

Handout #8

MAJOR POINTS IN “RISING ABOVE COGNITIVE ERRORS: Guidelines to Improve Faculty Searches, Evaluation, & Decision-Making (Resources for Medical, Law, & Business Schools and Colleges & Universities)” Copyright JoAnn Moody, 2010

Part I. Typical Cognitive Errors Unwittingly Made by Individuals

1. Negative stereotyping/biases
2. Positive stereotyping/biases
3. Raising the bar; Shifting standards
4. Elitism; Academic pedigree
5. First impressions
6. Longing to clone
7. Good fit/Bad fit & other “trump cards”
8. Provincialism
9. Assumptions/“psychoanalyzing the candidate”
10. Wishful thinking/personal opinions
11. Self-fulfilling prophecy
12. Seizing a pretext
13. Character over context
14. Premature ranking/Digging in
15. Yielding to momentum of the group

Typical Dysfunctions of an Organization that Exacerbate Cognitive Errors

1. Overloading/rushing
2. No coaching and practice
3. No ground rules
4. No reminders and monitoring
5. No one held accountable
6. No debriefing/regular improvement

Part II. How to Rise Above Cognitive Errors & Remedy Organizational Dysfunctions

1. Constant self-correction by individuals and evaluation committees
2. Coaching, reminders, and nudges about how to guard against cognitive errors, personal opinions, shortcuts, and “trump cards.” Tips from respected peers. Use on-line search tutorial at: www.virginia.edu/vpfa/search.html Also check: www.implicit.harvard.edu
3. Ground rules and checklists to govern the evaluation process, developed by the committee (but consult guidelines from previous evaluations or from outside experts)
4. Diverse evaluation committee, including professor from another department. Use a Process Monitor on the committee for quality control and to assist committee chair in insuring careful and opinion-free deliberations
5. Use a matrix or other visual aid to keep evaluation criteria front and center
6. Slow down the evaluation and decision-making process; no overloading or rushing
7. Build accountability into both processes and results and use a variety of checklists
8. Lengthen interviews and use simulations to get a fuller picture of applicants
9. Don't rank the finalists. Instead, write up a summary of each one's strengths, weaknesses, and likely contributions to students, patients, clients, department, school, etc.
10. Avoid a solo situation by including two or more members of negatively stereotyped groups in the pool of finalists
11. Continuously practice so that self-correction and prevention of cognitive errors become long-term cognitive habits (through case studies, interactive skits, formal observation by others, checklists, debriefing after evaluations and decisions have been reached)
12. Develop personal relationships/friendships with members of negatively stereotyped groups—to diminish social distance and automatic stereotyping
13. Frequent insistence on “Show me the evidence” during evaluation processes
14. Debrief after each search or evaluation; aim for quality-control and improvement; provide summaries of lessons learned, for future committees and leaders.