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Authors

Garcia Mazari, Sheila Araceli
Bélanger, Annie
Ngassa, Bruna

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Toward a Growth-Based Paradigm

Centering Candidate Experiences in the Hiring and Onboarding Processes

Annie Bélanger, Sheila Garcia-Mazari, and Bruna Ngassa

Organizations spend a lot of time recruiting the best candidate, yet often leave onboarding as an afterthought. Further, they may treat inclusion and equity as work that gets added on, rather than embedded in their efforts for diverse hiring. This disconnect is surprising considering that human resources is one of the largest expense categories in most libraries. Focusing in, hiring and onboarding are expensive endeavors that should allow both the organization and the candidate to make an informed decision about the path forward, foster belonging, and demonstrate the organizational culture of the hiring institution.

The Hiring to Onboarding life cycle model provided in figure 3.1 is used to articulate the major phases that an individual goes through in working with an organization from initial attraction to onboarding. These include: (1) attraction, (2) recruitment, (3) selection, (4) hiring, and (5) onboarding.
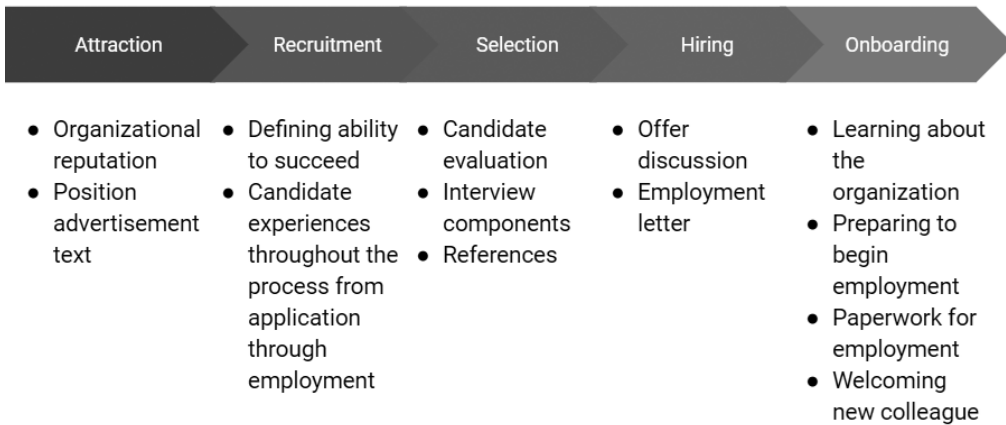
Hiring to Onboarding Life Cycle

Attraction	Recruitment	Selection	Hiring	Onboarding
• Organizational reputation • Position advertisement text	• Defining ability to succeed • Candidate experiences throughout the process from application through employment	• Candidate evaluation • Interview components • References	• Offer discussion • Employment letter	• Learning about the organization • Preparing to begin employment • Paperwork for employment • Welcoming new colleague

Figure 3.1. Hiring to onboarding life cycle[1]

This framework grounds an organization in viewing the hiring and onboarding processes as distinct components of a continuum, whereby organizations can engage actively in creating equitable and accessible approaches that center candidate experiences and promote inclusion. Additionally, organizations can use accountability, accessibility, and equity as ways to decenter whiteness and white-coded professionalism in each of these stages.

In this chapter, the authors will discuss their work critically examining existing hiring processes, designing an inclusive recruitment approach, and implementing a new growth-based hiring and onboarding structure. Through a case study of the practices implemented at Grand Valley State University (GVSU), a public liberal education university located in the Midwest, the authors will also illustrate how they centered an empathetic approach toward both applicants and new colleagues as they engaged in these processes. To conclude, the authors will provide practical tips, tools, and reflective prompts for readers to explore their local hiring and onboarding practices in order to center empathy as a way to advance inclusive and equitable processes.

Problem Definition

As it stands, hiring and onboarding processes in higher education institutions and academic libraries are employer-centered and serve as gatekeeping mechanisms, particularly for members of historically underrepresented groups. Many of the success indicators that search committees and hiring managers seek align with a culture of whiteness, further rooted in classism. These indicators include a focus on quantity of work over quality,

which does not take into account the impact of the work and what it can communicate about the candidate's values; the need for a written record to validate completed work, which further erases the invisible that which often falls on women and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in the academy,[2] and the belief that there is one right way to do things, which stifles a culture of growth and innovation. All of these are indicators of white supremacy culture.[3] Further, these indicators reinforce the hidden curriculum of unspoken norms, which prevent individuals who are not privy to these norms from flourishing in academic work environments.[4]

