

Strategies and Best Practices for Higher Education Faculty Recruitment for Online Instruction

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ABSTRACT - *The requirements, scope, and process of faculty recruitment have evolved considerably with the advancements in technologies and the explosion of online and hybrid teaching-learning settings. This digital transformation of higher education has extended into faculty recruitment practices, prompting institutions to adopt more efficient, inclusive, and strategic approaches to attract and retain qualified, competent, and suitable instructors. Online faculty recruitment offers broad reach and flexibility, but it also introduces new challenges, such as ensuring fairness, mitigating digital bias, and creating engaging and appealing virtual experiences. To attract and retain top teaching talent in higher education, academic institutions must need to implement best practices throughout the recruitment process of planning, outreach, evaluation, and onboarding. When recruiting faculty online, institutions must expect and plan for unique challenges, including technological availability, bias elimination in virtual formats, and ensuring inclusive practices, while guaranteeing academic thoroughness. This research outlines some strategies and best practices across key recruitment phases: strategic planning, job design, outreach and marketing, candidate experience, evaluation, offers and onboarding, and retention, all supported by scholarly and institutional values.*

Keywords – Artificial intelligence, adjunct faculty, contingent faculty, continuous improvement, data-driven recruitment, global academic collaboration, hybrid instruction, LMS, search committee, structured evaluation, STEM.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, higher education has undergone an unprecedented shift toward online learning. Given the proliferation of students pursuing higher education degrees [1] online, the demand for faculty who possess the academic and technological skills needed to successfully navigate the online environment continues to grow. As the number of applicants increases, hiring managers are frequently overwhelmed with the sheer volume of candidates. Increasing complexity in the hiring process, the dynamic nature of course scheduling, and the challenges of screening increasing numbers of applicants are some of the factors driving increased costs and delays in filling positions. To meet the demand for qualified faculty, many institutions are recruiting adjunct instructors to meet the need; however, it is not without its complexities and challenges. The authors suggest that there may be a more streamlined and cost-effective way for colleges and universities to find faculties to hire.

The rapid growth of online learning has transformed higher education, requiring a reassessment of how faculty are recruited, assessed, and retained. Traditionally, faculty recruitment processes focus on the subject matter and program expertise, research involvement, and teaching experience in face-to-face classrooms. However, with the expansion of digital learning environments, effective recruitment now requires institutions to concentrate on faculty candidates who not only are subject matter experts but also demonstrate adaptability, technological fluency, and the ability to engage diverse learners in virtual environments [2]. As a result, higher education academic institutions must embrace strategies and best practices customized to the unique needs of online teaching.

Recruiting faculty for online teaching roles presents both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, institutions can draw from a broader and more geographically diverse pool of applicants, thereby improving the chances of hiring individuals with specialized expertise [3]. On the other hand, online recruitment introduces complexities such as ensuring equity in digital

interviews, evaluating candidates' virtual teaching competencies, and sustaining faculty engagement in roles that may be more isolating than traditional appointments [4]. These realities necessitate strategies that integrate fair assessments, structured evaluations, and long-term retention objectives.

An important practice in the hiring process is the alignment of faculty hiring with institutional mission and priorities. It emphasizes including excellence requirements across all stages of the recruitment process of planning, outreach, evaluation, and onboarding, instead of treating them as an afterthought [5]. Similarly, literature highlights that expanded searches and diverse, well-trained committees enhance both fairness and the likelihood of finding candidates who bring innovative and novel approaches to online teaching [6]. By adopting inclusive frameworks, institutions can ensure that recruitment processes not only identify candidates with strong academic credentials but also those applicants committed to equity and student success in digital classrooms. Equally important is the candidate experience. Faculty recruitment websites and online job postings must be accessible, transparent, and informative, highlighting the institution's teaching philosophy, technological infrastructure, and support systems for online instruction [7]. It is suggested that institutions clearly articulate their value proposition, whether it is flexibility, research support, or mentorship programs, to attract top candidates [3]. These practices are particularly critical when recruiting online instructors, as candidates often weigh multiple offers from institutions competing in the digital education space. Finally, good recruitment must be viewed as part of a structured process that includes hiring and retention. It must recognize that competitive salaries, mentorship opportunities, and professional development are essential to retaining faculty in higher education [8]. For online instructors, this also means offering training in digital platforms, instructional design opportunities, and ongoing technical support [2]. Without such investments, institutions risk losing qualified faculty, which can impact program quality and student success.

