Museum 1
- FIRST Robotics 1
- UNLV Service 1
- Spread the Word Nevada 1
- Clean the World 1
- Las Vegas Book Festival 1

FIGURE 1.1

The Community Engagement and Volunteerism page from the “Living in Las Vegas” LibGuide

with the unique needs of ethnic hair types or markets catering to the culinary needs to specific cultural communities.¹⁸ While Tureen and Grays serve as the guide’s principal authors, they incorporated a feedback process that enabled their colleagues to provide recommendations of further resources for inclusion in the guide.

As with the changes to text and diction in both the Commitment to Diversity statement and the associated competency requirements, the use of the “Living in Las Vegas” guide expanded organically from its original intended use and deployment. Upon becoming aware of the existence of the guide, other department

heads requested permission to share the document with their on-campus candidates. After several requests, Tureen and Grays realized that with minimal adaptations, the guide could be shared universally. They extended this offer to Kim Kaplan (director, libraries human resources), who consented to include a link to the guide in the shared job announcement template. Concurrently, but not in collaboration with Tureen and Grays or each other, Mellanye Lackey and Jason Vaughan (division director, library technologies) were seeking to add copy to advertisements for their units that better communicated the livability of Las Vegas and reduce the emphasis on services associated with The Strip. Their text sought to instead emphasize Las Vegas's function as a culinary destination, the hub of a growing professional sports empire, and a place surrounded by national and state parks with year-round outdoor activity opportunities. The efforts of Vaughan and Lackey were combined with Tureen and Gray's guide to establish new benefits and amenities language:

The Libraries provide generous support for individual professional development, and residents of Nevada enjoy no state income tax. Home to many major annual conventions, Las Vegas is one of the best-connected cities in America and the nearest major city to several of the nation's richest natural treasures. In addition to the world-renowned Las Vegas Strip providing a variety of culinary and entertainment opportunities, Las Vegas is home to five professional athletic organizations and continues to expand local cultural opportunities, including the internationally recognized Smith Center for the Performing Arts.

To learn more about living in Las Vegas visit our guide at <https://guides.library.unlv.edu/lasvegas/welcome>.¹⁹

This new wording was formalized in the 2019 job advertisement template and now appears near the conclusion of all UNLV University Libraries job announcements.

With the job advertisement template changing and growing under the influence of multiple hands, it was unsurprising that attention swiftly turned to the topic of job advertisement placement. As with other elements of the search process, search committees and supervisors at the UNLV University Libraries have the benefit of significant latitude when identifying job advertisement

placement opportunities. By default, all advertisements for faculty positions within the UNLV University Libraries are posted by human resources personnel on job lists maintained by HigherEdJobs.com, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), the Nevada Library Association (NLA), the Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA), the Mountain Plains Library Association (MPLA), REFORMA, the Black Caucus of the American Library Association (BCALA), and the Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA).²⁰ Search committees can also request that paid ads be posted to relevant specialized job listings as appropriate, such as the Music Library Association, the Medical Library Association, the Special Libraries Association, and so on.²¹ Additionally, all employees are encouraged to share notifications of job postings with likely candidates or through any professional e-mail discussion lists they may be members of.

Between 2017 and 2019 multiple UNLV University Libraries employees explored additional alternative approaches to increasing awareness of current job openings. Brittany Paloma Fiedler (teaching and learning librarian), Chelsea Heinbach (teaching and learning librarian), and Amy Tureen explored the use of Twitter to push advertisements using the library employment-related hashtags #libraryjobs #LISjobs, and #libjobs (see figure 1.2).



Amy Tureen
@ATureen

Come join my team at UNLV (most diverse university for undergraduates, per U.S. News & World Report) as our new Sciences Librarian! Tenure track, \$65-68K, MLIS required by date of appointment (new & soon-to-be grads welcome!) higherjobs.com/institution/de...
[#libraryjobs](#) [#LISjob](#) [#libjobs](#)

11:21 AM · Aug 26, 2019 · [Twitter Web App](#)

||| [View Tweet activity](#)

29 Retweets **41** Likes

FIGURE 1.2

Posting on Twitter promoting a job opening at UNLV University Libraries

Some search committees also opted to make use of a tool developed by Twitter user @craftyhilary that provided swift access to ALA-accredited library school job lists and relevant contact people.²² Using this tool, search committees at the UNLV University Libraries were able to, for the first time, make direct and intentional contact with recent and soon-to-be grads at intuitions across the US and Canada. This in turn bolstered support for transitioning the default requirement for candidates to have a completed ALA-accredited degree in hand at time of application to requiring a completed ALA-accredited degree by date of hire.

