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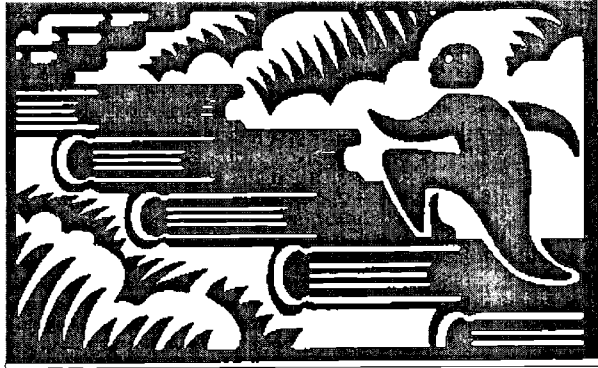DESCRIPTORS   *Females; Higher Education; *International Education;
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ABSTRACT
                 The ideas in this booklet were collected by the Institute of
International Education to promote greater participation by women from
developing countries in international scholarship programs. Many of the
points would be applicable to other underrepresented groups as well. A number
of suggestions are made to increase recruitment of women to scholarship and
grant programs. These include outreach efforts and carefully worded
recruitment materials. Suggestions to help candidates in the selection
process focus on written applications and in-person interviews. Also
important to the participation of women in international scholarship programs
are the terms and conditions of the award. Programs should be as flexible as
possible within the limitations of award terms. Monitoring and evaluation are
also essential to ensure that representation is documented for planning
purposes. (SLD)

"BEST PRACTICES"

TACTICS TO INCREASE ACCESS

TO INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

BY WOMEN AND OTHER

UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS

Institute of International Education

www.iie.org/svcs/womentoc.htm

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The full text of IIE's study, "Increasing Women's Participation in International Scholarship Programs" is available on IIE's website at www.iie.org/svcs/incwomen.htm.

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The ideas below were collected in the course of a study by the Institute of International Education (IIE),with Ford Foundation funding, to promote greater participation by developing country women in international scholarship programs. We believe many of the points are applicable to other under-represented groups as well. Some of the "tactics" listed below seem quite obvious; they form the core of any basic checklist of steps to insure equal access. During the study, however, we found that even some of these basic steps were not followed by some major scholarship programs. Your additional suggestions and feedback are warmly invited, so that the list of "best practices" includes the widest input from experts in the field. Send your comments by email to: Bestpractices@iie.org or by mail to: Room 800, 809 UN Plaza, NY, NY 10017.

Recruitment

1. The more time available to potential candidates to learn about a program before the application deadline, the more applications will come in, especially from those not previously informed of the opportunities or who had not considered applying. This rule applies especially to women, who tend to have multiple commitments (to family, work, etc.) that need to be addressed, and to those who may learn about such programs only through word-of-mouth or other indirect channels. Therefore, start publicity efforts for your program at least 8-12 months prior to the deadline for applications.

2. Initial outreach efforts should be as broad as possible, going beyond the usual list of agencies, institutions, and individuals who are routinely sent information about your program. Identify other agencies/institutions that serve communities of potential applicants perhaps unaware of your program, including community-based non-governmental organizations, teacher training colleges, and other agencies serving women and under-represented target groups. (Local or regional offices of USIA, USAID, foundations, and international organizations such as the World Bank and UNDP may also be excellent distribution centers.) Provide all these agencies with applications and detailed information about your program and ask them to disseminate the information widely. Tell them explicitly that ALL qualified applicants are encouraged to apply.
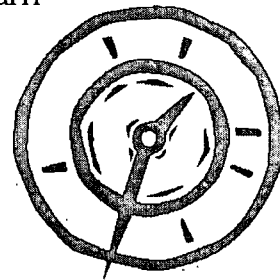
3. Be sure to include mass media (radio/TV and newspapers) in your outreach plan, to get your message beyond the traditional "old boy" networks. In print ads or TV/radio spots, consider announcing the names of prior scholarship winners, including women and those from other under-represented groups, so it is clear to readers/listeners that nontraditional candidates have been successful in the past.

