

**GVSU Diversity Assessment Committee
Employment Subcommittee
Report
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Chair: Jann Joseph - *Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences*
Co-Chair: Nancy K. Mack - *Professor, Mathematics*
Clerical Support: Mitzi Loving

Members: Melonie Bates - *Human Resources Representative, Human Resources*
Jing Chen - *Associate Professor, Psychology*
Jodee Hunt - *Associate Professor, Biology*
Connie Ingham - *Academic Department Coordinator, Biology*
Mitzi Loving - *TRiO UB/UBMS/McNair Programs, Academic Resources & Special Programs*
John Reifel - *Associate Dean, Seidman College of Business*
Scott Richardson - *Associate Vice President, Human Resources*
Veta Tucker - *Associate Professor, English*
William Washington - *Camps/Conferences and Facilities Coordinator, Housing*
Paul Yu - *Assistant Professor, Mathematics*
Linda Yuhas - *Director of Compensation and Employment Services, Human Resources*

Introduction

“To promote and integrate diversity in all aspects of university life” is one goal stated in Grand Valley State University’s (GVSU) strategic plan. An important first step in achieving this goal is creating a culturally and socio-economically diverse learning environment where tolerance has been surpassed and there is a foundation of acceptance and appreciation.

Recent passage of Proposal 2 required GVSU to examine its current policies, practices, and future initiatives focused on diversity with respect to this legislation. The Diversity Assessment Committee (DAC) was charged with this task and the following is the report of the Employment Subcommittee.

Current Employment Practices at GVSU and Compliance with Proposal 2

Employees at GVSU are classified by the office of Human Resources as “salaried” or “hourly”. Salaried employees include Administrative and Professional Staff (AP) and faculty (adjunct, affiliate, instructor, tenured, tenure-track, visiting). Hourly employees include Clerical, Office, and Technical Staff (COT), Maintenance and Grounds Staff, and Police/Public Safety Staff.

The area of employment most affected by Proposal 2 is the recruitment, search, and hiring processes at GVSU for both salaried and hourly employees. While the most qualified person is sought for every available position, the search processes for salaried

and hourly positions differ slightly. The search process for salaried positions follows guidelines established by Human Resources, which include forming internal search committees and placing advertisements for the position nationally through a variety of publications in an attempt to attract a diverse pool of candidates. Hourly positions are union jobs, thus, the search process for these positions is governed by the contract negotiated between the union and GVSU. The search process for hourly positions may or may not include an internal search committee but does include placing announcements of available positions on GVSU's website and at times advertising positions in a variety of local newspapers to attract diverse populations. (Please see Appendix A for flowcharts illustrating the different search processes for Faculty and AP employment and Hourly employment.)

GVSU is classified as a federal contractor and as such is an Affirmative Action Equal Opportunity Employer governed by federal guidelines. Thus, GVSU's legal obligation to comply with Affirmative Action supercedes its legal obligation to comply with Proposal 2. GVSU's efforts to attract a diverse pool of candidates complies with both federal guidelines and Proposal 2 as long as these efforts do not exclude or exclusively target specific subpopulations.

Employment Subcommittee members further examined various parts of the search process for salaried employees and found one aspect to be in non-compliance with Proposal 2. Current guidelines from Human Resources state that all search committees for salaried positions must have at least one female and at least one minority person among its members. Employment Subcommittee members recommend the guideline be revised to require at least one person who is identified as a "Diversity Advocate" as a member of a search committee for a salaried position.

Diversity Advocates could be any salaried or hourly employee who is committed to the goal of helping GVSU promote and integrate diversity in all aspects of the university work environment. An individual would need to successfully complete a training experience to be identified as a Diversity Advocate. Diversity Advocate training is not currently offered at GVSU; however, staff in Human Resources are aware of training experiences used at other universities that could be drawn upon to develop appropriate training experiences at GVSU. Serving on a search committee would be only one of the potential responsibilities of a Diversity Advocate. Other responsibilities might include serving as a point of contact or as a resource person for issues of diversity or serving as a facilitator or diversity representative on various committees and task forces. The creation of Diversity Advocates would show that diversity is, and should be, the concern of all employees at GVSU, which in turn would help GVSU make important progress towards its diversity goal.

