

Hiring a Statistician into a Mathematics Department

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Although it may not be a huge concern at many institutions, mathematics departments are occasionally faced with the need for a statistician to handle any advanced course offerings in statistics. Hiring a quality statistician who not only teaches effectively but stays many years (perhaps his or her entire remaining career years) can prove quite daunting. In fall 2000 we were faced with this situation. Our statistician informed us in late December that he was leaving at the end of the academic year. I was the chair of the search committee. We advertised for a tenure-track position beginning in fall 2001 and sent ads through the *Chronicles*, ASA, and MAA since we were mostly interested in teaching.

Although we had only 21 applicants as a result of the late start, we were very lucky. Our hire came from a biostatistics position at the medical center at the University of Kansas. He took a huge pay cut to join us, since he wanted to be in an academic environment and have a bit less stress than he had doing statistical analysis for medical doctors running clinical trials. We have an actuarial science program here (registered as an Advanced Undergraduate Program as designated by the Society of Actuaries), with some good students, so that helped. If your institution has such a program, or the ability to start one, that's an added attraction.

To keep top statistics candidates interested, and to show them that your institution is committed to hiring and retaining someone good, see if your dean will commit early to your offering certain perks during phone or campus interviews. These might include start-up funds for buying special software such as SAS (which is quite expensive) or even a reduced teaching load. Try to have a good understanding of consulting opportunities available in your area for potential hires. Check with various local professionals about the kinds of consulting work that might be available. Our new statistician gets about \$150 an hour for work he does outside school as part of a three-person independent consulting firm. The extra

money helps compensate for the big cut in salary he took to come here.

Tied in with this, will paid outside consulting work count as scholarly activity for tenure and promotion at your school? Here at Washburn there has been some debate on that issue. Some feel that paid work is like moonlighting, regardless of the expertise being tapped, and thus shouldn't count towards tenure/promotion. If consulting work does count towards tenure, that's another big plus. Unpaid consulting work for other faculty on campus certainly counts big. Statistical analysis projects that have come to our department include work in kinesiology (in physical education), biology (a fruit fly reproduction study), and education (learning outcomes and assessment). It might be tricky to determine whether this work counts more as "service" as opposed to "scholarship" despite the fact that some real expertise is being utilized. How this is viewed can vary widely from institution to institution, so it is important for the hiring committee to adequately convey to prospective candidates the current thinking on this at their school.

It definitely pays to get an early start on a search for a bonafide statistician, and it is also wise to advertise a range for the starting salary. Being upfront about the salary can help prevent surprises later. But, with a properly worded ad and some careful maneuvering on the part of the hiring committee and the administration, it is quite possible to hire a statistician who easily meets or exceeds your expectations and will stay in your department for a long time. If you are in this situation for hiring this year, good luck!

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