4. In all publicity materials about your program, be sure to include visuals with members of under-represented groups (women, minorities, people with disabilities). This sends a powerful inclusive message to those considering applying.

5. Outreach efforts should also utilize electronic media, as such E-mail and the World Wide Web. These permit much wider outreach at minimal cost, especially if you can post your announcements on websites reaching targeted groups (e.g. African Women in Higher Education; Asian NGO networks, etc.). In that regard, note that electronic media are particularly time-sensitive, so it is important to keep all information as up-to-date as possible. Posted information should always include clear and concise guidelines for applying, and specific deadlines. Since electronic media are inaccessible to some parts of the developing world and to many individuals unconnected to universities or established agencies, you should be sure to combine such a campaign with use of other mass media described above (especially radio).

6. Programs should encourage alumnae/i from under-represented groups to think of themselves as recruiters for and ambassadors of the program, and to spread word of the program's existence to other potential recipients from those groups. Routinely include these alumnae/i in mailings of program announcements/ applications so they can disseminate the materials to qualified colleagues. Alumnae/i might also be encouraged to provide more targeted assistance to potential applicants who have never before been involved in such a process, such as reviewing resumes and essays to insure that the information is presented in the clearest and most advantageous form possible.

7. To encourage greater participation of individuals from under-represented groups, the wording of recruitment material is critical. The language used should explicitly convey that the selection process is open and fair. Wording can be very direct and aimed at one target population (e.g., "women are encouraged to apply") or more inclusive (e.g.,"women and men, urban and rural, are encouraged to apply") or make a specific point (e.g., "there are no age restrictions"). Appropriate wording will differ according to cultural norms of different societies, but the aim is be the same, to send a message of encouragement and inclusion.

8. Programs committed to increasing participation from under-represented groups should consider expanding the targeted fields of study to include those which attract/serve candidates from these groups. For example, you '
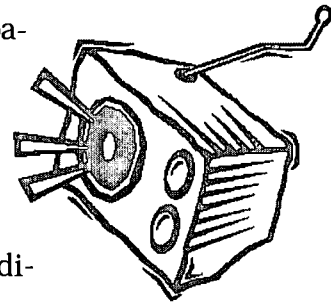
might explicitly note in program materials that science/medicine also includes public health and reproductive health, or broaden your list beyond male-dominated fields such as engineering or economics to include environmental studies, public administration/public policy and human rights.

Selection

A. WRITTEN APPLICATIONS

1. Be sure that application materials are available to candidates with substantial lead time before the deadline (see point 1. above in "Recruitment" section).

2. Make available sample successful applications to candidates along with other materials. In addition, consider adding a sample of what the program considers a "model" letter of recommendation. Those without prior experience applying for scholarships will especially benefit from such guidance.

3. Consider establishing a "pre-application process" so that potential applicants can easily express initial interest in your program without being discouraged by more lengthy and laborious steps required to complete a full formal application. Respond promptly to promising pre-applications from under-represented groups, encouraging them to pursue the full application process without any commitment, of course, to final acceptance.

4. Fellowship programs with similar types of grantees should consider sharing unselected applications, possibly via the Internet, so that programs in need of good candidates can be matched with programs that have too many highly qualified applicants for the available spots. To avoid violating the confidentiality of the application process, programs could include on the application a box asking applicants if they are willing to have their applications shared with other fellowship programs. Only applicants who give their express consent will have their applications forwarded.