Looking Beyond Compliance with Proposal 2

All Employment Subcommittee members had records of working towards diversity and equity in the workplace, and as a group decided to go beyond their given charge and make recommendations to the DAC to aid the university in its commitment to diversity. The resulting recommendations focused on two primary aspects of employment, recruitment and retention, and were informed by identifying best practices and by examining the work environment at GVSU with respect to diversity.

Best Practices Related to Diversity Recruitment and Retention

Employment Subcommittee members examined several research publications addressing diversity issues in the workforce, as well as the websites of various public universities and colleges in different states, including California, Iowa, and Washington. Sources the committee found most helpful for informing their work are noted in the bibliography for this report. Note, these sources classified university employees as faculty and staff rather than as salaried and hourly.

Results of the research studies examined suggested a diverse faculty and staff positively impacted student learning and scholarly endeavors. The literature also suggested faculty retention was affected positively by a vigorous intellectual/scholarly environment. Teaching and learning were enhanced by having a faculty body deeply engrossed in quality, up-to-date scholarly work in diverse disciplines.

Employment Subcommittee members identified patterns of successful practices revealed in the research studies and employed by other institutions. The bulleted statements below specify some of these successful practices for diversity recruitment and retention.

Engage in a Pro-Active Search Process

- Use statements related to the institution's commitment to diversity and inclusive language in position announcements/postings, specifically in the description of the university and as a preferred qualification for the position.
Example: Candidates with demonstrated ability to interact with individuals from a wide variety of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds are preferred.
- Advertise positions in a variety of publications, both those targeted for majority populations and those targeted for minority populations.
- Develop networks of diverse people with particular skills and backgrounds and encourage them to apply for appropriate positions.
- Create search committees that are diverse from a variety of perspectives (e.g., gender, rank/position, years of experience, etc.).
- Have consistent search processes across campus.
- Utilize pre-determined criteria for evaluating candidates' applications.
- Ask the same questions of all candidates for a particular position.

Retention of a Diverse Workforce

- All faculty and staff, regardless of their rank/classification, need to be involved in diversity efforts
- Provide on-going, high quality diversity education opportunities for all employees.
- Periodically conduct assessments of faculty and staff with respect to issues of diversity and employment to identify both things that are being done well

and possible problem areas. Take actions to address the problem areas, which may involve building on things that are doing well.

- Provide annual statements to the university community related to the institution's progress in the area of diversity on campus.
- Offer benefits, set policies, and engage in practices that are equitable and inclusive of all employees.
- Acknowledge and reward important work by both faculty and staff in the area of diversity.

Diversity and the Work Environment at GVSU

To gain information about diversity and the work environment at GVSU, Employment Subcommittee members examined several sources of internal information and data, including Human Resources' employment processes flowcharts for salaried and hourly positions and their Exit Interview Data, *GVSU Diversity Study 2005 Overview*, *Actions to Strengthen Inclusion: Voices from the Diversity Conversations*, CLAS Diversity Recruitment and Retention Committee Task Force Final Report, and the *Executive Summary Affirmative Action & Diversity Plan*. (Please see the bibliography for where to locate the latter four sources.)

Data presented in the *Executive Summary Affirmative Action & Diversity Plan* showed that the percent of minority employees increased 2% (12% to 14%) and the percent of female employees increased 1% (54% to 55%) over the last five years. This data also showed that in Academic Year (AY) 2005-2006, the separation rate for minority employees (13%) at GVSU was below the minority hire rate (22%) for the first time since AY 2001-2002. A closer look at the AY 2005-2006 hiring data showed that approximately 1/5 – 1/4 of all faculty and staff hired during that year were minorities.