Whiteness is anchored in the reality that a "global history of colonization and imperialism of generally lighter peoples over darker, discrimination on the basis of skin color and other manifestations of prejudice have played a pivotal role in shaping the world."[5] Whiteness centers the customs, culture, and beliefs of white people as the standard operating approach, which is then used to judge all other groups.[6] As whiteness centers the superiority of white norms and behaviors, then whiteness can logically be equated with white supremacy culture. Tema Okun defines white supremacy as

> the ways in which the ruling class elite or the power elite in the colonies of what was to become the United States used the pseudoscientific concept of race to create whiteness and a hierarchy of racialized value in order to disconnect and divide white people from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).[7]

Libraries' patriarchal and classist roots are intertwined with and reinforced by white supremacy. To disrupt these traits, the majority of the profession, which benefits from white supremacy, will need to deliberately and intentionally recognize the entanglements in systems and practices.

As articulated above, whiteness favors responsibility over accountability. While employees are responsible for things, they are accountable to and for people. Accountability becomes critical in organizations that are seeking to decenter whiteness and anchor in equity. Shannon Perez-Darby shares the definition that "accountability is taking responsibility for your choices and the consequences of those choices."[8] Kaba quotes Connie Burk's definition which frames accountability as "an internal resource for recognizing and redressing harms we have caused to ourselves and others."[9] The authors of this chapter argue that within the context of organizations, accountability encompasses fulfilling job responsibilities as well as impact on the workplace culture.

In further considering accountability, particularly for white-bodied colleagues, there is a need to differentiate between discomfort, hurt, and harm. For the purpose of organizational change, we can define

- discomfort as being uncomfortable, which does not produce damage;
- hurt as being often unintentional, which produces repairable damage; and

- harm as being often intentional, which produces damage that is frequently permanent.

In all cases, accountability will mean owning impact and seeking to repair the relationship.

In order to create processes that center candidate growth, learning, and well-being, key stakeholders in the onboarding and hiring processes must critically evaluate and examine their approach toward reimagining progressively inclusive practices. This includes shifting from a culture where the candidate must prove their worth to one where employers also feel accountable to candidates, focusing on their needs as individuals and creating an environment where they can fully communicate their potential for success in a role. As candidates make the transition to employees, the onboarding process plays a key role in their retention; therefore, the onboarding process requires the same level of evaluation and adaptation to inclusion and equity principles.

Literature Review

To survey the ongoing conversation in library workplaces regarding candidate-centered experiences, hiring and onboarding practices were examined, focusing on the role of libraries in higher education and their understanding of workplace culture. In conducting the literature review, the authors first defined critical terms to support an understanding of the problem. The critical terms defined include *cohort hiring*—which is the process of hiring candidates in groups, rather than individually—in order to foster a collaborative experience and create a diverse pool of candidates.[10] *Onboarding* refers to the integration of employees into the workplace community with the goal of making them feel a sense of belonging and community.[11] These key terms contextualize current library practices in implementing growth-based structures and designing inclusive recruitment approaches.

From there, the authors interrogated the centering of whiteness in the workplace and the institutional practices stemming from a culture of whiteness. Tema Okun's definition of white supremacy connects to the problem of reconciling inherent power differences between hiring committees and candidates, which are amplified for BIPOC candidates. Though many higher institutions have diversity, equity, and inclusion statements on their home pages, many job interviews enforce listing relevant experiences to demonstrate candidates' commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, which instead borders on performative.[12] Many of these problems can be attributed to the idea of vocational awe, which is a set of values and beliefs libraries have about themselves being inherently good and above critique.[13] This notion is a clear problem as it prevents libraries from growing with the times and addressing the current issues relating to race and equity.

Lastly, the authors reviewed literature that addressed whiteness and power dynamics within librarianship. Librarianship is a profession dominated by whiteness, historically lacking diversity when it comes to librarians of color. This power structure exists to categorize individuals as either being close to whiteness, and therefore acceptable, or being different and

therefore being excluded.[14] Many of the systems in place in libraries are designed to benefit white employees, casting aside minorities or making things harder for them. Examples of this white normativity can be seen when a librarian of color is mistaken for a library assistant by a white colleague or when nonbinary librarians are made to choose between binary gender groupings.[15] Many organizations will have job postings that enforce hiring power dynamics, such as asking for five years of experience for an entry-level position.[16] These instances of white normativity contribute to the low retention rate for BIPOC candidates and discourage them from applying to these jobs. Many workplace environments give the impression that they are benevolent institutions but oftentimes mistreat their employees due to unconscious bias, leading to self-doubt and insecurity within individuals.[17]