In summary, best practices and strategies for online faculty recruitment extend beyond just filling open positions. Instead, they represent a structured and all-inclusive process to attract, assess, and sustain competent, qualified, and skilled academic workforce for the digital age. Through planning, structured evaluation, candidate-centered outreach, and retention strategies, academic institutions can ensure that their online courses are staffed with qualified instructors capable of advancing both academic excellence and standards.

2. A SHIFT TOWARDS ADJUNCT FACULTY IN ACADEMIA

Adjunct, or contingent, faculty refers to part-time professors or instructors who teach courses at a college or university on a contractual basis. They are not considered permanent staff and typically do not have a path to tenure. Adjunct faculty members often have flexible schedules and may teach at multiple institutions. They teach classes for a specified period (usually a semester or a term) and do not receive benefits.

Over the past several decades, there has been a shift toward a proliferation in hiring of adjuncts, away from full-time and tenured faculty positions, across most American colleges and universities. In 1970, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 77.8 percent of the 474,000 teaching positions in higher education were staffed by tenured, full-time faculty [9]. By 1991, the percentage had fallen to 64.8 percent (826,252 positions), with the most recent year surveyed (2018) indicating 53.9 percent of the 1,542,613 total positions were full-time. This indicates an increase in adjuncts from approximately 22 percent (1970) to 46 percent (2018) [9]. A defining feature of this shift has been the growing reliance on adjunct, part-time, and contingent faculty, often at the expense of traditional tenure-track roles. This change reflects financial pressures, evolving student demands, and the rise of flexible instructional models. While adjunct faculty provide institutions with adaptability and cost savings, the trend raises concerns about academic quality, equity, and the long-term sustainability of higher education.

The shift is primarily driven by economic pressures. Since the 1980s, many states have seen a steady decline in funding for public universities, forcing institutions to reduce costs in instruction and labor [10]. Adjuncts, who are typically paid per course and do not receive the same benefits as full-time faculty provide a cheaper alternative to tenure-line appointments. According to the American Association of University Professors [11], the majority of instructional staff in U.S. higher education now work off the tenure track, with adjuncts constituting the majority. This transformation allows universities to maintain, sometimes increase, course offerings while balancing strained budgets. Flexibility is another reason behind the growing use of adjuncts. Institutions can quickly scale adjunct appointments up or down depending on enrollment fluctuations and program needs. This adaptability has been especially valuable in the expansion of online education, where courses may require specialized instructors for short-term or experimental offerings. Adjunct faculty, often professionals working in industry, can also bring applied expertise that enhances and enriches the learners' educational experience.

However, this change in academia introduces significant challenges. Adjunct faculty often face uncertain employment, low wages, limited professional development opportunities, and exclusion from institutional governance. Many adjuncts earn low-level wages despite teaching heavy course loads. This instability not only affects faculty well-being but also student outcomes. Adjunct faculty, due to their working conditions, may have less time to mentor students, engage in research, or innovate in

teaching. The rise of adjunct faculty also has implications for academic freedom and the mission of higher education. Tenure traditionally protected the ability of teachers to pursue controversial research topics of interest without fear of adverse consequences. By contrast, the insecure contracts may discourage adjuncts' ability to take risks in scholarship or instruction, potentially with negative consequences on the teaching quality. Furthermore, the growing divide between tenure-track positions and adjunct faculty position creates a two-tiered system that can undermine institutional collaboration and group morale. In response, several reform efforts have emerged. Organizations have started advocating for better pay, job security, and access to benefits for adjuncts. Some institutions have begun creating teaching-intensive, full-time positions with renewable contracts as a middle ground between tenure and adjunct work. Addressing the adjunct labor issue requires balancing institutional financial realities with commitments to academic excellence and fairness.