The increase in the number of minority employees at GVSU is encouraging as the university works toward its goal of promoting and integrating diversity into all aspects of its life. However, members of the Employment Subcommittee advise that issues related to the retention of a diverse workforce at GVSU should not be overlooked. Data from the *GVSU Diversity Study 2005* and the related follow-up conversations, as well as data from the CLAS Diversity Task Force Final Report showed there are a substantial number of employees, salaried and hourly, who did not feel valued, respected, and supported in their professional work at the university. In particular, the data showed that people of color, GLBT, disabled persons, and persons with differing religious beliefs were less likely to feel accepted at GVSU. These employees reported having been the target of discriminatory comments and negative treatment by both students and colleagues. Additionally, a substantial number of people suggested they did not believe GVSU was actually committed to its diversity goal, they noted there has been much talk but little action. Furthermore, data in the CLAS Diversity Task Force Final Report showed numerous respondents perceived there to be disparities in service workload expectations and salaries for female and minority employees within the college, as well as concerns about maternity leave benefits.

If not effectively addressed, the above issues will likely have an adverse effect on GVSU's ability to recruit and retain a diverse workforce for both salaried and hourly

employees. The Employment Subcommittee offers the following recommendations for actions to be taken to address the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce at GVSU.

Recommendations for Actions for the Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse Workforce at GVSU

The following lists of action items include short and long term recommendations to aid GVSU in making progress towards its goal “to promote and integrate diversity in all aspects of university life”. Some of the recommendations can be readily implemented by Human Resources, but others require administrative intervention and/or task forces to develop the proposals into policy. For the latter situation, the Employment Subcommittee requests that the DAC ask existing university groups focused on diversity (e.g., The People of Color Network, CLAS Diversity Action Committee, Intercultural Affairs Committee, and etc.) to develop action plans to implement the recommendations.

Recommendations for Both the Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse Workforce at GVSU

1. *Create Diversity Advocates*

Diversity Advocates were discussed in a previous section. Creating these advocates would allow GVSU’s search procedures to comply with Proposal 2, it would communicate that diversity is everyone’s concern at the university, and it would reduce the high service workload expectation of minority faculty members who have been required to serve on numerous search committees.

2. *Create a Diversity Directory for Faculty and Staff*

This directory would be more extensive than the one recently developed for students. The directory would contain information about diversity resources at GVSU as well as diversity resources and businesses in the Grand Rapids and lake shore areas. Various groups in the Grand Rapids area (e.g., Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, Grand Rapids Area Center for Ecumenism (GRACE)) have created such directories and could be contacted for assistance. This would help build connections between GVSU and the local community while showing the community that GVSU is committed to building and sustaining a diverse learning and work environment.

3. *Create a Diversity Center on Campus*

This would be a physical space with offices for various diverse community groups (e.g., multi-cultural groups, GLBT, etc.) and would have safe meeting areas for all faculty, staff, and students. This center might also be utilized when personalizing candidate’s interviews, which will be discussed in a recommendation below.

4. *Create a Family Leave Benefit*

Currently there is a maternity leave benefit that is available only to birth mothers and is perceived to be inconsistently applied across campus. If GVSU is to be known as a family friendly work environment, the maternity leave benefit should be reviewed and clarified to be consistently applied throughout the university. It should also be broadened to include fathers and newly adoptive parents. Dr. Gwenden Dueker, Department of Psychology, has researched family leave policies and drafted a proposal for GVSU that has been officially endorsed by the Women's Commission. This work may provide a basis on which to develop an appropriate family leave policy for GVSU. (Please see Appendix B for the proposal.)

Recommendations for the Recruitment of a Diverse Workforce at GVSU

Current search processes for salaried and hourly employees have enabled GVSU to grow with respect to a diverse workforce. After examining Human Resources' employment processes flowcharts for faculty and AP and for hourly employees (see Appendix A), Employment Subcommittee members suggest the culture of the search process should be changed to be more proactive and deliberate in efforts to recruit diverse candidates and recommend the following actions be taken.

1. ***Recruiting and Preparing to Search*** Move search committee training by Human Resources to be the 1st step of the search process flowchart for salaried positions.