The literature demonstrates the reasons why it is important to implement new strategies in library hiring and onboarding practices. These new practices should be ones that offer support to candidates, financially and otherwise, as well as create safe, open spaces for BIPOC colleagues. Yet a survey published in 2021 about Carnegie Research Libraries' onboarding initiatives showed that "library-based diversity and inclusion training is less widespread than hoped."[18] Additionally, Kung, Fraser, and Winn's systematic review found most efforts focused on recruitment of early career librarians and "located few publications about efforts to retain diverse librarians once they enter the profession or about career advancement initiatives to recruit them into leadership positions." [19] These findings showcase that this is an ongoing issue in libraries, one that requires strategies that integrate recruitment within a whole person approach to support the professional success of a candidate.

Discussion

There are many leading practices that can help organizations develop more inclusive and equity-based processes throughout the employee life cycle, with a focus on recruitment to onboarding. At GVSU, a predominantly white, large, regional public institution located on Anishinaabe land within what is currently called West Michigan, the University Libraries worked closely with the Division of Inclusion and Equity to reframe our hiring process to center on the candidate experience, their ability to succeed in the interview and the role, and to align and advance the libraries' organizational values. As a result, the hiring process was reframed through the lens of equity, care, and integrity (where possible), and with a learner-centered mentality, ensuring that candidates were reviewed through a growth lens, instead of focusing solely on prior experience. Additionally, the University Libraries examined the organizational readiness for inclusive hiring as well as manager preparation.

Preparing for Change

To center candidate experience through the earliest stages of the employee life cycle, the first step was to question the local practices to articulate a clear purpose between each

search component and the collective ability to make a decision to hire or join the organization. In parallel, we invited colleagues to reflect on when they had great experiences, as well as negative ones, within organizations. The key concerns that surfaced were the lack of communications, hiring as a black box, awkward interactions with future colleagues, and a feeling that only the worthy survive the process.

To address these concerns, the University Libraries started working on our organizational culture to ensure our lived values were woven throughout our work, to create accountability for interactions with colleagues, and to focus on inclusion and equity before diversity. Campus partners offered training to library colleagues on why inclusive hiring was important, what role they played, and how they could actively mitigate their bias as they engaged with candidates. The training also covered best practices for interacting with candidates using high empathy, kindness, and active communications. Lastly, the training covered what not to do in terms of questions to candidates, scheduling pace, and so on.

The University Libraries also did process mapping[*] to identify hiring pain points and how to engage colleagues appropriately in a process that focused on what candidates need to make an informed decision. Pain points included items within the libraries' control and some within the campus's control. Here are the key pain points, who had ownership, and how we worked to resolve them:

- *Lack of centralized support*. Owned by the libraries. Dean's office centralized coordination, and over time, the assistant to the dean became involved in all visiting and permanent role searches.

- *Long and delayed search processes*. Owned by the libraries and campus. The libraries altered their procedures to ensure that all interview materials and associated calendar holds are in place before the ad closes. This enables the libraries to move to phone interviews promptly and share the time line for the second round of interviews with candidates early in the process. In parallel, campus implemented several design-thinking efforts to reduce duplication of efforts and bottlenecks. Current librarian searches now take three to four months on average from opening to offer, whereas past searches lasted six to nine months.

- *Inconsistent materials used with candidates*. Owned by the libraries. The appropriate associate deans are involved in reviewing materials to ensure qualifications are covered, values in actions surfaced, and equity exists in the questions.

- *Lack of transparency for candidates*. Owned by the campus. Libraries created a public hiring FAQ to surface difficult-to-find information as well as to share information that is critical to candidates and is not to be added to ads per campus procedures. The libraries advocated for changes to campus procedures, leading to changes such having the ability to share salary ranges in ads.

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* The tool is discussed later in the chapter.

- *Onboarding inconsistencies*. Owned by the libraries and campus. Libraries have iterated on the onboarding process with the help of newer colleagues as well as created a supervisor's guide to onboarding to ensure shared understanding. Additionally, the dean's office coordinates the early onboarding to ensure that procedural steps, such as tax paperwork, are completed promptly. Next, the libraries will build an onboarding approach for new managers. In parallel, the libraries advocated to campus to make improvements to shared campus-wide onboarding processes.

Ultimately, the process mapping had one overarching theme—all of the hiring and onboarding processes need to center the experience of the individuals engaging in them. To this end, the libraries decided to leverage empathy and care to create a human-centered approach to these processes.