In summary, the shift toward adjunct faculty reflects broader transformations in higher education funding, labor markets, and instructional delivery. While adjuncts offer flexibility and expertise, the increasing dependence on adjunct faculty threatens academic quality and scholarship. Sustainable reforms that value adjunct contributions while improving working conditions are essential for ensuring that higher education fulfills its mission to both faculty and students.

3. THE SHIFT IN STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS IN ACADEMIA

Higher education has undergone a major transformation over the past several decades, driven by significant changes in student demographics. Colleges and universities, once dominated by traditional students from homogeneous backgrounds, now serve a diverse population that reflects broader social, cultural, and economic shifts. These changes include growth in the enrollment of nontraditional students, first-generation college students, women in the workforce, international students, and racially and ethnically diverse populations. Understanding these shifts is crucial for institutions to adapt curricula, teaching practices, and support services to meet the evolving needs of their students. One of the most significant demographic shifts has been the rise of nontraditional students. Historically, the typical college student was between 18 and 22 years old, enrolled full-time, and financially dependent on their family. Today, a growing number of students are older, working while studying, and/or balancing family responsibilities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2022), about 40% of undergraduate students in the United States are 25 years or older, and approximately half are enrolled part-time [1]. This trend reflects both changing workforce demands that require reskilling and the accessibility of flexible learning options such as online education. Another major shift is the dramatic increase in racial and ethnic diversity among college students. The Pew Research Center (2019) reported that Hispanic and Black student enrollment has increased significantly, with Hispanics now making up about 20% of U.S. undergraduates, compared to only 4% in 1976 [11]. This diversification is partly due to demographic trends in the U.S. population and increased efforts by colleges to promote access and equity. However, persistent gaps in retention and graduation rates highlight ongoing structural inequalities that institutions must address.

The enrollment of first-generation college students has also risen, reshaping the higher education landscape. These students, often from lower-income backgrounds, face unique challenges such as limited access to academic networks and unfamiliarity with higher education systems. Research shows that first-generation students are more likely to work long hours, attend part-time, and struggle with persistence compared to their peers. As a result, colleges are increasingly developing mentorship programs, financial support systems, and advising models tailored to first-generation student success. Gender dynamics have also shifted. Women now constitute the majority of college students in many countries. In the United States, women represent nearly 58% of undergraduate enrollment, a reversal of the historical gender gap in higher education [1]. This change has influenced the fields of study, professional pipelines, and institutional priorities, though gender disparities persist in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines where men remain overrepresented. Additionally, globalization has contributed to a surge in international student enrollment, particularly in countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. These students enrich campus diversity, bring global perspectives, and contribute significantly to institutional revenues. However, shifts in immigration policies, global competition, and the COVID-19 pandemic have introduced new uncertainties in sustaining international student populations.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics [12], “overall employment of postsecondary teachers is projected to grow 7 percent from 2024 to 2034.” At the same time as colleges and universities are shifting away from full-time faculty and toward adjunct part-time faculty, there has been a significant escalation of students enrolling in online higher education. The shifts in distance learning enrollment indicate that while many students initially enrolled in online courses because of the pandemic [13], distance learning numbers remain high long after lockdowns ended. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics [13], the percentage of undergraduate students taking at least one online course during the 2019 to 2021 period ranged from 36 percent in 2019 to 75 percent in 2020 and fell to 61 percent in 2021. This coincides with the first COVID outbreak in the fall of 2020 and the slow return to a new normal afterwards. In 2022, a bachelor's degree was the most common degree to earn online, representing 47.4% of all online degrees awarded by primarily online colleges. More than 94,000 graduate students

also earned master's degrees online, making up 33.7% of all online degrees conferred. 46,753 students earned associate degrees online, and almost 6,000 earned a doctoral degree online [13].