Currently, training by Human Resources occurs as the fifth step in the *Faculty and AP Employment Process Flowchart*, which is after position announcements are created, advertisements for positions are placed and published, and search committees are formed (see Appendix A). Training offered by Human Resources exposes search committee members to a variety of resources related to ways to attract a diverse pool of candidates and possible venues for publishing position announcements. Moving the Human Resources training to be the first step of the search process and requiring training of all search committee members at least once during a given time period, would necessitate that departments form a search committee as soon as they are aware a position is open. Moving the Human Resources training would change the current culture of the search process to be one that is more pro-active in recruiting diverse applicants. (Please see Appendix C for the Revised Faculty and AP Employment Process Flowchart recommended by Employment Subcommittee members.)

2. ***Examine the search processes for Hourly positions to make them consistent across campus, as well as consistent with salaried positions.***

Currently, there are perceived differences in search processes for hourly positions that extend beyond procedures governed by union contracts. Employment Subcommittee members recognize that search processes for hourly positions are not as extensive as those for salaried positions but recommend that the search processes for

the two types of positions should be more consistent. In particular, supervisors should be required to participate in diversity training prior to advertising an available position. Position announcements for hourly positions should be advertised in publications targeted to majority populations and those targeted to minority populations to bring more interest from diverse women and men in the community. If these practices are not allowed under the current union contract, subcommittee members recommend they be included in negotiations for the next contract.

3. *Use a common phrase addressing diversity in all position announcements at GVSU.*

A common phrase would communicate to both the GVSU community and the outside community that the university is committed to building and sustaining diversity in the workplace. The Employment Subcommittee recommends the following phrase: *The University is committed to building a culturally diverse educational environment; and candidates with demonstrated experience with people of diverse backgrounds will be preferred.*

4. *Create search committees that are diverse from a variety of perspectives.*

Search committees could be diverse with respect to Diversity Advocates, gender, rank/position, years of experience, discipline, etc. Such diverse perspectives would further communicate that diversity is the concern of all at GVSU

5. *Encourage employees to develop networks of diverse people and to suggest employees contact people within these networks about applying for available positions.*

This would potentially allow GVSU to reach a more diverse population of potential candidates while communicating the university's commitment to diversity.

Interviewing the Final Candidates

Implementation of the following recommendations would provide an environment that allows candidates to recognize the GVSU community as a place that embraces diversity. These recommendations are for both salaried and hourly positions.

1. *Send a packet of information about GVSU and the local community prior to the interview.*

The packet can include a diversity directory for faculty and staff, which was discussed in an earlier recommendation. The packet should also include other diversity, family, and community information.

2. *Question candidates about their experiences working with diverse populations.*

The common phrase related to GVSU's commitment to diversity that appears in all position announcements should be viewed as one qualification for an available position. Employment Subcommittee

members recommend that during the interview, all candidates are questioned about their experience working with diverse populations.

Example Question: Please describe the experiences you have had working with diverse populations.

3. *Individualizing the Interview*

Explore the feasibility of allowing all candidates for a specific position the option of individualizing 1-2 hours of the interview to focus on a particular aspect of interest to her/him (e.g., exploring or talking with a person about GLBT resources, talking with a person of a particular racial or ethnic group (e.g., African American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Arab, etc.) talking with someone about churches or the presence of specific religions in the area, talking with a person about child care or local schools, touring the Grand Rapids area with a realtor, and etc.). Informing the candidate of this option would be handled through Human Resources or the proposed Diversity Center. The individualizing option would be implemented if requested by the candidate, and all aspects related to this portion of the interview time would be considered confidential and thus not shared with the search committee. Individualizing the interview would communicate to the potential employee that GVSU is interested in her/him as a person as well as the skills, knowledge, and background s/he brings to the university.

4. *Dual Career and Family Issues*

If requested by the candidate for a specific position, address dual career and family issues as part of the interview time. This could be done through the Diversity Center and would be kept confidential unless the candidate requests the information be shared with the search committee. This would communicate to the candidate that GVSU has a broad view of diversity and is a family friendly workplace.

