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Best Practices for Recruiting and Retaining Diverse Faculty for Institutions of Higher Education

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Research has shown that increasing diversity in organizations and the workplace is not only a matter of social justice. It suggests that including diverse voices and experiences makes groups more knowledgeable, sensitive, efficient, creative, and successful². Examples cited claim that increased diversity (in its broadest sense, i.e., gender, ethnicity, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, religious and socioeconomic background) affords groups rich opportunities to respond more effectively to the challenges of society that require multiple perspectives and broad approaches to complex problem-solving³. Unfortunately, among the faculty represented in higher education, diversity remains an issue. And, the proportion of diverse individuals in positions of leadership in academia has been decreasing, even among minority-serving institutions⁴. Also, women suffer widespread discrimination in many forms⁵.

What follows is a list of suggestions for improving both recruitment and retention of diverse faculty in institutions of higher education. Given the tremendous diversity of institutions of higher education in this country, some may work better than others for your institution. Another key factor is the majority of recommendations herein require financial resources which demands commitment from the top authorities of the institution, from the board of trustees to the deans' level.

1. Campus Climate Assessment: An institution should seek to understand, both qualitatively and quantitatively, their current practices and campus climate regarding diversity and inclusion. That understanding should be based on a broad definition of diversity that includes gender, ethnicity, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, and religious background.

2. Comprehensive Diversity Plan: An institution should develop a strategic plan that identifies both problems and goals related to diversity and inclusion. Ideally, the plan should be institutionalized to ensure that all of the constituents of the university recognize it as a top priority. The preparation of the plan must include input from all constituencies: faculty (both tenure track and non-tenure track), staff, students, and alumni. From the beginning the head of the institution (President, Chancellor) should publicly show interest and support for the plan and

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² See, e.g., Hong, L. & S. Page. 2004. Group of diverse problem solvers can outperform groups of high-ability problem solvers. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci.* **101**:16385-16389.

³ Page, S. 2007. *The difference. How the power of diversity creates better groups, firms, schools and society.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁴ *The American College President 2012.* American Council on Education.

⁵ Romero, A. 2015. Women, minorities face prejudice in academia. *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 9 February 2015, p. 3. Romero, A. 2016. Women in academia facing more prejudices. *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 8 February 2016, p. 3.

its implementation. As mentioned above, increasing diversity requires financial resources and there is no better way to demonstrate support for those efforts by the upper administration than to provide generous financial resources to that end.

3. Promoting Diversity: Faculty and staff need to be informed about diversity issues and provide cultural competency training for them. One way to heighten the importance of diversity on campus is to make sure that people with diverse backgrounds are routinely portrayed – and their achievements recognized – in the marketing material of the institution. Another is to give a Diversity Achievement Award every year based on nominations from faculty, staff, and students to recognize significant contributions in this area. The award should be presented at a campus-wide occasion like, for example, by the President at Fall Convocation. It is also important for your institution to take every opportunity to talk about its successes with diversity.

4. Search Processes: The Equal Opportunity Office should visit with each faculty search committee to brief them on ensuring sound equal employment opportunity practices throughout the search and in reviewing the level of underrepresentation of minorities or women in the job group to which the searched position falls. The EO Office should work with the search committee to assist them in proactive outreach for applicants from underrepresented groups. These practices can be explored and enhancements made to more effectively recruit diverse faculty. Further, training of departments regarding how to best search, attract, and retain diverse faculty via workshops should be made available. Be sure that the search ad makes a strong statement regarding diversity that goes beyond the standard ones used by most other institutions. For example, when candidates read that working with multicultural or otherwise diverse groups of people is a required qualification, the diverse candidate then is more likely to be interested and confident in researching the advertised position. This position would attract more diverse applicants than it would without that emphasis.

A special effort must be made in order to train different constituencies about unconscious bias. There are several documents that can be used to that end. One was assembled by The Association for Women in Science: http://www.awis.org/?Implicit_bias. Another is a document that the Mathematical Association of America made public that helps remind us of the right steps to take in the hiring process to help avoid bias. You can find that document at http://maa.org/sites/default/files/pdf/ABOUTMAA/avoiding_implicit_bias.pdf. Finally, you can also provide members of a search committee with a self-test that can lead them to discover their own biases. You can find it at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>; it takes 10-15 minutes to complete and causes you to become aware of associations you make subconsciously.

Another strategy that works is to identify terminal degree candidates representing diversity who could join the institution while completing their terminal degree, and if successful, be considered for a faculty position by inviting them to apply. Search committees need to find out what is important to candidates through the telephone screening or interview process and highlight it. Candidates are not only making a decision to work at your institution, but to live and make a life for themselves and possibly their families there. Again, the focus should be on the individual, rather than on any particular group. Candidates should also be made aware of what their salary can purchase in your location and in neighboring counties. In addition, diverse candidates/finalists can meet with the top diversity officer on your campus after you've ensured that the materials are specifically tailored to meet candidates' needs. Safeguarding that diverse candidates can work and live in a community that is not yet highly diverse can be challenging.

