

A Diverse Faculty

Before focusing on recruiting and retention strategies, one Big Ten journalism program poses a rhetorical question about faculty diversity:

“What better way for the students to begin to be open to new ways of looking at the world than by seeing and learning from professors who are different from them, and whose very presence at the head of a classroom, as models of excellence, can serve to alter prior conceptions?”

When it comes to building a diverse faculty, schools congregate toward one of three approaches in their diversity plans:

Three approaches:

- √ make an effort
- √ pledge an increase
- √ set a clear goal

□ *Some pledge effort.* A number of programs define their commitment to diversity through nice phrases rather than specific goals. One department calls having a diverse faculty “a top priority.” Another pledges to seek “fair and equitable proportions” of faculty. One diversity plan doesn’t even promise effort, instead stating only a “desire to conduct an inclusive search.” Absent any specifics, these are considered weak statements in a diversity plan.

□ *Some pledge an increase.* These diversity plans typically state the current percentage of women and minority faculty and broadly promise to have a higher percentage without setting a target. One program states its goal this way: “Increase the number of minorities and women on the faculty through active recruitment.” A few programs that already have a diverse faculty use the word “maintain” instead of “increase” in their plans.

□ *Some set measurable goals.* These are strong commitments in a diversity plan because success or failure becomes so transparent. Common benchmarks are to match or exceed the institution’s percentage of diverse faculty or to match or exceed the minority student enrollment in the unit. One nationally prominent school states its faculty demographics goal as matching the national percentages of females and minorities.

Good idea... Set realistic and measurable goals for faculty diversity. Declarations such as “top priority” are nice, but an accreditation team would rather see specific goals than feel-good language.

A common measurable goal is to equal or exceed minority faculty representation in the institution’s faculty. Using a national benchmark, one school pledges to have a faculty more diverse than the minority faculty population reported in the annual demographic survey of ASJMC (16 percent according to *Insights*, Fall 2006).

This 50th-percentile strategy of seeking to mirror the home institution or national demographics may not sound ambitious, but imagine if every program in the nation were actively striving to be in the upper-half of faculty diversity.

Another measurable goal is to meet AEJMC’s 1989 resolution calling on programs to have at least 50 percent of their faculties be a combination of women and minority men – in other words, faculties with no more than 50 percent white males. AEJMC passed this non-binding resolution two decades ago, with the year 2000 as the target date.

A 1989 AEJMC resolution called for faculties to have no more than 50% white males by 2000

Always a good idea...
Cite prior diversity
goals and whether
they were achieved

Some schools note that their faculty compositions have long met the objective of the AEJMC resolution. Other schools make it their ongoing target. The diversity plan at a school in the Midwest notes that its current faculty is 35 percent female or minority, and its diversity goal remains the 50 percent target called for in the 1989 AEJMC resolution.

Some departments confess that diversity goals cannot be achieved until current faculty members retire. A Southern university with a diversity goal of having a female faculty matching student proportions said that, even if every anticipated faculty position in the next two years went to a woman, the program still could not reach its goal until faculty retirements occur after another six-year accreditation cycle has come and gone.

Ironically, this same program uses optimistic language about being able to successfully hire minority faculty. At present, the unit has three minority faculty members and needs to double that number to match the minority student population. Its diversity plan states, "The minority goal cannot be achieved quickly, but it is reasonable to believe that it can be easily achieved by 2012." This is a clear and unambiguous goal. Of course, we would have recommended editing out the word "easily."

Good idea... Cite previous diversity goals and whether they have been achieved.
A large program established a goal to have three more minorities on the faculty within five years. When the self-study was written five years later, the program was able to show that it had added four more minority faculty. That's the way a diversity plan ought to work.

If a program did not achieve previous diversity goals, explain why. But here's a caution: The reason shouldn't be that previous diversity goals were unrealistic (even though they might have been) because that will be viewed as placing the fault on your predecessors. Instead, explain the proactive efforts of the program to reach its diversity goals. For example, a small department in a mostly white state region has a 50 percent female faculty, but no minority faculty. In saying that it had failed to achieve its diversity goal of attracting at least one minority faculty member, the unit specified its efforts to do so, including having made a faculty offer to a minority candidate who turned the offer down. When an accrediting team visits, it could decide that the unit is making good-faith efforts despite still having an all-white faculty.