Recommendations for the Retention of a Diverse Workforce at GVSU

The following are recommended actions that may aid in changing the culture and work environment at GVSU so all employees, whether salaried or hourly, feel valued, supported and respected personally and in their professional work.

Educational Opportunities

1. *Provide on-going, high quality education on issues of diversity for all salaried and hourly employees.*

Such experiences may include Institute for Healing Racism, dialogue meetings focused on particular issues, and etc. Additionally, all employees should be provided with and/or allowed time to participate in diversity education experiences.

2. *Create Diversity Advocates.*

Provide education for individuals and carefully describe roles they may play in the university. Diversity Advocates were discussed in previous sections.

3. *Enhance communication about equitable salary review process.*
Enhance communication to all employees about procedures used at GVSU to ensure equitable salaries for minorities and women.

Acknowledging and Rewarding Important Work on Diversity

1. *Awards for work on diversity.*
Create annual awards for all employee groups (faculty, AP, COT, Maintenance and Grounds, Police/Public Safety) that acknowledge and reward important work conducted by the employee that focuses on diversity. The work need not be limited to work completed by the individual at GVSU but can extend to the outside community.

Diversity and Personnel Matters

1. *Faculty work on diversity and the personnel process.*
Value faculty work (teaching, scholarship/research, service) in the area of diversity by having it count in personnel matters (e.g., yearly review of activity reports, proposed workload plan, tenure and promotion decisions). Encourage departments to add items related to work on diversity to their criteria for required activities or desired additional activities of all faculty.
2. *Student evaluations of faculty teaching.*
Decentralize student evaluations in the contract renewal and tenure process for faculty by having them count as only one component for evaluating a faculty member's teaching. The review process should take the cultural climate at GVSU into consideration and truly protect the diversity being established. Without appropriate review criteria, faculty with diverse backgrounds may be forced to conform to the "norm" defined by the current university culture. In this case, the unique and diverse qualities these people brought to GVSU may be lost. Thus, the university's efforts to recruit people with diverse backgrounds may turn out to be futile if changes are not made to the evaluation practice.
3. *Hourly employees work on diversity and the personnel matters.*
Value hourly employees contributions in the area of diversity by having it count in the professional development area during their annual evaluation. Where needed, add criteria items on the evaluation form related to diversity activities.
4. *Develop a mentoring program for hourly staff.*
Currently, Human Resources has a mentoring manual for COT staff and works with the COT Development Committee to assign mentors to new employees. The current mentoring program does not necessarily extend beyond a COT member meeting with a new employee to share the

mentoring manual. Thus, new COTs and other hourly employees often are left to seek mentoring from other colleagues on their own. Employment Subcommittee members recommend a mentoring program be developed that extends to all hourly employees, that new employees be told about this program at the time they register for benefits and during new staff orientation, that mentors be assigned to new employees at the beginning of their employment, that notice of the mentor assignment be sent to the new employee's supervisor and Dean or other appointing officer at the same time it is sent to the employee, and that the mentoring experience be extended for a longer period of time.

5. *Promotion opportunities for COT staff to AP positions*

COT staff often report they think their work is undervalued in the GVSU community and find they have few opportunities for advancement at the university. The majority of COTs are women. Employment Subcommittee members recommend that GVSU invest in professional development opportunities that would enable COT staff and other hourly employees to develop the skills, knowledge, and experiences that would help them be viable candidates for AP positions.

6. *Supervisor accountability and diversity.*

Hold supervisors accountable for diversity by adding a section to the supervisor's annual evaluation that addresses her/his competence in diversity issues. This would include the supervisor's participation in diversity education experiences, as well as her/his staff's participation in diversity education experiences. Where not currently available, implement policies that allow staff to evaluate their supervisors. Staff evaluations of supervisors should be confidential and ways to ensure confidentiality in this evaluation process should be explored.