5. Programs seeking to encourage more applications from candidates who may be less confident about their English language skills might consider the possibility of allowing pre-applications in the candidates' native language.
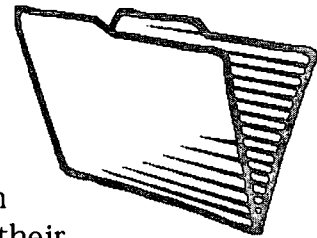
6. In the formal application stage, programs should be even-handed in disqualifying candidates who fail to obey the rules, i.e. observation of the application deadline, answering each question completely, or sending in all additional requested material. It may appear superficially that this weeding-out process will adversely impact those from under-represented groups. In fact, there was evidence in one case study that when programs are strict and even-handed in the initial weeding-out of formal applications, the result is that women candidates will benefit, and less careful/serious applications from traditional candidates are eliminated. To be fair to first-time applicants, however, program staff should review incoming applications carefully (before the deadline if possible) to insure that those unfamiliar with application procedures are not inadvertently excluded by failure to include all required materials.

7. It is critical that the impact of biases held by application reviewers (conscious or unconscious) be minimized in the selection process. In assessing written applications, reviewers should not consider or (ideally) even have access to personal information (i.e., age, marital status, maternal/paternal status, photograph) of applicants. Programs should organize the written application so that such personal information can be kept separate from professional/educational credentials and personal essays, letting reviewers form their first impression without knowing the marital status or ethnic background of the candidate, unless the candidate chooses to reveal it in other parts of the application. In many cases, of course, candidates' names reveal their gender or ethnic background. Some programs remove names from applications prior to the review process, tracking them by assigned numbers instead.

8. Another way to minimize subjective judgments on the part of selectors is to develop and apply a clear and consistent grading system for ranking written applications. A pre-established range of test scores or grades, for example, will let reviewers quickly eliminate traditional candidates whose ranking falls below that of more qualified nontraditional candidates. Programs committed to "affirmative action" may decide to be flexible in applying such grading systems to candidates from under-represented groups, but several case studies suggest that when the applicant pool is sufficiently inclusive, nontraditional candidates need only fair treatment, not preferential treatment, to succeed.

9. Review panels should not only be briefed about what constitutes criteria for selection; they should be very well briefed about what will be considered **unacceptable** criteria for inclusion or rejection.

10. In reviewing the qualifications/professional accomplishments presented in written applications, programs should enlist reviewers with current knowledge of and experience in relevant fields of study. Non-traditional candidates tend not to fare as well if the reviewers come from more traditional fields and established networks. Where fields of study are quite diverse, or new fields have been added, and the reviewing panel cannot be

expanded to include full coverage, programs should have experts in the fields "on call" for consultation by selectors.

11. Application review panels should be as diverse a group as possible, in terms of gender and ethnic background, as well as expertise in the relevant professional fields.

12. Programs that are seriously committed to greater participation of individuals from under-represented groups cannot **assume** that each member of the review panel knows and supports this policy. On the contrary, program directors should explicitly inform potential selectors that the program is committed to a policy of fairness and equity, and insure that reviewers explicitly agree to abide by such a policy before they are formally invited to join the process. Programs might also consider doing a review of a potential panelist's previous performance(s) in terms of commitment to fairness and equity on other panels **before** they are invited to participate.

13. Programs and funders must be prepared to monitor the work of selection panels on an ongoing basis to assure that the commitment to fairness is being honored. Detailed statistics on the ratio of applicants from under-represented groups must be maintained and compared with the ratio of selected candidates from under-represented groups to see if the review process is screening in or screening out such candidates.

B. IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS

1. While personal information can and should be separated from the review of professional/academic credentials during the written application phase, it is obvious that gender, race, ethnicity, some physical disabilities, and general appearance and demeanor are visible during the in-person interview stage of the process. Inevitably, these factors have an effect, positive or negative, conscious or unconscious, on the interview panel. Recognizing that the potential for less than objective selection does exist, programs should develop and use protocols/procedures that minimize the opportunity for biased selections. For example:
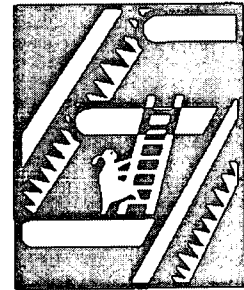
   ■ Interview protocols should be developed well in advance by program staff and selectors and used by all the selectors as they conduct their interviews.