Engaging with Candidates

The University Libraries developed a high-empathy approach[†] to engaging with candidates from the time of application to extending an offer.[‡] A high-empathy approach allows for an individual to move beyond what they may consider to be a logical or reasonable reaction or response to an issue and force themselves to think about alternate approaches rooted in understanding the emotional aspects of that decision.[20] By using a high-empathy approach, the libraries can center the experience and needs of the candidate to foster their ability to success, build trust with them, and ensure an accessible process.
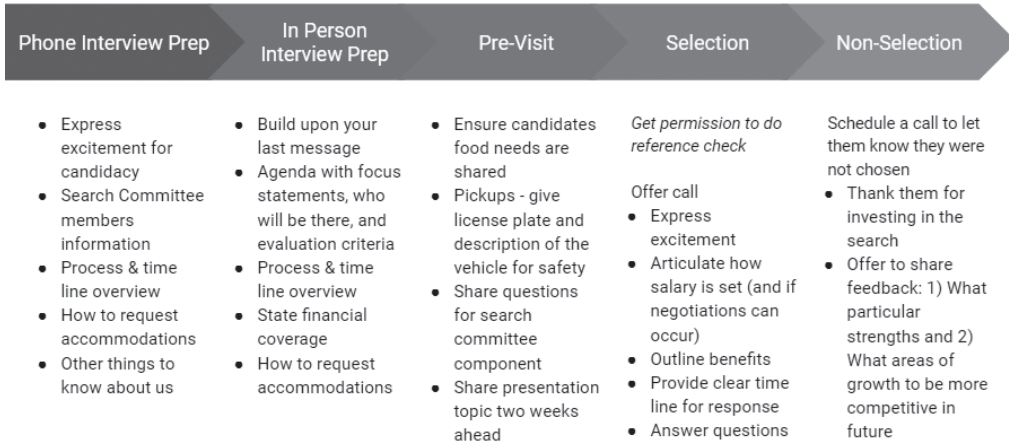
The high-empathy approach translates to a higher number of detailed communications with the candidates throughout the hiring process as outlined in figure 3.2. In each communication, the libraries provide a lot of information about where they are in the process, what is next, how to get support, and who to reach out to. Ahead of interviews, the libraries will share what criteria are used for the evaluation; who will be present and why; what components will occur and why; and tips for a successful interview. The libraries share their organizational values and provide links to information a candidate might need, rather than having the candidate expend energy to learn about the libraries by digging across organizational websites. Additionally, as part of the interview invitation e-mails, the assistant to the dean or the search chair also offers the ability for candidates to ask questions and asks that they share dietary needs and preferences and ask for accommodations—sharing details of accessibility features already in place. At the conclusion of the process, the search chair offers to provide the candidate with feedback about strengths noted and ways to be more competitive in future searches—in the e-mail communication

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† High empathy, also commonly referred to as radical empathy, includes both cognitive empathy, whereby "you understand another person's situation on an intellectual level," and emotional empathy, whereby "you go beyond imagining what a person must feel, and actually experience those same emotions yourself." (Jacqui Paterson, "Radical Empathy: What Is It and What Are the Benefits?" Happiness.com, accessed July 10, 2023, https://www.happiness.com/magazine/relationships/radical-empathy-extreme-what-is-it.)

‡ Eventually, the University Libraries broadened that to include pre-boarding, onboarding, and a one-year check-in.

for first-round (screening) interviews and in a phone call for second-round interviews—as well as solicits feedback the candidate would like to give us.

What To Expect: Timely Communications

Phone Interview Prep	In Person Interview Prep	Pre-Visit	Selection	Non-Selection
• Express excitement for candidacy • Search Committee members information • Process & time line overview • How to request accommodations • Other things to know about us	• Build upon your last message • Agenda with focus statements, who will be there, and evaluation criteria • Process & time line overview • State financial coverage • How to request accommodations	• Ensure candidates food needs are shared • Pickups - give license plate and description of the vehicle for safety • Share questions for search committee component • Share presentation topic two weeks ahead	*Get permission to do reference check* Offer call • Express excitement • Articulate how salary is set (and if negotiations can occur) • Outline benefits • Provide clear time line for response • Answer questions	Schedule a call to let them know they were not chosen • Thank them for investing in the search • Offer to share feedback: 1) What particular strengths and 2) What areas of growth to be more competitive in future

Bélanger, Annie and Gorecki, Preethi, "ACRL Diversity Alliance Webinar - Kindly Hire Me: The Process and Impact of Inclusive Hiring" (2022). *Presentations*. https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/library_presentations/102

