

Goal:

To improve the fairness and transparency of the process of distributing named professorships, with the expectation that better practices will lead to more equity in their distribution.

Considerations and challenges:

- There is substantial heterogeneity in the requirements for named professorships dictated by the specific details of the endowment, ranging from no criteria to strict criteria.
- There are also substantial differences in each department's practices and approach to distributing named professorships, from a tendency to save them for retention/recruitment, to the opposite.
- An important consideration is departmental relations: Norms for the distribution process have been in place for a long time and drastic changes could lead to resentment among those who have been waiting to receive a named professorship.
- In some cases, the selection does not normally involve a department-level consultation at all – for example, when the named professorship is already tied to a recruitment or retention case, or when the criteria do not locate the professorship within a single department. In such cases, the recommended process for selection within departments (detailed below) will not apply, but the principles of equity and fairness should still be taken into account by the EVP.

Current process and status:

- The EVP makes all final decisions about the distribution of named professorships, typically relying on recommendations from departments.
- Currently, recommendations for the assignment of named professorships are typically made by those individuals who already hold a named professorship. The department chair (who may or may not be included in the meeting and the vote), typically writes a report conveying the qualifications of the selected individual. The report typically does not list the eligible candidates or describe the process, the criteria for selection, or the nature of the discussion. Currently there are also no guidelines to encourage diversity or equity. The process as detailed in the faculty handbook (<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/vpaa/handbook/instruction.html>):
The Trustees make all appointments to named professorships. Nominations normally originate from the deans and vice presidents and require the approval of the Provost and President before they can be submitted to the Trustees. Before deciding whether to make a nomination, the dean or vice president may, at his or her discretion, consult with the named professors of equivalent or higher rank in the department or school in which the candidate will serve. If the number of named professors in a department or school is too few to ensure that the nomination has

adequate support to merit consideration, the dean or vice president may seek the advice of named professors of equivalent or higher rank in cognate disciplines.

- There are currently a total of 193 named professorships in A&S. Many of these are in specific subfields.
- At present, fewer than 5 named professorships come with any material benefits to the appointed faculty member.
- As detailed in the recent equity report, there is a gap between the proportion of tenured women and URM faculty in departments and the proportion of faculty holding a named professorship. This is likely influenced by norms that privilege seniority and by implicit bias in selection coupled with lack of transparency in current procedures. The severity of the discrepancy varies widely across departments.

Approach:

The following recommended procedure is intended to bear on the process by which a department arrives at a recommendation for the EVP. It is guided by two principles:

- (1) Minimal intervention for maximum benefit. We offer a first step towards increasing transparency and consistency of the process with the assumption that small improvements in the process can lead to meaningful changes in the outcome.
- (2) Generality and flexibility. We offer general recommendations that seek to improve the process overall while accommodating the different needs, requirements and norms across specific endowments and each department.

To adhere to these principles, the recommended procedure (detailed below) adopts an approach similar to current practices in faculty hiring committees. As with faculty searches, we focus on increasing awareness of and accountability in the process itself while allowing for heterogeneity between the different searches and across departments. We believe this approach offers an improvement in the process and an increase in transparency and fairness, while allowing each department to maintain its own norms. We recommend that each department state its own goals and norms in its by-laws.

Recommendation

1. **Department allocation.** The process below applies to named professorships that sit within departments. Because in some cases named professorships can be moved between departments, the first step will be a consultation with A&S verifying the relevant department for any new or open named chairs.
2. **Committee.** The Department Chair assembles a committee of the current chair holders, and, ideally, an outside member from another department.

The Chair appoints one member of the committee to serve as a diversity advocate. The chair then provides the committee with the following information:

- a. A detailed description of the endowment, backed by Endowment Compliance.
 - b. The current status of named chairs in the department, including a list of current chair holders and the subarea of the held chair.
 - c. Guidelines and requirements for the process.
3. **Selection process – initial report.** A representative from the selection committee is asked to prepare an initial report before proceeding with selection of a candidate. This initial report is vetted by the department Chair and by the divisional Dean before the committee proceeds with its recommendation. This initial report should include the following information:
- a. A copy of the description of the endowment specifications (as provided by the Chair).
 - b. The broadest list of candidates under consideration, given the criteria.
 - c. The name of a designated diversity representative on the committee.
4. **Selection process - final report.** With approval of the Chair and divisional Dean on the initial report, the committee proceeds to make a recommendation. The committee submits a final report about the procedure and recommendation to the EVP, including a brief description of the process, a list of the candidates under consideration, and justification of why the nominee was elevated from this list.
5. **Final decision.** As before, the final nomination is made by the EVP, who communicates the selection to the trustees for appointment.