   ■ The list of questions developed should be the only questions asked. Questions used should be the same for all candidates, regardless of their gender or other status. Questions should focus on professional/ educational areas, not on personal issues (e.g. "will you miss your children if you study abroad?").

■ To avoid even the appearance of a biased selection process, the selection panel should be as diverse a group as possible, and include panelists who have demonstrated a commitment to inclusiveness in their professional careers.
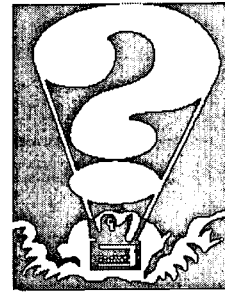
2. At least one program staff member should always be present during the interview, even if the individual does not actively intervene in the process.

3. Programs should conduct regular post-interview debriefings, to determine if all went as planned, and to air any concerns about inappropriate questions or behavior towards candidates.

4. Some programs have found that for many individuals from under-represented populations, the most difficult aspect of the selection process was the in-person interview, because they had so little experience in that arena. Some programs have set up "orientation" seminars to strengthen in-person interview skills. Fairness requires that such sessions be provided to **all** candidates, not just those from under-represented populations. However, there is evidence that such even-handed treatment yielded disproportionate advantages to those from under-represented groups, simply because they were most in need of the help. Programs that have a rigorous interview process may wish to offer interview-skills training, by making available seminars, perhaps staffed by program alumnae/i from under-represented groups along with knowledgeable program staff.

5. Some programs advocate so-called "waiting-room interviews," that is, having a staff member or panelist meet applicants informally before a formal interview, chat with them, and then provide other panelists with information on any significant differences in performance between the formal and informal interviews. For applicants who are so nervous at the formal process that they are unable to perform at their best (and these may, or may not, be from under-represented groups), the intervention of someone who has talked with them informally may mean the difference between receiving and losing a scholarship.

6. Funders have a key role to play in assuring that a program's commitment to fairness and equity in selections is not a hollow pledge. Funders should actively monitor and assess the selection process. Funders that require programs to be more diverse should sit in as observers on selection panels and regularly review statistics on ratios of applicants to awardees by various categories of special concern. Donors should be prepared to require changes in the process if the data is not satisfactory or raises questions about equity.
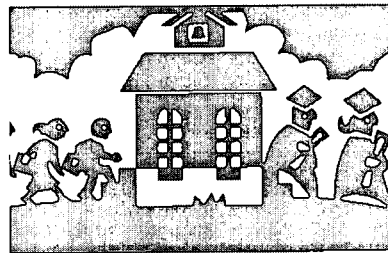
Terms and Conditions of Award

1. Programs should be as flexible as possible, within the limitations of award terms and conditions. For example, the following award terms may affect decisions by women candidates to accept a fellowship offer:

   - availability of health insurance for accompanying dependents

   - length of award (with multi-year awards sometime problematic)

   - emergency assistance/travel funds for mid-program visits home

   - possibilities for conducting some portion of the work in the home country, combined with short-term experience abroad (i.e, so-called "sandwich" programs).

2. Programs with age restrictions, either at the upper or lower levels, should closely examine those limitations and reconsider their value. For women particularly, there is a correlation between age restrictions and numbers of applicants. Programs with a commitment to greater participation by women should recognize that the pool of candidates may well increase if open to younger women, who may not yet have children, or older women, whose children may have grown, rather than confining age eligibility to peak child-rearing years.

3. Some programs have developed strategies specifically to help applicants from under-represented groups through the difficult stage once they have been selected for the overseas study awards, when they may face opposition from family members or employers to accepting the award. These programs try to work directly with the candidate and family/employers to resolve troubling issues where possible and to help family/employers understand better the program benefits. Programs should recognize that, for women especially, family-centered objections may arise, and staff should prepare appropriate responses/strategies. Programs might also address such potential problems earlier in the process, by:

   - stating up-front in the informational material that the program may be flexible in certain terms and conditions of its awards and that interested candidates should discuss any issues of concern with staff in advance.

