Reducing Stereotypic Biases in Hiring
Cornell ADVANCE Center

A. Findings from research in social psychology on stereotypic biases

1. Gender stereotypes or "schemas" bias the evaluations that are made of individuals, often in "male advantaging" ways.
2. Gender stereotypes function as cognitive shortcuts.
3. Stereotyping often occurs out of awareness.
4. Both men and women are prone to biases.
5. Even well-intentioned, non-sexist people are capable of bias.
6. Biasing processes are more extreme when …
   a. individuals are tired, rushed or otherwise cognitively burdened.
   b. women are rare in a unit ("tokens").
   c. jobs are "male-typed."
   d. valid performance information is lacking.
   e. criteria are vague or ambiguous.
7. The good news is that biases can be reduced.

B. How stereotypic biases disadvantage women

1. Stereotyping leads to the use of a gender differentiated double standard for assessing competence and ability.
2. Stereotypic biases can be embedded in seemingly objective supporting materials (recommendation letters, teaching evaluations).
3. Stereotyping can result in seeing successful women as unfeminine or difficult (the "double bind").
4. Stereotyping can result in shifting evaluation criteria for women and men.
5. Stereotyping can result in even harsher biases against women who are mothers.

C. What can be done?

1. Underlying principle—disrupt the tendency to use stereotypes as cognitive shortcuts.
2. Strategies/solutions
   a. Devote adequate time.
   b. Avoid premature ranking of the applicants.
   c. Read candidates work rather than relying solely on support materials
   d. Critically analyze supporting materials (recommendation letters, teaching evaluations, research statements).
   e. Be accountable—be prepared to explain your decisions and rankings
   f. Be transparent—what are the criteria, is it the same for men and women, is it the right criteria?
   g. Structure diverse groups and allow for maximum participation.
   h. Think about how the job ad and descriptions might impact the applicant pool and perceived fit of the candidates.
   i. Consider using a candidate evaluation form (see attached for example).

For more information about effective search practices and avoiding bias, please visit our website at
http://advance.cornell.edu.