INVITED ESSAY

Redoubling Our Efforts: How Institutions Can Affect Faculty Diversity

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Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report
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This chapter is part of a larger report by the American Council on Education (ACE) titled *Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report*. The report and its accompanying microsite provide a data-informed foundation for those working to close persistent equity gaps by providing a comprehensive review of the educational pathways of today's college students and the educators who serve them.

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Visit **www.equityinhighered.org** to learn more about the project and to download the full report containing more than 200 indicators on race and ethnicity. Also available on the site are downloadable figures, detailed data, and other resources on race and ethnicity in higher education.

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Redoubling Our Efforts: How Institutions Can Affect Faculty Diversity

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While the American professoriate has long been predominantly White and male, there has been an increased emphasis on the lack of faculty diversity in higher education, particularly in the last five years. As students across the country protested incidents of racism and discrimination on and off campus in 2015–16, they called attention to the small numbers of Black, Latinx,[1] and Native American professors on their campuses, and faculty diversity has consistently appeared on activists' lists of demands (Chessman and Wayt 2016; Flaherty 2015). National agencies such as the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health have also widely noted the lack of national progress in diversifying the professoriate, and have developed new funding initiatives to support the training and development of scholars from underrepresented populations.

Concerns about a lack of progress in faculty diversity are well founded. As evidenced in this volume, the numbers of under-represented minority faculty[2] on college and university campuses remain small, and racial and ethnic diversity of the professoriate remains significantly out of alignment with the nation's undergraduate student body. According to data presented in this report, about three-quarters of all full-time faculty at degree-granting postsecondary institutions are White, while those who identify as Black, Latinx, and Native American *collectively* represent approximately 11 percent. Comparatively, over one-third of all students enrolled in college are Black, Latinx, or Native American, and 52 percent are White.

In response to these trends, internal protests, and external pressures, colleges and universities have voiced both their struggles with and commitment to hiring a faculty body that looks more like their students. Some have instituted new recruitment strategies, policies, and programs directed at increasing the presence of Black, Latinx, and Native American professors, with varying levels of success. Given the challenges and opportunities inherent in efforts to move the needle on faculty diversity, it is important to consider and better understand the barriers that limit progress toward increased representation, as well as the efficacy of solutions at hand.

To make substantive progress, colleges and universities must innovate, test, and replicate new strategies. This includes attending to the multiple ways that academic environments limit the success of talented scholars of color. Research shows that academic contexts and structures often result in decreased interest in entering, and increased levels of departure from, faculty positions (Gibbs et al. 2014; Kayes 2006; Tuitt, Sagaria, and Turner 2007). Recent discourse and research point to three specific areas that need to be addressed to catalyze progress: 1) attractiveness of faculty positions; 2) hiring, tenure, and promotion processes; and 3) departmental and campus climates for faculty of color.

Extending Conversations About the Underrepresentation of Black, Latinx, and Native American Faculty

As the data in this report show, demographics of the U.S. professoriate suggest a mixed story of progress and stagnation in faculty diversity over the last 20 years. In many cases, newly hired professors are more diverse than the faculty body as a whole (e.g., Finkelstein, Conley, and Schuster 2016; Li and Koedel 2017); thus, it may be tempting to assume that the shifting demography of the U.S. population will eventually translate to a more diverse faculty body. It is important to view these data

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1   "Latinx" is a gender-neutral version of Latino that is being used more widely. It includes Latina and Latino, which are usually used to refer to women and men within the community. It also is inclusive of individuals who are trans, queer, gender fluid, or do not identify with the gender binary.

2   Black, Latinx, and Native American individuals have been identified as underrepresented minorities given that their representation in higher education is smaller than in the broader U.S. population. While Asian Americans experience marginalization in the academy and are not equally represented across all ethnic subgroups or in all disciplines (Poon et al. 2016), they are not usually considered underrepresented in the professoriate.

with a critical eye; the rate of change in the faculty body is not consistent with increases in diversity among undergraduates or even PhD recipients.