Figure 3.2. Inclusive and timely communications with candidate

Creating Clear Accountability

To ensure that the high-empathy approach occurred, the libraries defined clear roles and accountabilities for hiring managers and search chairs, as well as redefined what is considered a successful search.[*] The search committee is responsible for identifying, recruiting, and selecting applicants who will be able to succeed in the role based on the required and preferred qualifications. The search committee needs to be charged with the responsibility to provide a fair, equitable, and inclusive search without unlawful discrimination. In this effort, the organization must foster active allies and provide appropriate training; otherwise, it will fall short of its goal by continuing to adopt processes centered around gatekeeping. Therefore, it is important that, at a minimum, search chairs are trained in identifying and calling in bias, as well as meeting the need for a positive, accessible candidate experience. Additionally, search committees must be trained on the steps expected in the search process, the decisions made at each step, and their accountability for a positive candidate experience.

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[*] We redefined a successful search as one where the candidate has the ability to succeed, rather than having a proven track record or simply being the most qualified on paper. In parallel, a failed search is one where we fail to hire for success, not one where we fail to hire. Our reasoning was that privilege compounds itself.

Search committees are accountable for leveraging leading practices in preparing and enacting the search process. The search committee should collaboratively develop and implement a recruitment plan; write the job ad; create interview questions for phone screenings and in-person visits; and finalize an agenda for the interview day ahead of starting to review any candidate materials. Another leading practice is to challenge interviewing habits by asking the search committee to articulate why each portion of the interview exists and how it will support the decision-making process of the search committee and the candidates. This articulation can be turned into focus statements for each component of the agenda to support candidates' understanding of expectations and associated evaluation criteria. Another leading practice is to ensure that questions focus on required and preferred qualifications by having the search committee indicate which qualifications are being addressed and develop success criteria[†] for a strong answer.

Outside of the search committee members, active allies[‡] are critical to advocate for and continue the organizational change needed to foster equity and active inclusion among colleagues and in institutional systems. Allies can be cultivated by demonstrating that the organization values equity and inclusion and by building these into lived values and expectations for workplace behaviors. Over time, as equity and inclusion are part of core hiring expectations, more individuals will come to share the commitment. Additionally, when an organization embeds expectations around equity and inclusion into performance reviews, it begins to align its incentive structure with expectations of the workplace, thereby creating a virtuous cycle. Organizations also need to provide continued development of knowledge and skills related to equity and accessibility as well as methods for calling in bias and holding colleagues accountable for their behavior. Lastly, organizations should consider how job descriptions support and make explicit their commitment to equity and inclusion.

Supporting Candidates

Supporting candidates begins with the job ad and associated materials. The language used throughout and in the materials is another critical component to both equitable and inclusive searches as well as high-empathy approaches. The feelings of belonging that can be elicited by a job ad are important in creating job appeal; language that appears to cater to one identity creates a barrier for applicants of other identities.[22] In developing written materials, consider who is positively or negatively affected by the language, how organizational values and mission are demonstrated in the writing, and if the qualifications are truly the minimum needed to succeed within the first year. Additionally, consider highlighting not only what the organization and the job needs, but also what the candidate

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† Success criteria are the concepts that the committee agrees the question is seeking in a strong answer. To develop them, a search committee should consider the aptitudes to meet a qualification as well as the organizational values that could be applied—for example, time management, clear communication, understanding of impact on others, empathy.

‡ An ally is someone who uses their privilege and power to act in support of a structurally excluded group.

may gain from working in this position. It is also important to provide clarity around compensation and benefits. Throughout the process, the language used should demonstrate the lived values of the organization.

When organizations are seeking to hire colleagues who will be able to succeed in the role, they must acknowledge that interview skills do not always translate to job success. To shift their approach, search committees and colleagues should focus on supporting the candidates' comfort and needs so that candidates' knowledge and values can shine through. There are many simple practices that can support candidates: (1) simplifying questions; (2) sharing questions ahead; (3) developing question prompts to help reframe or dig deeper; (4) having a purpose statement for each search component;* 5) providing frequent breaks, water, and snacks; and 6) being flexible in the schedule. Flexibility, at minimum, should include providing at least one time slot for the candidate to select a component that would help in their decision-making, such as meetings with a benefits manager, disability support services, an affinity group leader, a campus tour guide, and so on. Flexibility can also include the ability to either wholesale reschedule or to be aware of the optional components that can be more easily rescheduled if something comes up for a candidate.