Communicating About GVSU's Progress on Diversity Goal

1. *Establish a diversity advisory committee to the President of the university.*

This committee would be charged with the following responsibilities.

- Annually collecting and reporting data related to the hiring of minorities and faculty.
- On a regular basis, conducting interviews of minorities and women to investigate how they are treated at the university. Based on the interviews, the committee would identify possible problem areas and take actions to address these areas.
- On a regular basis, collecting information about what is being done well with respect to diversity efforts at the university. Use this information to take actions and address identified problem areas.

2. *Annual statements on the university's progress towards its diversity goal.*

Annual statements should be made by the President that address progress GVSU is making towards its diversity goal. The statements should be made to the entire university community.

3. *Communicating about diversity.*

Continue the recent practice of noting aspects related to diversity in the Forum (e.g., diversity enrollment increases, noting Milt Ford is a Professor of English and director of GLBT resources) so diversity is perceived as an integrated part of GVSU.

Other important actions

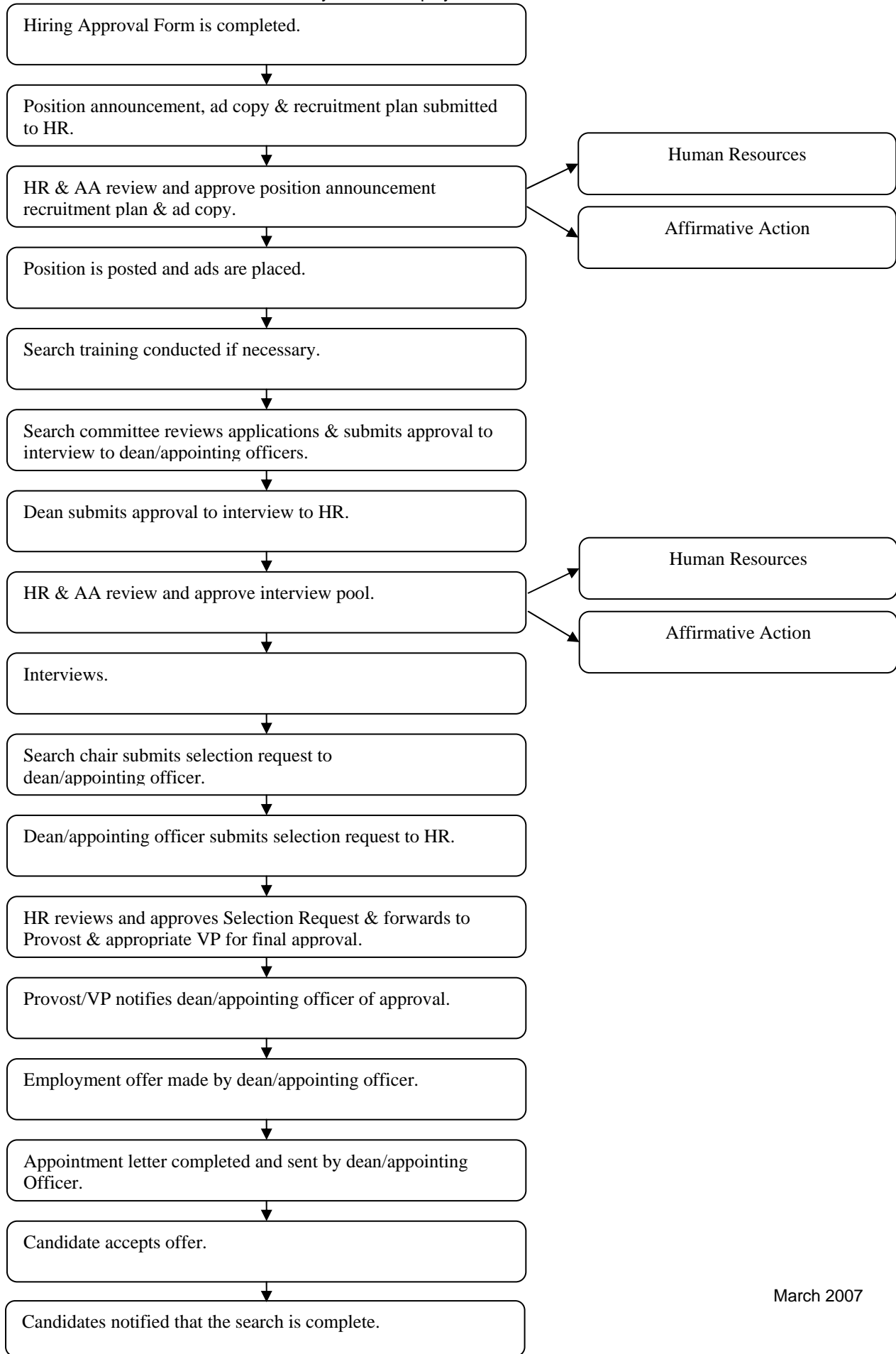
12. *Examine existing benefits, policies, and practices*