Efforts were also made to establish an approach to job announcement sharing that was less passive and went beyond the simple broadcasting of information. Fiedler began leveraging her role as an ALA Emerging Leader, Spectrum Scholar, and REFORMA member to craft job announcements on both Twitter and via e-mail discussion lists that invited interested parties to contact her to discuss her experiences as a person of color (POC) in the employ of both the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the UNLV University Libraries. Her actions articulated a need for the organization to consider the unique concerns diverse candidates may have and to potentially build opportunities for candidates to address those concerns early in the application process. Uncertainty arose, however, regarding how to develop such a system that did not necessitate diverse employees engaging in unpaid diversity, equity, and inclusion-related labor (emotional or otherwise), particularly labor that their non-diverse colleagues would not, and perhaps could not, be asked to do. As of publication, this question has yet to be answered and remains a topic of ongoing thoughtful consideration within the organization.

Proactive Hiring—Candidate Cultivation, Task Forces, and Next Steps

Employees of the UNLV University Libraries were quick to latch on to the idea that the recruitment of new employees, particularly those who prioritized diversity in workplace, must extend beyond the passive broadcasting of new openings and hiring opportunities. Moreover, they were aware that savvy would-be employees were increasingly at risk of regarding terms like *diversity*, *equity*, and *inclusion* as standard buzzwords within job descriptions and position announcements that did little to reflect an organization's true commitments. The UNLV

University Libraries would need to demonstrate its commitment to these values while engaging not only in active hiring processes but, indeed, in *proactive* hiring processes. This would necessitate identifying potential future hires who shared diversity, equity, and inclusion values and actively inviting them to participate in appropriate searches as they came open.

Diversity-focused conferences such as the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color 2018, IDEAL/Advancing Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility in Libraries and Archives 2019, and People of Color in Library and Information Science (POCinLIS) provided robust opportunities to identify library professionals who valued increasing diversity within the profession. So too did presentations, posters, and discussion sessions focused on diversity topics at larger, less narrowly themed conferences such as ALA Annual, ACRL, or ALA Midwinter. As before, efforts to utilize these spaces as combined conference locations and recruitment grounds initially began as individual efforts. Individual employees and conference attendees would identify potential candidates and share current openings or known future openings, exchange business cards, and follow up post-conference with job ad specifics, application deadlines, and updates to proposed search time lines. This model was effective but required individuals to either be well versed in all current openings or to prioritize vacancies in their home departments or divisions. To better ensure all UNLV University Libraries openings were represented regardless of the presence of an employee-advocate, a universal employment opportunities card (see figures 1.3 and 1.4) was developed and made available to all employees.

Double-sided, colorful, portable, and universal, the recruitment cards shifted some of the responsibility for follow-up onto the potential candidate, as well as facilitated more general recruitment to the organization at large, rather than in connection with specific roles. The cards also provided a physical memento of the recruitment interaction, something not offered with alternatives such as “I’m Hiring” badges or buttons that identify potential employers but render the recruitment pitch somewhat ephemeral.

UNLV University Libraries search teams and supervisors overseeing vacancies have also experimented with direct invitations to candidates either cultivated by themselves at a conference or recommended by others within the organization. Full transparency is recommended when inviting a candidate to apply directly, including clearly identifying the individual who has recommended the candidate. This provides the potential candidate with an easily identifiable contact from whom to



FIGURE 1.3
Employment opportunities card: front



FIGURE 1.4
Employment opportunities card: back

solicit more information, including personalized information regarding why the recommender felt the candidate may be a good fit for the position and organization. In addition to providing an obvious information pathway to the candidate, this approach may offset an imbalance of unpaid recruitment work that might otherwise fall to one or a small number of employees willing to answer questions.

In May of 2019 the UNLV University Libraries Leadership Team, responding to the growing upswell of individuals seeking to improve diversity recruitment and search processes on an ad hoc basis, charged the Equity and Inclusion Committee to launch three Diverse Recruitment Task Forces. In an article articulating the origin and work of the Equity and Inclusion Committee, Brittany Paloma Fiedler, Rosan Mitola, and James Cheng defined the purpose of each individual task force as follows:

- Task Force 1 was asked to conduct a literature review of current practices for hiring faculty and staff from under-represented groups in academic libraries.
- Task Force 2 was asked to review current hiring policies and practices at UNLV and in the University Libraries.
- Task Force 3 was asked to gather data and information from recent University Libraries search committees and hires.²³

Collectively, however, the task forces worked to capture the myriad approaches and uncelebrated processes individuals had enacted to further the recruitment of diverse personnel at the UNLV University Libraries. Further, these task forces sought to identify ways in which those individual processes could potentially be systematized to better ensure that all searches prioritized diverse recruitment strategies and approaches in the same way. These efforts were intended to enhance equity across all searches as well as to lessen the burden of unpaid labor that was disproportionately affecting those most dedicated to the cause.