Using Tools to Center Equity and Inclusion in Processes

Many tools can help advance the work for organizational change to enable inclusive hiring and onboarding within the context of an equitable approach to the employee life cycle, especially when critically examining local practices. In addition to the approaches discussed above, the authors have identified several other tools that were most effective in shifting local practices at GVSU Libraries, an organization that was already committed to moving to an active practice of inclusion. The authors acknowledge that additional tools not mentioned here may support other local realities.

In considering the overarching processes and components, organizations can use an equity lens at the beginning, during, and after the interview, and through the onboarding processes. An equity lens is a set of questions that an organization asks itself about its work to center equity and ensure systems-level thinking—"it is explicit in drawing attention to the inclusion of marginalized populations, typically [Black communities,] communities of color [and Indigenous communities], and can be adapted to focus on other communities."[23] Excerpted from the "Building Inclusive Libraries: Kindness, Equity, and Candidate Experiences in Hiring and Onboarding Toolkit," the following equity lens questions focus on interview planning and associated components:

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* For example: (1) Presentation: Why is there a presentation, what is the topic, who will be at the presentation, what does the organization want to learn about the candidate's skills, and how will it be evaluated? (2) Meeting with the dean: Why is there a meeting with the dean, what should the candidate expect in the meeting, and what should be prepared?

- Have we planned all of the interview components ahead of reviewing candidate materials?

- Do all of the interview components help us make our decisions?...

- Have we created an evaluation rubric that... [mitigates bias] and [is] reflective of our values?"

- Are our questions aligned with the job qualifications?...

- Are we creating an accessible and inclusive environment for the candidates?...

- Are we supporting the candidates' ability to make their decision whether to join us?[24]

While an equity lens will help organizations review equity and impacts to vulnerable stakeholders, at times, an overview of the whole process is needed to ensure that it is the right process with the proper steps. Process mapping, a visual representation of a process, can identify pain points in the interview process and areas to focus change efforts, as demonstrated above. Process mapping can be done alone or in groups as well as in low-tech and high-tech ways. There are six critical steps:

1. Identify the process to map

2. List all the activities involved—[Consider noting who is responsible]

3. Write out the sequences of the steps

4. Create a flowchart or [sequenced mapping of the steps]

5. Finalize and share out

6. Analyze for areas to improve[25]

Once you have a process map, it can increase understanding of the process, identify inefficiencies, and ultimately redefine the process steps. In redefining the process and components, organizations can leverage universal design principles† to ensure that candidates' experiences are centered and barriers are reduced.

Recognizing the mental models at play can be used to elevate where internal and external bias may be occurring. To identify and challenge mental models, individuals and groups can use the Ladder of Inference. This is a tool that allows for the discovery and challenge of mental models, assumptions, and reflexive beliefs.[26] This ladder breaks down the steps from data observation to conclusions. To use the ladder, one typically walks downward. This can be done by using a series of questions, such as the ones articulated by Mind Tools:

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† "Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability." Center for Excellence in Universal Design. "What Is Universal Design?" Accessed March 10, 2023. https://universaldesign.ie/what-is-universal-design/ (page discontinued).
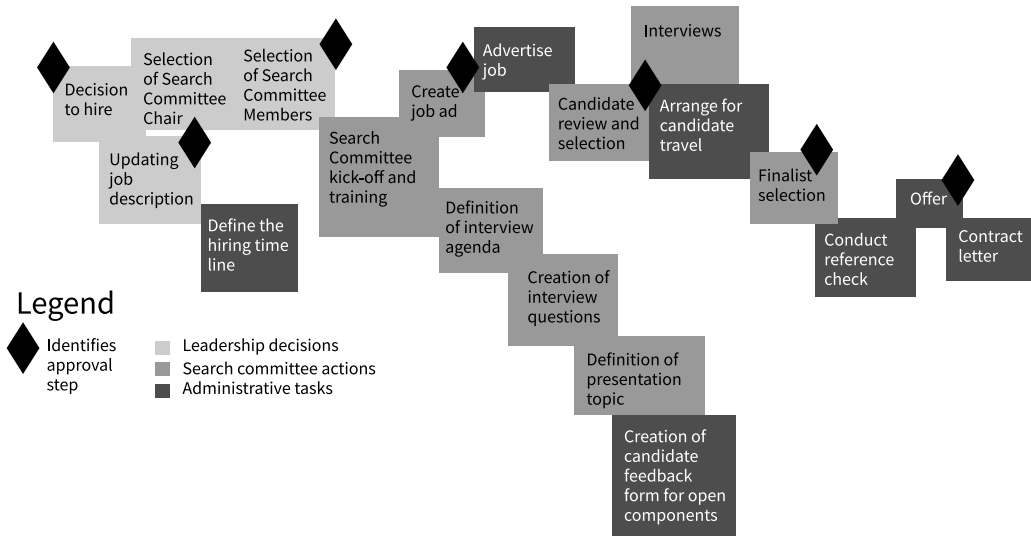
Figure 3.3. Hiring process sample process map