Benchmarks regarding female faculty are similar across the nation. After all, women comprise 50 percent or more of student enrollments and population areas nationwide. But minority populations across the country differ dramatically, and benchmarks will differ significantly depending on the particular geographic area. Some schools are in areas with small minority populations, and other schools are in urban settings with large minority populations. ACEJMC doesn't expect all programs to have diverse faculties in the same proportion. Instead, the expectation is that minority faculty composition should somewhat reflect the reality of the location.

As a result, most programs strive to increase representation. For instance, the diversity plan at one school in an urban setting says the unit has a 19 percent minority faculty, and the diversity goal is to increase that by 5 percent within three years through new hires.

Conversely, a school that already has a diverse faculty may emphasize maintaining, rather than increasing, its diversity. This seems reasonable. Still, an accreditation team might wonder about a program that sets its diversity goals far lower than the present faculty situation. A JMC unit at a Midwest university currently has 50 percent female faculty and 27 percent minority faculty, but lists its Action Plan goal as "maintain a minimum goal of 35 percent women ... and a minimum of 10 percent minority."

Worst Phrase in a Diversity Plan:

'Reduce underutilization of
underrepresented groups'

This particular plan seems unusually retro, even allowing the unit to drop below the 50 percent women/minorities goal of the 1989 AEJMC resolution.

Not a good idea... Create a diversity plan that can't be measured for at least 10 years. In 2006, a department with an all-white faculty of eight listed its diversity goal as "Make reasonable attempts to ensure that JMC faculty and staff diversity corresponds to student diversity by 2016." Establishing a diversity goal that cannot be tracked for a decade seems meaningless without benchmarks along the way to determine progress. This department needs a good short-term goal to help advance toward that larger goal.

By the way, we present the "Worst Phrase in a Diversity Plan" award to this statement about recruiting diverse faculty: "Reduce underutilization of underrepresented groups." That's a "reduce/under/under" phrase. Ideally, a diversity plan contains at least one *positive* word in its objective.

TAKING THE INITIATIVE

To have a positive outcome, JMC programs need to scan the horizon for innovative ways to address a persistent need.

Good idea... Take advantage of university initiatives related to faculty diversity. Some universities come under pressure from regional accrediting bodies to diversify their faculties. If that happens, universities have been known to offer academic units a new faculty position if it is filled by a minority (laws regarding targeted searches are in flux in some states). Jump on such opportunities if offered.

Good idea... Recruit minority professionals who may be interested in making a transition to the academy. One university calls it a "Grow Your Own" program that involves selecting a minority professional to be a lecturer, supporting that person in a Ph.D. program, and making available a tenure-track faculty position upon completion. One department in the South is currently providing eight semesters of paid leave, plus reimbursement of childcare and travel expenses, for its lone minority faculty member who is pursuing a doctorate and has pledged to accept a tenure-track position upon completion. Wow, that's quite a deal.

Good idea... Seek a new position or endowed professorship specifically to advance diversity in the program. Such a position could be designed to hire a female or minority or, if state employment policies have non-discriminatory hiring clauses that preclude a targeted search, the position could be designed for someone with a teaching and scholarly interest in diversity issues. While such a designation does not preclude finding an excellent white male with those interests, it certainly does increase the probability of females and minorities in the applicant pool.

Good idea... Use short-term appointments to enhance the diversity of the faculty. If a permanent faculty position is not available, then go with the next best strategy. The goal is to have faculty diversity for the good of both students and the professoriate. That can happen with short-term appointments as well.

RECRUITING ISSUES

Just as a course is organized through the creation of a syllabus, a faculty search needs a similar organizational direction at the start. Of course, a program could simply advertise a position in one or two places and, well... hope for a decent applicant pool.

'Grow Your Own'
involves selecting a
minority professional
to be a teacher and
then supporting in a
Ph.D. program

Frankly, that's a bad strategy in general, and it's a particularly bad strategy if a program wants a highly diverse applicant pool.