During a search, it may be useful to offer to bring in the spouse/partner of a candidate, should they become a serious contender for a position. This can be offered on either the first or follow-up interview. Diverse candidates may need a little more time in the community with their spouse/partner, to fully appreciate the many resources that are available to them for a high quality of life. A person relocating who has the full support of their family is more likely to have a full and healthy tenure at your institution. A search committee needs diversity within it. It may be important to consider the power differentials when selecting members so that people will feel free to share opinions. Be aware of the same faculty repeatedly sitting on an unreasonable number of search committees. This would unfairly impose on the time needed to advance their own careers. You need to broaden your current paradigm and consider minority individuals outside the specific department or unit of the position being searched.

Another worthwhile action is to be aware of and participate in events of those non-profit organizations that specialize in providing opportunities for minorities in academia. An example is Black Doctoral Network (<http://www.blackphdnetwork.com/>) which provides candidate profiles and meeting opportunities for your institution recruiters/search committees.

5. Cluster Hiring: There are two forms of cluster hiring for minorities. The first is hiring more than one diverse person at a time, minimizing feelings of isolationism and overload. The second is hiring a group of people at all levels that are well versed in more than one area and can float between disciplines. The advantage to this is having a cohort of flexible and dynamic minority scholars well suited to the new challenges facing them in an ever-changing environment. Another way to increase diversity on campus is by having visiting and/or exchange programs as a beginning step to help provide a presence of ethnic diversity among the faculty on campus. This can be achieved by developing a Visiting Scholar Program and/or a Faculty Exchange Program. The Visiting Scholar is given as an honorary title awarded to people who hold professorial (including research) positions at other institutions, or other professional positions, and who are invited by an academic department. This can be implemented by contacting, among others, historically black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions.

6. Multicultural Resource Directory for Candidates and New Diverse Faculty Hires: As diverse faculty interview on campus and are hired, it is important for them to understand that there are appropriate resources available to them both on campus and in the community. Therefore a guide of those resources must be prepared, constantly updated, and readily available on the website of the institution.

7. Funding Initiatives: As mentioned earlier, to increase diversity on campus requires financial resources. Therefore, centralized funding should be utilized for a variety of hiring incentives:

- a. Competitive beginning salary and start-up incentives (e.g. provision of labs, equipment, teaching assistant, etc.).
- b. "Bridge" funding to hire a diverse candidate in anticipation of a retirement, and then use centralized funding to "bridge" funding until that retirement.
- c. Funding for diverse faculty research projects.
- d. Seed grants for diversity curriculum development to assist faculty in developing a new course or in revising an existing course offering that will feature diversity and/or comparative material and perspectives.
- e. Internal grant program to provide financial support to departments for new hires.

f. Shared funding.

g. Fundraising campaigns to support faculty diversity. Administrators – particularly deans – should work on these campaigns in conjunction with the Development/Advancement offices of the institution. This is not easy, among other reasons, because alumni – the main source for financial support of colleges and universities – tend not to be as highly diversified and tend to have more financial resources. One way to overcome that is to portray people of color who are donors even if their financial support/resources are not as high. This helps to create a sense that minorities can also be donors and that they are already participating in those campaigns even if philanthropic tradition is not as well known among those groups.

8. Mentoring Programs: Mentoring is a critical component for professionally developing junior faculty. You must aim at reinforcing a respectful, positive work environment. One way to provide support is also by instituting a Minority Employee Council (MEC) as a group that comes together for camaraderie and support for the minority faculty. Other ways to enhance mentoring and support for minorities could be through special events. For example, you could organize a Minority Faculty Welcoming Reception to help make them feel welcome and to introduce them to other new and current diverse faculty on campus. You could also organize a Diverse Women Empowerment Dinner at an annual event to celebrate the professional accomplishments and personal successes of diverse women throughout the community. The occasion could be used to raise scholarship funds for diverse women students. Another initiative could be to create centers for diversity that utilize students and involves faculty in a variety of educational experiences, including guest lectures, research, workshops on an array of diversity issues. Having such centers could also be attractive to diverse candidates applying for positions at your institution.

9. Retention Studies – Data Collection: Exit interviews with diverse faculty must be conducted in order to understand why they are leaving. The outcomes of those interviews must be used to revisit and revamp the recruitment and retention efforts. This can produce invaluable longitudinal quantitative and qualitative data. Tracking retention, by seeing how long minority employees stay at your institution as opposed to their majority counterparts, and identifying those job groups which experience the most difficult ability to retain minorities, will allow you to focus your effort on these job groups in particular. Accurate and timely retention data will enable you to better assess how well we are doing in meeting our Affirmative Action goals.