Further, much of the shift in the demographics of the academy has been due to increases in the number of faculty from underrepresented backgrounds in non-tenure track and part-time positions (Finkelstein, Conley, and Schuster 2016). Although part-time and non-tenure track positions still provide students with exposure to faculty from a more diverse range of backgrounds, these positions do not have access to the protections of tenure, are more likely to be on temporary contracts, and are at the lowest ranks of the academic hierarchy. In other words, increasing faculty diversity in the most vulnerable academic positions does not solve the overall problem; rather, it creates new, pernicious inequities.

Black, Latinx, and Native American faculty are also more scarce in particular academic disciplines. For example, much (and well-deserved) attention has been focused on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, where Black, Latinx, and Native American scholars were less than 9 percent of all faculty members in 2013. Looking beyond STEM, an analysis of selective U.S. research universities revealed that Black scholars are 2.7 percent and Latinx scholars are 5 percent of all economics professors, and under 2 percent of all English professors at these institutions identify as Black (Li and Koedel 2017). Finally, it is important to note that while Asian American faculty are rarely viewed as underrepresented within the professoriate, there are substantive differences across disciplines. Asian American faculty are more present in biology (13 percent), chemistry (14 percent), and economics (21 percent) departments; however, they appear in much smaller numbers in humanities and social science disciplines such as English (6 percent) and sociology (8 percent) (Li and Koedel 2017).

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We must acknowledge that much of the discourse on increasing faculty diversity has focused on research universities, which may be rooted in the significant underrepresentation of Black, Latinx, and Native American professors in these environments. According to a TIAA Institution report (Finkelstein, Conley, and Schuster 2016), Black, Latinx, and Native American scholars are most underrepresented at research universities; White faculty outnumber underrepresented minority tenured professors 9.3 to 1, and 6.1 to 1 among tenure-track faculty. Disparities are also notable at master's comprehensive institutions; underrepresented minority faculty are outnumbered by White faculty by 8 to 1 among tenured faculty and 5.9 to 1 for those on the tenure track. Disparities remain at baccalaureate and two-year institutions, but their faculties are more diverse. Analyses also reveal smaller differences between the representation of Black, Latinx, and Native American faculty when comparing those who are tenured and on the tenure track (Finkelstein, Conley, and Schuster 2016).

Higher Education's Faculty "Pipeline Problem"

As institutions and national organizations have developed interventions to promote the increased representation of faculty of color, there has been an emphasis on increasing the number of potential candidates available. This is particularly true for faculty positions at research universities given the disparities described above and their role in the creation of new knowledge and the next generation of scholars. Some argue that outstanding Black, Latinx, and Native American faculty candidates are in short supply, and are frequently sought and hired away by institutions able to make more lucrative or otherwise attractive offers (Smith, Wolf, and Busenberg 1996; Tuitt, Sagaria, and Turner 2007), thus making it difficult for certain schools to build a diverse faculty body. Others argue that most Black, Latinx, and Native American applicants are uncompetitive or a poor fit for their available positions (Smith et al. 2004; Tuitt, Sagaria, and Turner 2007).

In response, attention has been focused on increasing the number and quality of potential candidates of color—preparing diverse students to enter and complete graduate programs, compete for faculty positions, and successfully navigate tenure and promotion processes. These strategies intend to address what is commonly referred to as the "pipeline problem," or the sheer unavailability of scholars of color (e.g., Knowles and Harleston 1997; Patel 2015).

This framing is not wrong—we absolutely must increase the number of Black, Latinx, and Native American graduate students and PhDs as part of a larger strategy to increase faculty diversity. However, focusing on the pipeline offers incomplete solutions to a complex problem. Blaming a lack of faculty diversity on the number and quality of candidates alone is short-sighted and ignores the many qualified candidates who report that they are not being recruited to available positions (Smith et al. 2004) or choose to leave the academy. It is equally important to ensure the professoriate becomes a more attractive option for Black, Latinx, and Native American scholars. As a field, higher education must refocus its attention on understanding and addressing how faculty—especially full-time and tenure track faculty—are recruited and hired, and the culture and climate of the environments in which they ultimately work.

