AVOID EXTREME MODIFIERS
“BEST OF THE BEST”, “OFF THE CHARTS”, ETC.

Avoid phrases like “best of the best” “off the charts”, “world-class” or “unparalleled”. Research shows that these kinds of terms tend to prevent women as well as men from applying. Anyone who has been raised/socialized to downplay their expertise, or not “toot their own horn”, will be less likely to categorize themselves in these ways, even when they are very highly qualified. Suggested alternatives would be: “truly innovative”, “a genuine curiosity”, “highly respected”, “excellent, thoughtful, or perceptive [insert type of skills]”, “dedicated or committed to creative problem solving and getting things done”.

Also avoid words or phrases like “perfectionists” or “forever tinkering”. Highly-qualified talent that doesn’t self-identify this way – that sees themselves as having a broader set of valuable skills – can be dissuaded by this language. Suggested alternatives would be: “enjoys tinkering and teamwork to arrive at solutions to critical problems” (or any similar kind of combination that describes a broader set of applicable skills).

AVOID CREATING REQUIREMENTS THAT CAN BE MET BY ALTERNATIVE MEANS

Specific degrees, must have knowledge of organization, etc.

Avoid requiring specific types of degrees, unless that is a job specific requirement, as in the case of nurses. Try to create broad inclusion of possibilities in terms of degree and years of experience or types of experience. Avoid indications that the candidate must have knowledge of the University of Wisconsin specifically, unless that really is the only applicable knowledge-base. Be careful about requiring someone to use their own vehicle, when they may be able to arrange for alternative transportation. And above all else, be sure the skills and knowledge required for the job are tied back to the duties indicated in the job description itself.

AVOID GENDER-SPECIFIC PRONOUNS (HE OR SHE), AND IMPROVE BALANCE OF “MASCULINE/FEMININE” ASSOCIATED LANGUAGE

Subtle, often overlooked use of language can dissuade people with certain identities from applying

The goal is to achieve a balance of language. It may seem obvious, but this kind of mistake is more common than you think. Rephrase to avoid the need for specific pronouns. In the examples below, we are not suggesting that one should never use words like “manage”, “resolves”, “analyzes”, but that an overuse of these words can be problematic. It’s also important to remember that in calling these “masculine” and “feminine” words, we are talking about historical associations, rather than saying that these things actually are masculine or feminine. In reality, we know that both men and women can be good at managing and analyzing or understanding and nurturing.

Use “they/them” gender neutral pronouns!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEFORE X</th>
<th>RECOMMENDATION ✓</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manages the successful resolution of client issues, including competing demands, sensitive situations, and conflicts with other groups.</td>
<td>Thoughtfully works with the client to resolve issues, including competing demands, sensitive situations, and conflicts with other groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilizes team, establishing the tactical plans, projects and objectives needed to accomplish these goals.</td>
<td>Mobilizes and encourages team, establishing the specific (or concrete, day-to-day) plans, projects and objectives needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactively manages the talent in their area, establishing performance goals and objectives, providing ongoing constructive formal feedback and implementing development plans.</td>
<td>Proactively develops the talent in their area; co-constructing performance goals, objectives and development plans, and providing ongoing constructive performance feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manages and resolves the diverse perspectives of stakeholders.</td>
<td>Understands diverse perspectives of stakeholders and works with them to resolve differences.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CHECKLIST TO HELP REMOVE UNCONSCIOUS BIAS
SPECIFICALLY IN JOB ADVERTISEMENTS AND DESCRIPTIONS

A re all of the “required” criteria listed necessary for doing this job well? Are some of the criteria really preferred and not required? For example, do you list certain programming languages or certain skills as “required” that could actually be learned in the job? If some criteria needs to be changed to listed as “preferred”, make this change in the description or remove the criteria completely.

Do any of the criteria reflect typical assumptions about the “kind of person” you think usually does this job? For example, do you say that you want an assertive, hard-driving leader when other leadership styles would also work? Decide which characteristics or criteria are truly necessary for the job and whether they reflect subtle biases about who traditionally does this job. If subtle bias exists in the criteria, alter the description to include more types of people.

Does the description contain an imbalance of masculine or feminine-associated language and describe people rather than behaviors (e.g. language such as “high-powered”, “action-oriented”, “people-person”)? If so, revise description to better balance the language and describe behaviors.

Could additional criteria be included that would open up possibilities for a wider range of candidates who might still do an excellent job? Could additional criteria be included to allow candidates to demonstrate important life experiences that may not show up on traditional resumes? If so, add this additional criteria.

Does the description avoid extreme modifiers, such as “world-class” unparalleled” or “rock star”? If so, great job!

Do you include and value criteria such as “ability to work on a diverse team or with a diverse range of people?” If so, nice job!

TIP SHEET: REDUCING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN RECRUITING EFFORTS

5 TIPS TO HELP YOU GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR SEARCH

TIP 1: ADVERTISE AND RECRUIT IN VENUES THAT TARGET DIVERSE AUDIENCES.
Take stock of your current recruiting venues and plan strategic efforts to reach underrepresented groups that you currently do not reach.

TIP 2: IMPLEMENT OR ADVOCATE FOR DEPARTMENT PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS TO TECHNICAL CAREERS.
Establish policies that encourage hiring candidates from a wider range of schools or from alternative pathways. Many companies also offer opportunities for current employees to move from non-technical to technical positions. Encourage these internal employees. If not such opportunities exist, work with appropriate company personnel to explore ways to implement these opportunities.

TIP 3: ENSURE THAT JOB OPPORTUNITIES OR DESCRIPTIONS ALLOW FLEXIBILITY IN SCREENING AND SELECTING CANDIDATES.
Only criteria that are absolutely necessary for the job should be listed as “required” qualifications. List other desired criteria as “preferred”; this allows the committee maximum flexibility in considering different combinations of strengths. Also include criteria that account for “nontraditional” evidence of strengths (e.g., demonstrated success at overcoming adverse circumstances might be as strong or stronger evidence of future job success than having attended a “top school”).

TIP 4: EXAMINE JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS/DESCRIPTIONS FOR BIAS.
Are all of the criteria listed truly relevant for the job? Does the language subtly reflect stereotypes (e.g. language such as “high-powered”, “results-driven”, “action-oriented”, “people-person”)? Research shows that these types of phrases tend to conjure up gendered or race stereotypes of what it looks like to be “action-oriented”, or a “people-person”. This can cause interviewers to miss other, non-traditional ways of being “action-oriented”. It also can cause some high-quality candidates to self-select out of these positions. If such a candidate is “high-powered” or a “people-person” but not in traditional ways, they may not think of themselves in these terms or may not have been told that they have these talents.

TIP 5: EDUCATE AND TRAIN INTERVIEWERS AND/OR SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABOUT UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN RECRUITING, INTERVIEWING, AND SELECTION PROCESSES.
Use resources such as the Implicit Association Test to educate interviewers about ways to reduce these biases.