Examine existing benefits, policies, and practices (e.g., health insurance, maternity leave, recognition and inclusion of partners, etc.) and move to make them equitable and inclusive for all employees.

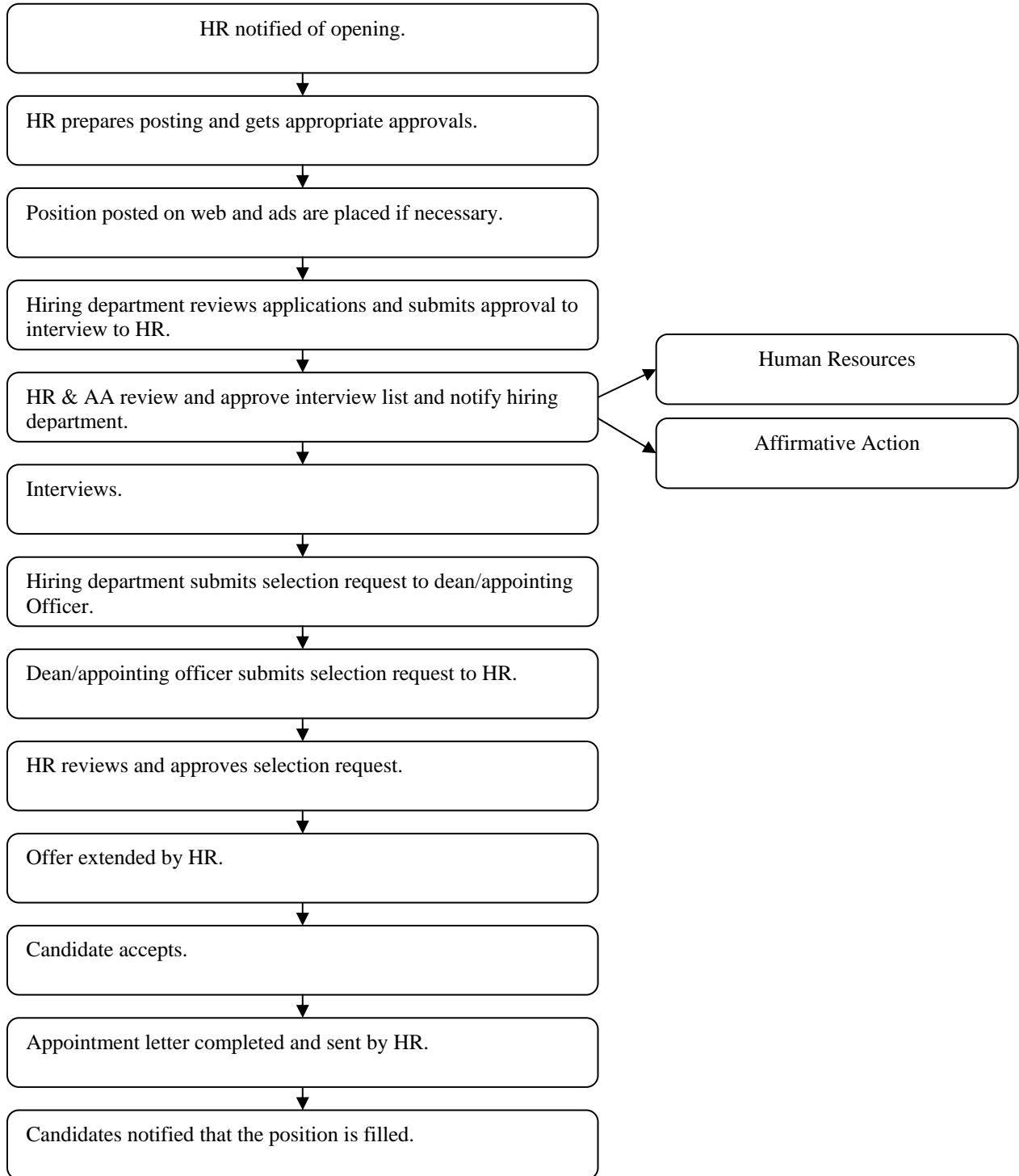
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Faculty and AP Employment Process Flowchart