- Actions: Why do I believe this to be the right action? What are some alternative options?
- Beliefs: What beliefs do I hold about this? What conclusions are they based on?
- Conclusions: Why did I conclude this? What are my assumptions there?
- Assumptions: Are my assumptions valid? Why am I assuming this?
- Interpretations: Am I looking at this data objectively? What other meanings could they have?
- Selected data: What did I ignore or didn't pay attention to? Are there other sources of data I didn't consider?[27]

This might be useful, for example, if a candidate is late. The search chair has had an employee who was frequently late and had to be on a performance improvement plan as they were not meeting their job expectations. The search chair makes the split-second judgment that the candidate does not care about the job and proceeds to engage half-heartedly in the job interview, having made the decision they will not hire the candidate. Alternatively, if the search chair were to walk down the ladder, they might see the past connections, the judgment they made, and their automatic action response. Instead of shutting down, the search chair decides to check their understanding by asking the candidate if everything is OK and how they might help them refocus. The candidate shares that their pet was violently sick just before they were going to drive in and had to go to

the emergency vet. The candidate apologizes profusely. The search chair shares concern, asks for help shifting the schedule for the day to ensure all components are covered, gets a cup of tea for the candidate to help them settle, and proceeds with a successful interview. The candidate is selected and becomes a strong team member.

Gaining Agency as a Candidate

> *"We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist."*
>
> *~James Baldwin*

As a candidate, gaining agency can be one of the most difficult aspects of both the hiring and the onboarding processes. Through the lens of an employer-centered model, the candidate must prove their worth not only during the hiring process, but continuously throughout the onboarding process as well, as the performance of a new employee in the first few months after their hire has traditionally been used to gauge potential and the level of success in a role.[28] This holds true for library roles, which may have a probationary period of a few months to even a few years. Tenure-track library roles, in particular, can often be viewed as an extension of the onboarding and probationary processes, where a candidate's performance is scrutinized, and determinations of continuing employment are made. The hiring and onboarding processes, therefore, create a high level of stress for a candidate and can, from the outset, disempower them.

While inclusive hiring and onboarding practices can help mitigate the impact of processes that disempower candidates, the candidates themselves can use a variety of tools at their disposal to gain agency. For example, the Green Book for Libraries, a guide to working conditions in libraries across the United States and Canada, is a crowdfunded resource maintained by a community of volunteers.[29] The guide highlights the experiences of BIPOC, in particular, and is open only for use by individuals who identify as members of these communities. Users can provide a review for their workplace and engage in conversations with others in the space. The concept of the Green Book is to highlight safe working environments for BIPOC professionals and to provide a form of agency for individuals who are job searching. Through this resource, they are able to gather information about a workplace and determine whether or not it is a space where they can thrive.

Other such resources and networks within librarianship may not be as openly available. Candidates may often reach out to a friend of a friend who may provide in-depth information of their own experiences within an institution and any challenges that a new employee may face. Often characterized as employee whisper networks, such tools are powerful counteragents to the official secret model inherent within bureaucracies,[30] where

decision-making is closely guarded and serves as "a way of gatekeeping, where information is used to dominate marginalized groups."[31] Whisper networks can also serve as a form of self-protection for current employees, who may face repercussions for speaking truthfully about their experiences in a hostile workplace.

In addition to information sharing among peers and personal networks, candidates can exercise agency by viewing their interviewing and onboarding experience through the lens of critically examining a future workplace. Most candidates are attuned to the actions and dialogue that may indicate a future employer is facing similar challenges as a current or former employer, and the candidate has the agency to decide whether or not they will pursue a position. Areas of potential concern will differ from individual to individual and may include a lack of accommodations built into the interview process, such as not providing questions ahead of time or not providing candidates sufficient breaks, or the inability of interviewers to clearly answer candidate questions about the status of an institution's equity and inclusion efforts. For early-career librarians, these red flags, so to speak, may not be as pronounced, and can be easily overlooked. Early-career librarians can consider building networks through social media, particularly if the privilege of time and financial capacity to join conferences or professional organizations to form these networks may not be at their disposal.