In summary, the evolving demographics of students in higher education reflect a broader societal transformation. This has increased with the rise in the online and hybrid modes of education. Institutions that successfully adapt to these shifts by implementing inclusive teaching practices, offering flexible learning opportunities, and addressing equity gaps will be better positioned to serve diverse learners. Ultimately, embracing demographic diversity strengthens higher education by expanding access, enriching learning environments, and preparing students for participation in a global society. Suffice to say, there is an exponential rise in students, both undergraduate and graduate, taking online classes. This fuels a huge demand for faculty to teach these courses. Colleges and universities are primarily looking to hire adjunct faculty to meet this demand. Adjunct professor demand in subject-specific domains is projected to grow significantly. Colleges are spending substantial amounts of resources on the hiring process for online adjunct faculty. This adds to the inflation and overspending practices in administration, money that could be spent instead on educating America's budding scholars.

4. HIRING PROCESS FOR ONLINE FACULTY

For many institutions, the hiring process for online adjunct faculty has historically paralleled that of full-time on-ground faculty. Driven by rapid advancements in technology, this is changing as the focus shifts to a hybrid hiring model; one that includes elements of a traditional face-to-face methodology along with virtual components. Many institutions will continue to utilize a combination of face-to-face processes, with virtualized components for on-ground faculty, while focusing on virtual tools for their online adjunct cohorts thus attracting a more geographically diverse candidate pool.

Along with the transition to a hybrid hiring model has come a shift in advertising philosophy. In recent years, institutions have utilized multiple advertising channels for recruitment, primarily focused on a local candidate pool. A study conducted in 2015 [14], of some two hundred, two- and four-year institutions (Table 1), found that more than half of the respondents used their internal web site and word of mouth to attract candidates which limited their outreach efforts.

Table 1: Advertising Methods for Online Adjunct Positions

Advertising Method	Percentage
Institutional website / newsletter / mailings	78%
Word of mouth / informal channels	66%
National Publication	23%
Other	11%
Adjunct matching service	02%

Source: Magda, A. J., Poulin, R., & Clinefelter, D. L. (2015) [14]

This legacy advertising model has worked well when recruiting from a pool of candidates that are within commuting distance of their facilities, but it severely limits the overall availability of qualified candidates. The study [14] concluded that in addition to the limited outreach, many institutions do not have a centralized approach to recruiting adjunct faculty as compared to their on-ground equivalent. In many cases, the individual departments within an institution do their own recruiting, advertising, and screening of adjunct faculty thus leading to inconsistent hiring practices. This approach has undoubtedly reduced administrative costs but has also prevented the institutions from accessing a more geographically diverse workforce.

Evaluating applications has taken on new levels of complexity. With the proliferation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools available to job seekers, there is an ever-increasing volume of responses to job postings. In recent years, this has driven a sense of urgency as Human Resource (HR) departments seek out the limited pool of qualified faculty for online positions. Faced with reductions in staffing and budgets, HR professionals are deploying AI tools of their own. As applications are received, they are automatically screened to determine if they are complete, the applicant meets the desired academic qualifications, and the minimum amount of experience is well documented. In some instances, where recruitment posting may have generated fifty responses, that number may now exceed four hundred, leading to lengthy delays in reviewing them: AI tools have substantially reduced this time. Along with the increasing volume of applicants is a corresponding escalation in fraud. Some examples include fake academic credentials, embellished or completely false work histories, or fake identities. Utilizing AI to root out irregularities in applications, HR professionals are able to detect fraudulent information by analyzing the writing style, cross-referencing available public records, academic sources, or other commercially available data sources. As an example, checking

databases to determine if previous employer information matches industry data or verifying an academic degree came from an accredited school. Utilizing AI tools, human resource staff are now able to review each application within a couple of minutes and make a recommendation to continue with the candidate or reject them. Once human staff have reviewed the recommendations, an interview list is generated. These tools have become an important part of the recruiting process [15], increasing efficiency, facilitating the tracking of applications, and improving the overall transparency of the process.