10. Leadership Opportunities for Diverse Faculty: One way to retain diverse faculty is by offering them leadership opportunities. Sometimes this includes mentoring an individual for an administrative position or other promotion; or, it can be providing an opportunity for an individual to assume a leadership role on an important university committee. By the same token, we must be careful not to overwhelm diversity faculty with service duties. For example, institutions with a reduced number of diverse faculty should not charge their few minorities in being in every single search committee. They should be compensated with either course releases or enhanced support for their scholarly work, otherwise their professional careers could be derailed, particularly true in the case for junior faculty.

APPENDIX 1

Some organizations that provide resources to enhance diversity and inclusion efforts

[Academic Diversity Search](#)
[American Association of Blacks in Higher Education](#)
[American Council on Education](#)
[American Psychology Association](#)
[Arts Consulting Group](#)
[Association for Women in Mathematics](#)
[Association for Women in Science](#)
[Association of American Colleges and Universities](#)
[Black Doctoral Network](#)
[Chronicle of Higher Education](#)
[Council of Colleges of Arts & Sciences](#)
[Higher Education Recruitment Consortium](#)
[Inside Higher Ed](#)
[Minority Access Inc.](#)
[National Association of Colleges and Employers](#)
[National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education](#)
[National Association of Women Artists](#)
[National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity](#)
[Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education](#)
[Women of Color in the Arts](#)

APPENDIX II

Links to some publications addressing diversity and inclusion topics

Burgoyne, R., T.M. Shaw, R.C. Dawson & Rena Scheinkman. 2010. **Navigating a Complex Landscape to Foster Greater Faculty and Student Diversity in Higher Education**. Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Chronicle of Higher Education. 2016. [Hiring in Academe: Insights on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#).

Chronicle of Higher Education. 2016. [Creating a Diverse Faculty](#).

Chun, E. & A. Evans. 2015. **The Department Chair as Transformative Diversity Leader: Building Inclusive Learning Environments in Higher Education**. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Fine, E. & J. Handelsman. 2012. **Searching for Excellence & Diversity: A Guide for Search Committees. National Edition**. Madison, WI: Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute.

Leslie, S.-J.; A. Cimpian, M. Meyer & E. Freeland. 2015. [Expectations of brilliance underlie gender distributions across academic disciplines](#). *Science* **347**(6219):262-265.

Moody, J. 2012. **Faculty Diversity: Removing the Barriers**. New York: Routledge.

PeopleAdmin. 2016. [Diversity guide: Top 10 practical steps for advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education](#).

- Romero, A. 2013. [Students of black theater break stereotypes.](#) *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 26 April 2013, p.3.
- Romero, A. 2013. [LGBT community faces stigma, stereotypes.](#) *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 22 November 2013, p. 3.
- Romero, A. 2014. [Diversity more than a black and white issue.](#) *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 14 February 2014, p. 3.
- Romero, A. 2014. [Black studies programs aid in understanding U.S.](#) *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 29 August 2014, p. 3.
- Romero, A. 2015. [Positive news for LGBT people in science fields.](#) *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 8 September 2015, p. 3.
- Romero, A. 2015. [Women, minorities face prejudice in academia.](#) *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 9 February 2015, p. 3.
- Romero, A. 2016. [Women in academia facing more prejudices.](#) *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 8 February 2016, p. 3.
- Romero, A. 2016. [Issues with diversity on campus continue.](#) *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 14 March 2016, p. 3.
- Romero, A. 2016. [Who gains from college diversity?](#) *The New York Times*, Section A, p. 26. 19 May 2016.
- Romero, A. 2017. [Student debt disproportionately affects blacks.](#) *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 3 January 2017, p. 3.
- Romero, A. 2017. [There is proof diversity makes colleges better.](#) *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 6 February 2017.
- Romero, A. 2017. [Diversity more than race, gender in higher ed.](#) *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 20 February 2017, p. 3.
- Romero, A. 2017. [Female administrators face discrimination in ed.](#) *The Edwardsville Intelligencer* 6 March 2017, p. 3.
- Smith, D.G., L.E. Wolf & B. E. Busenberg. 1996. **Achieving Faculty Diversity: Debunking the Myths.** Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Sotello, C. & V. Turner. 2002. **Diversifying the Faculty: A Guidebook for Search Committees.** Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges & Universities.
- U.S. Department of Education. 2016. [Expanding College Opportunity by Advancing Diversity and Inclusion.](#)
- U.S. Department of Education. 2016. [Advancing diversity and inclusion in higher education.](#)