Appendix A
Hourly Staff Employment Process Flowchart



The Women's Commission subcommittee on Parental Leave Policies at Grand Valley State University was created in Fall 2005 to review GVSU Parental Leave Policies and to propose any modifications that would increase equity and positive outcomes for GVSU employees. We gathered and carefully reviewed three types of information: 1. empirical research on the impacts of parental leave policies on the health of children and families; 2. benchmarking information collected from other Universities in Michigan and around the country and 3. current GVSU policies and input solicited from GVSU community members about their past experiences with parental leave practices at GVSU. Based on this evidence the committee's conclusion was that parental leave policies at GVSU should be adjusted according to the principles defined below. These principles were approved by the Women's Commission in February, 2007.

Please note: These are general principles that could apply to any employee at GVSU. The specifics of how these would apply to specific job types (e.g., 9-month v. Yearly employees) still need to be addressed.

Proposed Principles for GVSU parental leave policy

1. Policies regarding parental leave will be applied consistently across all members of the GVSU community, and the President's office shall be charged with monitoring adherence to the policy.
2. This policy will apply to mothers and fathers either biological or adoptive who are experiencing the addition of a new child to his or her family.
3. Parental leave benefits will not be considered part of disability leave.
4. The benefit shall include at least 12 weeks of full time leave for any eligible employee, and employees may take up to one year of job protected leave after the introduction of a new child. This benefit will begin either with the introduction of the child, or after disability from birth ends. Employees would not be required to take the full twelve weeks of leave although they will be encouraged to do so.
5. The first 12 weeks of parental leave will be fully paid. At the employee's request, the paid leave could be spread out over a 6-month period and could include part-time work assignments worked out in agreement with HR and the employee's supervisor/s. Leave in excess of 12 weeks will not be compensated by the University.
6. University health benefits will continue during parental leave.
7. Parental leave will in no way negatively affect any GVSU employee's chances for promotion or job continuation and will not count as part of any probationary employment period.
8. This policy is designed to address typical outcomes for parents and children. Should atypical situations arise employees will work with both HR and their supervisor to address individual needs. Bed-rest and other medical complications before the introduction of the child to the family do not count towards the twelve week period, but will be covered by current University disability policies.
9. Training in the new policy is mandatory for all supervisors in the GVSU community and clear information about the policy will be made available to all employees.

Revised Faculty and AP Employment Process Flowchart

The following steps are suggested for the Faculty and AP Employment Process Flowchart in order to move training by Human Resources to the first step of the search process.

1. Search training conducted.
2. Hiring Approval Form is completed.
3. Position announcement, ad copy & recruitment plan submitted to HR.
4. HR & AA review and approve position announcement, recruitment plan, & ad copy.
5. Position is posted and ads are placed.
6. Continue with the steps on the flowchart in current use, beginning with "Search committee reviews applications & submits approval to interview to dean/appointing officers" and continue to the end of the chart.