Addressing Aspirations, Hiring, and Retention to Promote Faculty Diversity

As institutions develop new strategies to promote faculty diversity, a first step is to consider whether doctoral students from underrepresented minority backgrounds are interested in and will ultimately apply for faculty positions. Recent research suggests that students' interest in pursuing academic careers—particularly at research institutions—significantly decreases as they make their way through their graduate programs (Fuhrmann et al. 2011; Sauermann and Roach 2012). Importantly, declines are greater for Black, Latinx, and Native American graduate students, with underrepresented minority women showing the lowest levels of interest in faculty careers by the end of their graduate training (Gibbs et al. 2014).

Multiple factors shape students' interest in becoming faculty, and may account for steeper declines among underrepresented minority scholars. Negative racial climates and marginalization by faculty and peers have an influence on these trends (e.g., Felder, Stevenson, and Gasman 2014; Griffin et al. 2015; Robinson et al. 2016), creating a discriminatory environment that may translate to less interest in staying in the academy long term. Scholars have further connected disinterest in faculty careers to a perceived lack of alignment with the culture of the academy and the nature of faculty life and work. Graduate students generally report a disconnect between their personal values and the structural dynamics of the academy. Namely, they express concern about a heavy workload with limited time for personal interests and commitments, and an emphasis on publishing and getting grants over mentorship, teaching, and unfettered intellectual exploration as particularly discouraging (Fuhrmann et al. 2011; Gibbs and Griffin 2013).

Black, Latinx, and Native American students may be particularly invested in doing work that addresses persistent social problems, serves their home and institutional communities, or diversifies higher education. They may not see faculty life and work as a way to reach these goals, particularly if they are seeking positions at research universities that emphasize obtaining funding and conducting research that is linked to more abstract discoveries (Gibbs and Griffin 2013; Johnson 2007). Thus, we must consider whether we will have any success increasing faculty diversity without addressing the contexts within which students are trained. One solution is to rethink whether and how institutions recognize the importance and value of multiple forms of scholarly and other contributions to make faculty positions more appealing, and to address the issue of work-life balance.

It is also critical for institutions to examine how potential candidates are recruited and how hiring decisions are made; this is an area of particular relevance given recent research on the ways that bias can infiltrate the faculty search and selection processes (Carnes et al. 2015; Tuitt, Sagaria, and Turner 2007). Multiple studies suggest that myths about stiff competition and bidding wars for a small number of underrepresented minority scholars are overinflated. Black, Latinx, and Native American faculty candidates do not feel sought after or in demand; rather, they feel overlooked and less desirable in academic searches (Smith, Wolf, and Busenberg 1996; Smith et al. 2004; Tuitt, Sagaria, and Turner 2007).

> One solution is to rethink whether and how institutions recognize the importance and value of multiple forms of scholarly and other contributions to make faculty positions more appealing, and to address the issue of work-life balance.

While many institutional leaders and search committees assert that they are doing their best to identify and encourage scholars of color to apply to open positions, their efforts often do not reach Black, Latinx, and Native American scholars. Experts suggest that institutions should go beyond a few well-placed position descriptions and general affirmative action statements. Pre-search campus visits with potential candidates, cluster hires (i.e., targeted resources toward hiring a group of faculty at one time), and strategic placement of advertisements in resources targeting people of color are necessary to make progress in diversifying applicant pools (Kayes 2006; Smith et al. 2004). Tuitt and colleagues (2007) assert that institutions also must find new ways to send scholars of color signals that they will be welcomed into a hospitable climate and have access to community beyond the campus, offering critical career development resources and holistic support.

> Increasing faculty diversity requires attention to departmental and campus climates and environments, including the provision of support and resources necessary for faculty retention.

It is also important to consider the characteristics and criteria on which search committees place value as they engage in the hiring process. Researchers have called attention to how implicit bias can manifest in the applicant review process. Search committee members (who are often White and/or male) often unconsciously give preference to individuals that remind them of themselves, and more critically assess the qualifications and scholarly pursuits of those that do not (Smith et al. 2004; Tuitt, Sagaria, and Turner 2007). Another common practice used by search committees is to lean heavily on their own networks—often consisting of individuals who were educated at the same or similar institutions or otherwise represent a similar profile—again resulting in a homogeneous candidate pool (Tuitt, Sagaria, and Turner 2007). This is especially true at highly selective institutions that favor academic pedigree above all else (Tugend 2018). While institutions may articulate a broad commitment to promoting diversity and equity in higher education, search committees may instead focus on recruiting faculty with well-established research agendas from top-ranked institutions, overlooking scholars focused on teaching, mentoring, or community-based research that aims to address the very social problems that institutions and departments study and care about. Implicit bias training and requiring search committees to complete anti-bias checklists may be helpful in shifting the hiring process and making real progress on faculty diversity goals (Tugend 2018).