The use of technology has also impacted on the interview process. The ideal way to conduct interviews would be to do in-person sessions. Having an applicant face-to-face provides the interviewer, or panel members, with the opportunity to interact with the candidate in ways that are awkward with video conferencing. However, with the need to access a broader pool of applicants, video conference interviews are becoming more common place. When recruiting for an online position, the video conferenced interview does offer an advantage as it provides the opportunity to evaluate a candidate using some of the tools and technologies that would be routinely experienced in the online modality. This provides an opening for the interviewer, or panel members, to evaluate the candidate in terms of on-camera performance, communication / presenter skills, and their passion toward teaching and online modality. It can also reveal any disconnect in the candidate's ability to multitask, an important core competency for online faculty. Even with these advantages, there are some unique challenges that interviewers must be aware of. Increasingly the use of Deep Fake technology [16] is being encountered in video conference interviews. It is the use of software to allow someone to alter their image or video to impersonate the true candidate during an interview. This has obvious consequences for the prospective employer as they are not hiring the uniquely qualified individual. In a recent report, by a major U.S. news agency [17], the authors described some of the "red flags" for detecting Deep Fake technology use as long delays in responses, the sound of key clicks as the candidate research questions, lack of industry knowledge, or inability to answer questions regarding their academic background.

In summary, advancements in Artificial Intelligence technology have changed the way institutions recruit a more geographically diverse workforce for online positions. The shift to a hybrid hiring model, incorporating attributes of the on-ground and online modalities, has brought about new strategies for recruiting online faculty that leverages a more global approach. Using video conference technology to conduct interviews can offer multiple advantages for the hiring institution, as well as the candidate, but it is not without additional risks. Finally, interviewers must be aware of the risks inherent to video conference interviews and be mindful of techniques to detect and defeat fraud.

5. DISCUSSIONS

The recruitment of faculty for online instruction is an increasingly complex endeavor that intersects with institutional missions, student success, and the evolving higher education workforce. The discussion of best practices clarifies the importance of balancing quality, equity, and efficiency in a digital hiring space. Unlike traditional recruitment, online faculty hiring requires institutions to evaluate not only subject matter expertise but also competencies in digital platforms, ability and interest in ever-changing technologies, and student engagement in virtual platforms. This section discusses the broader implications of recruitment practices, challenges institutions face, and potential strategies for sustainable faculty hiring.

One key consideration is the redefinition of faculty qualifications in the context of online instruction. Effective online educators must possess effective communication skills, technological proficiency, and the ability to foster meaningful interaction with virtual platforms. Institutions that fail to integrate these criteria risk hiring faculty who struggle to engage online learners. Therefore, recruitment practices should expand beyond traditional academic credentials to include assessments of digital teaching competence, content development, or certifications in instructional design.

Online recruitment allows institutions to reach broader and more diverse applicant groups by eliminating geographic barriers. However, some biases may still exist. To minimize this further, institutions should adopt standardized rubrics, blind review practices, and structured interviews that emphasize teaching philosophy and student-centered philosophies. Promoting faculty variety not only enriches academic communities but also aligns faculty demographics more closely with increasingly diverse student populations, thus improving equity and representation in higher education.

Another critical issue is the dependence on adjunct faculty in online education. While adjuncts provide flexibility and cost savings, dependence on them can compromise instructional quality and long-term faculty engagement. Adjunct faculty often lack access to institutional resources, professional development, and career stability, which may negatively impact commitment and student performance. Recruitment best practices should therefore balance the use of adjuncts with investments in full-time online faculty positions and ensure that adjunct hires also receive adequate training and support.

Technology-enabled recruitment methods also bring both opportunities and challenges. Applicant tracking systems, video interviews, and AI-assisted screening tools streamline processes, but they risk losing human wisdom. Institutions must adopt

transparent and ethical use of technology in recruitment to ensure that efficiency does not come at the expense of human experience. Combining digital tools with human judgment remains essential to successful faculty recruitment.

Finally, faculty staffing must be tied to retention and long-term engagement. Recruitment efforts that overlook professional development, workload balance, and institutional support structures may result in low retention. Thus, best practices for recruitment extend beyond the initial hiring process to include continuous faculty support.