   - extending an explicit offer of help to successful candidates to work with them and their family/employers to resolve specific obstacles or
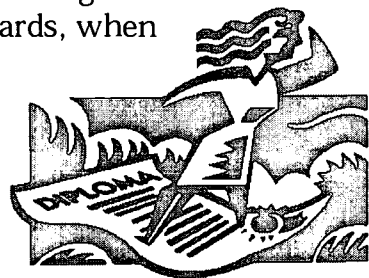
problems, noting that earlier candidates have successfully resolved such issues with staff assistance.

4. Some programs have found a highly successful and cost-effective approach to providing more overseas scholarships to women is to provide a "package" including support for accompanying spouses to study while overseas. This eliminates many of the family problems of recipients (plus a savings in housing costs, etc.) and enables the program to aid greater numbers of recipients with a modest increase in cost. Male and female spouses are able to take advantage of overseas training informally, while their spouses with awards complete their own formal study programs.

5. Program alumnae/i may be an untapped resource in designing flexible and pragmatic approaches to problems relating to the terms and conditions of awards. Programs should make use of this resource and turn to alumnae/i for assistance, based on their own experiences. For example, some programs have found that the greatest help they can give recipients who have brought small children with them is to put them in touch with present and former fellowship holders who have figured out how to deal with such problems such as finding appropriate schools and day care facilities. Moral support early on from alumnae/i can help candidates to accept the award and thrive in the program.

Monitoring and Evaluation

1. While time-consuming and perhaps difficult to maintain, statistics tracking representation should be regularly collected and reviewed in all phases of the selection process: numbers of initial requests for information, pre-applications, applications, selections, and acceptances/rejections, as well numbers of participants completing the program and returning home. Analysis of such data over time is the only way for programs to accurately measure the success of efforts to diversify the participant profile, and learn which aspects of the recruitment/selection process, if any, need to be improved.

2. In addition to statistical data, programs should regularly solicit input from staff, selectors, and applicants (unsuccessful as well as successful), either through interviews or short questionnaires administered on a regular basis.

3. In evaluating the success or non-success of any award, programs should also take into account the impact of the scholarship on family members other than the recipient, including those left behind as well as accompanying spouses, minors, etc. Asking questions about how those individuals fared, during the course of the award and afterward, may well change the initial assessment of the award's impact.

4. Programs should make the necessary effort and investment to remain in touch with alumnae/i. The many advantages of this effort outweigh the difficulties and costs involved. Until programs know how grantees have fared in their subsequent professional lives, they cannot assess if the program has fulfilled its mission. alumnae/i are also invaluable and often untapped resources as recruiters for applicants (especially among under-represented groups) and should be enlisted as selectors, as advisors to new grantees preparing to go abroad, and as mentors when they return home.

5. At present, few programs have formal alumnae/i networks in place. However, as electronic communications options multiply, even programs with very limited time and funds for alumnae/i activities can create an ongoing communications link to alumnae/i and a way to sustain dialog among past and current participants.

6. Success and failure in diversifying fellowship recipients must have consequences for program staff. Funders committed to fairness and equity should be prepared up-front to reward success, and punish failure. Programs that receive no recognition for success in this area may become less vigilant over time; programs that underperform year after year with no negative consequences are unlikely to see any compelling reason to overhaul their procedures.

7. Publicity about successful methods within the donor community will help other programs improve their performance and increase the pool of under-represented candidates who can be referred to other appropriate programs.
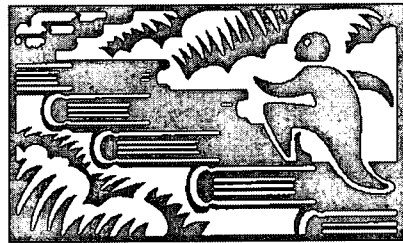
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