Finally, increasing faculty diversity requires attention to departmental and campus climates and environments, including the provision of support and resources necessary for faculty retention. Some describe a revolving-door phenomenon, noting that higher education makes little progress in faculty diversity because Black, Latinx, and Native American new hires often simply replace scholars of color who did not persist. A growing body of research has documented the multiple challenges that faculty of color generally, and underrepresented minority faculty in particular, face in the academy, which can ultimately lead to their departure (see Turner, Gonzalez, and Wood 2008 for a comprehensive review). Faculty members of color face subtle and overt racism from their colleagues, navigating stereotypes, microaggressions, and racist comments on a regular basis (Jayakumar et al. 2009; Pittman 2012; Stanley 2007). Studies show that faculty members of color face questions about their legitimacy as scholars, the quality and contributions of their scholarship (especially if focused on communities of color), and exclusion from informal social networks that are often an invaluable source of support (Griffin et al. 2011; Stanley 2007).

Research suggests classroom contexts can also be challenging, and students are described as questioning the authority and expertise of scholars of color in ways that they do not question White faculty. Students' stereotypes and negative perceptions appear to translate to lower teaching evaluation scores, which can have negative implications for tenure and promotion reviews (Griffin, Bennett, and Harris 2013; Pittman 2010; Stanley 2007). Faculty of color also carry a heavier service burden than their colleagues, more often engaging in committee work, community engagement activities, and mentorship of students (Padilla 1994; Turner, González, and Wood 2008). While many find this work fulfilling and central to their mission as faculty members, it can also be emotionally draining and time-consuming (Baez 2000; Diggs et al. 2009; Joseph and Hirshfield 2011; Stanley 2007). Perhaps most importantly, engagement in service is often undervalued as faculty are considered for tenure and promotion, particularly at research universities (O'Meara 2016; Tierney and Bensimon 1996). Retaining a more diverse professoriate requires attention to distinctions in experiences once scholars become faculty, particularly those that translate to lower rates of success and satisfaction, and higher rates of departure.

Conclusion

Increases in faculty diversity will not just happen as the nation's demographics shift (Gibbs et al. 2014). Rather, there are multiple factors and forces within the academy that must be addressed to make substantive gains in the number of professors from underrepresented groups in the academy. Campus leaders, consortia of institutions, and national organizations must work individually and collaboratively to develop new, innovative strategies that address the multiple factors that have limited progress in diversifying the professoriate.

There have been several initiatives of note that are attempting to promote change. The National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation have issued statements and funded initiatives focused on increasing diversity in science, with specific attention focused on expanding access to faculty positions. The Consortium for Faculty Diversity in Liberal Arts Colleges offers residential postdoctoral fellowship awards, fostering the ability of member institutions to build relationships and recruit young scholars to their institutions. Institutions such as Harvard University (MA), Brown University (RI), and Boston College have developed comprehensive strategies to recruit, hire, and retain a more diverse faculty body. California Lutheran University, a liberal arts college, contracted with the University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education to increase inclusion and mitigate bias in their faculty search and hiring processes.

National agencies and consortia such as the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and the Center for the Integration of Teaching, Research, and Learning have encouraged discourse, provided resources, and offered training focused on expanding access to and increasing diversity in the academy at research universities and community colleges, respectively. Philanthropic entities such as the Kresge Foundation, Mellon Foundation, and ECMC Foundation have partnered with the Penn Center for Minority Serving Institutions to support faculty and increase access to positions at minority serving institutions, collaborating to offer mentorship, leadership development, and workshops focused on faculty success. These efforts are a promising start, and should be encouraged, evaluated, and expanded to promote meaningful progress toward a more diverse academy.

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