Question 5: How can units use their AAPs to inform their recruitment practices and address underrepresentation?

What is the problem/situation? VCU is committed to inclusive search practices that yield a diverse candidate pool. The Office of Equity & Access Services will soon be providing units with their specific affirmative action plans (AAPs). These plans will contain information about the current demographic makeup of the unit as well as areas of underrepresentation. EAS should provide units guidance on how to best use this information to address and/or remedy areas that are underrepresented without relying on legally impermissible quotas or making hiring decisions based on protected status.

What does the literature/research have to say about it? In reviewing the affirmative action requirements/regulations with Equity and Access Services, consulting with appropriate offices at VCU, and looking at how other higher education institutions are using affirmative action plans in recruitment, several common themes and recommendations emerged. These recommendations include: developing an effective and legally permissible plan to remedy areas of underrepresentation; reviewing job-related criteria to reduce disparate impact and eliminate barriers to equal opportunity; creating widespread promotion and outreach in advertising and recruitment; applying fair, legally sound, and consistent assessment of all applicants; and remembering that the overarching goal is to hire the most qualified applicant.

What does the work group recommend? Unit action plans will provide data regarding the current unit makeup and areas that have underrepresentation. In addition, the AAPs will provide information regarding census data and the availability of underrepresented groups by AAP job group in the reasonable recruitment area. In order for units to best use the information given in the AAP:

- Provide training/guidance as well as a checklist for all recruitments and staffing planning.
- Identify resources for outreach to faculty and staff candidates for recruiting underrepresented populations.
- Develop VCU policy requiring units (hiring officer) to certify searches at 2 critical points – 1) applicant pool as a whole, and 2) applicants invited to interview
- Resource units to be able to oversee the monitoring of efforts regarding their unit affirmative action plan.