In summary, the discussion of best practices for online faculty recruitment underscores the importance of integrating quality, equity, and sustainability into hiring models. Institutions that adopt inclusive, technologically sound, and development-oriented strategies are better positioned to recruit faculty capable of delivering high-quality online education and advancing institutional missions in a digital space. Finally, with the continuing growth in online education and the migration to more online adjunct faculty comes a tremendous strain on higher education in-house recruiters. What is becoming known is the increasing risks of individual institutions doing their hiring with limited resources and expertise. The ever-increasing number of applications, driven in part by the emergence of AI technology, has overwhelmed HR recruiters seeking to fill available faculty positions. Adding to the problem is the growing volume of fraudulent applications enabled with AI technology. The opportunity exists for the institution to subcontract this project to a highly specialized staffing company, one whose only business is academic recruitment and talent management, thus reducing the risks and costs of recruitment for their client organizations. This organization would possess the expertise to identify and eliminate fraudulent applications. What differentiates this organization from the existing staffing companies is that they would go beyond merely supplying candidates to their clients; they provide fully vetted candidates with verified resumes. Staffed by professionals in academic staffing, this organization would provide faculty who have been fully screened for their academic qualifications, as well as having passed an intensive background investigation to include validation of their credentials and experience.

6. CONTINUING RESEARCH

Today, academic institutions face the simultaneous challenges of recruiting talented faculty while maintaining cost-effective and sustainable hiring systems. Despite advancements in digital platforms, important gaps remain in understanding how new recruitment technologies influence faculty retention, instructional quality, and administrative efficiency. Following are areas suggested for continuing research:

1. Study on Strengthening Online Faculty Recruitment and Retention

Future inquiry should investigate how online recruitment processes can be optimized to support both instructional quality and faculty retention. The purpose of this study would be to explore the role of digital tools—such as artificial intelligence, virtual interviews, and automated screening—in shaping fairness, inclusivity, and effectiveness in faculty hiring. Anticipated outcomes include the development of a model that integrates technological solutions with human-centered practices to ensure alignment with institutional missions while advancing diversity and equity objectives.

Research Questions

Fairness & Bias Mitigation: How can institutions safeguard equity when using AI-driven screening systems and video interviews in faculty recruitment? [18,19].

Methodologies

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Examine institutional data to determine correlations between recruitment methods, retention rates, and instructional performance.
- **Qualitative Interviews/Surveys:** Collect perspectives from HR staff, search committees, and online faculty about fairness and transparency.
- **Case Studies:** Analyze institutions that have successfully implemented inclusive digital recruitment strategies and extract transferable lessons.

Anticipated Contributions

This research will deepen the scholarly understanding of how digital transformation is altering faculty recruitment practices and identify strategies to reduce bias while improving candidate experiences [20]. Beyond theory, findings will support institutions, policymakers, and accrediting agencies in refining recruitment systems, while also paving the way for future work on artificial intelligence in hiring and its link to institutional outcomes [21].

2. Study on Assessing the Cost-Effectiveness of Centralized vs. Decentralized Faculty Hiring

Another area requiring examination is the financial and administrative efficiency of different recruitment structures. As digital hiring systems expand, HR operations often become more costly. Models such as the Higher Education

Recruitment Consortium (HERC) demonstrate how shared, centralized recruitment can reduce redundancy and enhance collaboration across institutions [22]. By contrast, decentralized approaches may preserve institutional autonomy but risk inefficiencies [23]. The goal of this study is to compare centralized, decentralized, and outsourced recruitment models to evaluate their relative costs and impacts on faculty quality and institutional mission.

Research Questions

- *Cost and Efficiency:* How do recruitment expenses and time-to-hire differ across centralized, decentralized, and outsourced approaches?
- *Impact on Quality:* Which model best supports academic quality and alignment with mission.
- *Risks & Benefits:* What trade-offs arise from outsourcing recruitment, particularly regarding candidate experience and institutional cohesion?