As of early 2020, the combined report reflecting the findings of all three task forces is still under ongoing review by the Library Leadership Team. Those most interested in continuing to increase the diversity of the UNLV University Libraries employee pool are eagerly awaiting administrative response to the extensive list of proposed changes to existing recruitment policies. Many proposed changes emphasized not only relatively simple-to-enact process changes (e.g., a uniform requirement to share interview questions in advance, the insertion of candidate meetings with the Equity and Inclusion Committee or selected affinity groups, the establishment of an antibias monitor on all search committees, etc.) but also cost-heavy policy shifts to support the ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion work of current and future employees. Some proposed policy changes included guaranteed additional funding beyond employees' annual professionalization

budgets to select diversity-oriented conferences, a commitment for the UNLV University Libraries to serve as an official sponsor or host for diversity-oriented conferences, and a process by which the labor of employees heavily involved with diverse recruiting can be acknowledged financially.

These recommendations and those like them reflect the growing desire for the UNLV University Libraries to more generously acknowledge the work of individuals who promote organizational priorities. These recommendations should not be viewed, however, as an indication that the previously successful model of organic change is at an end. Rather, the process is cyclical. Much as changes to the competence and sensitivity qualification were edited, retooled, and replicated by individuals before being formalized into expected practice by human resources and leadership, so too some of the active and proactive processes developed by individuals are transitioning into a phase wherein they could potentially be established as organization-wide norms with the full weight of administrative expectation behind them. Codification of this previous work will then free its developers to identify a new area of focus for iterative improvement and allowing the cycle to continue indefinitely.

Tips for Employees of All Levels to Promote Diverse Hiring Practices

As is evident by the work of the employees of the UNLV University Libraries, envisioning and enacting change in organizational approaches to enhancing diversity recruitment processes do not need to live only with those empowered to establish an administrative mandate. Rather, this vital work is incumbent on employees of all levels regardless of their formal organizational power to enact change. Potential first steps for employees at a variety of levels are suggested below.

Actions for Employees without Hiring Responsibilities

- Participate in any available review process for job advertisements. Make suggestions for changes that help develop advertisements that are more

inclusive and reflect your organization's diversity-related goals and values

- Take an active part in sharing information about current openings in your organization; share advertisements on your social media feeds and with e-mail discussion lists you are active in.
- Invite individuals whose work you admire to apply for open positions at your organization. Alternatively, forward recommendations for specific potential candidates to search committees or supervisors with current or upcoming openings.
- Offer to answer questions candidates may have about the organization despite not serving on the search committee. These conversations should be confidential and can be held outside of the confines of an on-campus interview.
- Request that your employer provide resources such as handouts or “we’re hiring” buttons and information regarding current and upcoming searches to employees attending conferences so that you can participate in proactive recruitment.

Actions for Employees with Hiring Responsibilities

- Regularly review job advertisements for language that invites minoritized communities to apply and provides an accurate reflection of the equity, diversity, and inclusion values of your organization. Terminology changes rapidly, so commit to reviewing boilerplate advertisement text at least twice a year.
- Require search committees in your assigned areas to commit to best practices that reduce bias and seek to give candidates an equal footing. This can include using rubrics, distributing questions to candidates in advance, making use of a neutral third-part bias observer during search committee meetings, and so on.
- Commit to asking candidates about how they will support diversity and inclusion efforts at your institution if hired. Commit to asking versions of this question more than once and at all stages of the interview process to underline the importance of these values within your organization.

- Stay up to date on the best practices for hiring and decreasing implicit bias during the search process. As an employee with hiring responsibilities, it is your obligation to keep up to date on this topic and craft search processes that provide candidates with a fair and equitable search experience.
- Ensure that draft job advertisements in your area are open to comment and review by all employees. Take provided feedback seriously and adjust tone, word choice, and stated qualifications.

Actions for Employees with Administrative Authority

- Make increasing diversity a priority in both your organization's goal statements and planned budget expenditures. Provide funding for necessary cultural humility training, sponsor or host diversity-focused conferences, and underwrite travel and registration fees associated with diversity-focused conferences and learning opportunities.
- Honor the unpaid labor of employees who work beyond their assigned job duties in support of equity, diversity, and inclusion goals. If policies permit, pay people for their labor. If additional pay or funding is not available, publicly acknowledge their work. Consider recommending these individuals for awards so that their labor is not rendered invisible.
- Establish a committee focused on equity, diversity, and inclusion work. Meet with this committee regularly to discuss concerns, proposals, and so on. Active engagement with this committee and its work will communicate that diversity work is taken seriously by the very highest levels of administration.
- Participate in the candidate search process at all stages. This includes providing feedback to draft job ads, attending candidate presentations and Q&A sessions, and providing candidate feedback. Ask questions about how candidates will support diversity and inclusion initiatives and what goals in these areas are particularly important to them.
- Make yourself available to answer candidate questions, including very direct questions. Know how you will answer if a candidate asks specifically how you support minoritized candidates as well as what you hope to do in the future to support marginalized employees.

Notes

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