

Summary of Booklet by JoAnn Moody, PhD, JD

“RISING ABOVE COGNITIVE ERRORS: Guidelines for Search, Tenure Review, and other Evaluation Committees”

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Part I. Typical Cognitive Errors Unwittingly Made by Individuals

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

Typical Dysfunctions of an Organization that Exacerbate Cognitive Errors

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

Part II. Rising Above Cognitive Errors & Remedy Organizational Dysfunctions

1. Constant self-correction by individuals and evaluation committees
2. Coaching and follow-up reminders and nudges about how to guard against cognitive errors, personal opinions, shortcuts, and “trump cards.” Tips from respected peers. Check on-line tutorial for search committees at: virginia.edu/vpfa/search.html
3. Frequent insistence on “Show me the evidence” during evaluation processes
4. Ground rules for the committee’s process, developed by the committee (but consult guidelines from previous evaluations or from outside experts)
5. Diverse committee, including professor from another department. Non-voting process person on the committee for quality control and to assist committee chair in insuring careful and opinion-free deliberations
6. Use a matrix or other visual aid to keep evaluation criteria front and center
7. Slow down the evaluation process; no overloading or rushing
8. Build accountability into both processes and results
9. Gather non-stereotypical evidence about the candidates/applicants. Lengthen interviews and use simulations to get a fuller picture of applicants
10. Don’t rank the finalists. Instead, write up summary of each finalist’s strengths, weaknesses, and likely contributions to students, the department, and the campus
11. Avoid a solo situation by including two or more members of negatively stereotyped groups in the pool of finalists
12. Continuous practice at rising above cognitive errors and shortcuts (through case studies, interactive skits, and so on)
13. Develop personal relationships/friendships with members of negatively stereotyped groups—to diminish social distance and automatic stereotyping
14. Debrief after each search or evaluation; aim for continuous improvement; provide summaries of lessons learned, for future committees.