Methodology

- **Financial Benchmarking:** Collect and analyze cost and staffing data to compare the efficiency of each model.
- **Comparative Case Studies:** Investigate the experiences of institutions within HERC consortia alongside those using decentralized strategies.
- **Stakeholder Interviews:** Engage administrators, faculty, and HR professionals to gather perspectives on alignment, risks, and perceived outcomes.

Anticipated Contributions

- Provide evidence on whether centralized systems reduce costs while maintaining quality and equity.
- Show how collaborative consortia can expand recruitment reach and outcomes.
- Offer guidance for institutions weighing outsourcing or restructuring decisions to balance efficiency with academic integrity.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The recruitment of qualified faculty for online instruction has become a crucial priority for higher education institutions, particularly as digital learning increases across the global educational space. The shift toward online education, accelerated by technological advances, shifting student needs, and the post-COVID pandemic shifts, has compelled a reassessment of faculty hiring best practices and strategies. As discussed in this paper, best practices in online faculty recruitment revolve around aligning institutional goals with instructional quality, leveraging technology, and ensuring sustainable support for faculty retention. Critical drivers for online faculty recruitment and retention are:

- The process must be intentional, and goal driven. Unlike traditional hiring, this process requires identifying candidates with not only subject matter expertise but also digital competence. Faculty must demonstrate adaptability, proficiency with Learning Management Systems (LMS), and the ability to engage students in virtual environments. Effective online instructors encourage interaction and student-centered learning.
- Institutions should design recruitment processes and guidelines that prioritize teaching effectiveness, digital literacy, and a commitment to content creation and accessibility.
- Equally important are recruitment strategies that embrace transparency, equity, and retention. Online recruitment expands the potential applicant pool, allowing institutions to access talent across geographical boundaries. This presents an opportunity to diversify faculty by reaching historically underrepresented groups. However, best practices demand clear communication of job expectations, fair evaluation criteria, and non-biased mechanisms to ensure fair selection. Following these best practices, academic institutions not only improve their academic communities, but they also reflect and serve diverse student populations.
- Retention and long-term faculty engagement also emerge as crucial components of recruitment best practices. Successful hiring does not end with an offer letter; rather, it must be accompanied by structured onboarding, mentorship, and professional development tailored to online instruction. Faculty who gets ongoing training in virtual platforms and digital tools are more likely to thrive and contribute meaningfully to student success. Moreover, compensation models, workload balance, and pathways for professional growth must be carefully considered to avoid faculty frustration and burnout.
- Technology also plays a transformative role in faculty recruitment. Digital platforms, AI-driven screening tools, and video interviews streamline processes and expand access, yet they must be applied responsibly to avoid worsening inequalities. Best practices suggest combining technological efficiency with human-centered evaluation, ensuring that recruitment remains all-inclusive and aligned with institutional values.

In summary, online faculty recruitment is not simply a procedural task but a strategic endeavor with long-term implications for institutional quality, equity, and resilience. The most effective recruitment strategies include instructional skills evaluation, deep commitment to diversity, and ongoing faculty development. Institutions that integrate these practices will be better positioned to attract, retain, and empower faculty who can deliver transformative online learning experiences. The success of online higher education ultimately depends not only on technological infrastructure but on the quality and commitment of the faculty who guide students through digital learning environments. From a business perspective, the increasing size of Human Resources (HR) staff adds to the cost of administration, thus driving up the cost of higher education. This suggests that there should be an opportunity to hire from one or more specialized staffing firms that are focused and specialized in recruiting faculty, thus minimizing the duplication of resources within the institution that may currently exist.

Finally, the two research agendas discussed in the section “CONTINUING RESEARCH,” create a comprehensive path for advancing faculty recruitment in higher education. The first study focuses on optimizing recruitment and retention through digital and AI-enabled practices, while the second evaluates the structural and economic dimensions of centralized versus decentralized models. Taken as a whole, the research offers higher education leaders the tools to design recruitment systems that are inclusive, mission-driven, cost-effective, and capable of sustaining high-quality online education.

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