Making the decision to self-advocate becomes harder during the onboarding process. Therefore, it becomes important for the manager to consider addressing concerns early on in an employee's experience with an institution. This can begin during the interview process, whereby hiring managers can actively acknowledge the inherent power structure between themselves and the candidate and carve out space for a candidate to address any concerns that arise.* Having this difficult conversation early provides space for a candidate to also make an informed decision as to whether or not the institution will meet their needs. Once a candidate transitions to becoming a new colleague, supervisors can begin to build on this exchange and address further concerns they may have. While the employee can determine their individual boundaries as powerful tools to set guardrails for when it may be time to walk away, the manager can further support this development through their one-on-one meetings. The manager can be proactive in preparing for a discussion around accommodations to ensure individual success as this can be difficult for new employees who are concerned about losing a role. There is no prescriptive solution for a manager to support an employee beyond listening and providing feedback that is grounded in the well-being of the employee, and not necessarily in the well-being of the institution at large. It is vital for managers to be consistent and transparent when noting what they are trying to change institutionally in order to improve an employee's situation, while also acknowledging when they themselves may be facing barriers in attempting

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* This can be done by having the hiring manager or senior administrator ask if there are any red flags or dissonance they can address during one-on-ones.

to lead healthy change. Consider the following questions to determine your needs and ensure follow-through:

- What limitations are you (the employee) experiencing?
- How do these limitations affect you? Your job performance?
- What responsibilities are easiest to accomplish?
- What responsibilities are the hardest?
- What is the environment or conditions when you are most productive?
- What is the environment or conditions when you are facing struggles?
- What portion of your job might need an alternate way of approaching it?
- What support might you need from your colleagues? What do they need to know? What training might they need?
- Once the accommodations are in place, how effective are they in supporting you?

Candidates and employers alike should ensure that they document all information exchanged during a conversation about accommodations. Having an open dialogue about what a candidate may need to succeed ultimately not only helps the individual but can also help the employer understand areas of opportunity to improve the overall employee experience.

Conclusions

A job interview and starting a new role are inherently stressful situations and can be harmful when handled poorly by the hiring organization. Ensuring intentionality when designing the interview and onboarding processes will lead libraries toward not only recruiting early-career librarians, but also retaining the talent within their institutions. Inclusive processes throughout the employee life cycle can spearhead a shift in cultural practice, away from the white-coded norm of a candidate proving their value, to an inclusive candidate-centered approach to foster success in the workplace.

As processes shift and individual institutions determine the best practices for their local needs, all stakeholders—from search committee members to hiring managers, to the candidates themselves—can use the learning loop questions provided below to embrace a growth-based paradigm and self-reflect on lessons learned in order to drive change:

- What did I try?
- Where did I succeed?
- Where did I struggle?
- What did I learn?
- What will I try next?

While no individual experience is indicative of the encounters of all candidates and employees that have interviewed using GVSU's growth-based paradigm for hiring and onboarding, there are key takeaways that can be shared from GVSU's approach. The first is that iteration is core to this work. Without continual improvement, a candidate-centered, equitable approach can become performative, as it indicates that an institution was not ready to fully commit to a growth-based paradigm. Additionally, inclusion and equity training is vital at all levels of the library and should be continually built on. A one-off training may prove ineffective, as individuals are provided with a wealth of information but are not guided through active application of these concepts and approaches. Further, single trainings do not aid employees in keeping abreast of evolving best practices. Finally, it is imperative to ensure not only that leadership is fully trained in this approach, but that they are fully committed to the principles of inclusion and equity. This requires leadership to continually interrogate the power dynamics and how their role may have upheld barriers to entry, particularly for librarians with identities that are historically marginalized in academia.

The work of creating a more inclusive workplace is dynamic, evolving alongside the organizational culture and employee needs. Therefore, it is incumbent on search committees to be aware of when their institutional culture may not be welcoming to candidates, particularly for BIPOC individuals. For these workers, the employee life cycle model may be a continual struggle in a noninclusive workplace. It is the hope of the authors that the practical tools provided in this chapter, such as equity lenses and process mapping, can help to jump-start institutional reviews of pain points within current hiring and onboarding processes in librarianship and by extension, serve to shift current practices toward embracing a growth-based paradigm throughout the employee life cycle. Centering the candidate in hiring and onboarding processes is, as of yet, an imperfect iterative model, but its flexibility and potential for change is what makes it one of the most inclusive tools to finally integrate long-overdue change.

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