Good idea... Itemize search strategies up front that will help build a diverse applicant pool. This will require taking initiative. Do not wait for minority candidates to approach you, or for a faculty opening to occur. As one school puts it, diversity recruitment is "continuous, determined and proactive."

Good idea... Visit conventions and conferences where minority candidates are likely to be in larger numbers. One school's diversity plan states that its faculty members are urged to "prospect" for potential female and minority candidates at professional and academic meetings and, when vacancies occur, to use the relationships to recruit these individuals. Other diversity plans encourage faculty to make personal calls to friends and colleagues at other universities and in the professions.

Good idea... Send special mailings to historically black institutions and to national professional and academic organizations representing persons of diverse backgrounds. These include the National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, Asian American Journalists Association, Native American Journalists Association, National Federation of Press Women, Unity: Journalists of Color, and the AEJMC Minorities and Communication Division.

In addition, faculty openings can be advertised in publications that reach minority audiences such as *Diverse* (formerly called *Black Issues in Higher Education*) and *Hispanic Outlook* and on specialty Web sites such as IMDiversity.com.

Good idea... Create a brown bag luncheon series to invite minority academics to campus. One school, acknowledging it does this a recruitment screening device, notes that "we still benefit from their presence and their presentations as guest lecturers" even if the school decides not to pursue any of the individuals as future colleagues.

Good idea... Make sure all search committees have female representation and, when possible, minority representation. This helps mitigate the very understandable tendency for search committee members to select people like themselves to be their future colleagues.

Good idea... Appoint a search committee member to be the "diversity advocate." Even with a mix of faculty members on a search committee, some programs also designate a "diversity advocate" so that the search committee does not lose sight of the value of expanding the candidate pool.

Please don't assign a minority faculty member on the search committee to be the "diversity advocate." Such an assignment places the committee member in the role of seeming to emphasize race more than other credentials in faculty selection.

Similarly, we believe an accreditation team chair should avoid assigning scrutiny of "Standard 3: Diversity and Inclusiveness" to a minority team member. It seems to improperly stereotype.

Good idea... Ensure that every hiring pool contains diverse candidates before selection of finalists is made.

While exceptions may need to exist for highly specialized positions that typically attract a fewer number of applicants, the fact remains that when a hiring pool contains no minorities, the outcome is already predetermined when it comes to any diversity goal.

Recruiting strategies include conventions, mailings, and even brown-bag invitations

Designate a search committee member as 'diversity advocate'

Some programs require that any list of finalists that does not include a member of a minority group be justified. One school even states in its diversity plan that half of all finalists for all searches in the school for the next three years must be women and/or minority candidates.

HIRING DECISIONS

While this is a booklet on diversity, we need to reiterate that academic programs have a multiple set of goals in faculty selection: educational credentials, professional experience, disciplinary expertise, the expectation of being an excellent teacher and scholar, the ubiquitous institutional “fit” that is very real and appropriate to have as a criterion, as well as characteristics such as gender, race and ethnicity.

In making hiring decisions, a few programs explicitly state in their diversity plans that they will consider race and gender as criteria in addition to the academic triumvirate of teaching, scholarship and service.

Here is an example: “All other factors being considered equal, minorities and women will be given preference over male members of the majority.”

Another puts it this way: “The school will use a candidate’s potential for increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in teaching perspectives, research interests and professional role models as a major criterion for recruitment, evaluation and selection.”

One school refers to a candidate’s racial diversity as a “non-traditional strength,” defining it as “the ability to attract minority students or offer new and different research ideas.”

In making a faculty offer, be prepared for candidates to inquire beyond salary and work expectations. Be prepared for collateral questions about summer teaching, office computer systems, and other non-salary considerations. Be careful about promising something to a candidate that you do not provide to existing faculty. You want new faculty to be welcomed as colleagues rather than welcomed with jealousy.

Search committees at state universities, in particular, conduct faculty searches with institutional Affirmative Action Offices looking over their shoulders. Lists must be generated showing recruitment efforts to reach diverse populations, the diversity of the applicant pool, the diversity of those invited to interview on campus, and ultimately the one offered the faculty position. As one school explained in its self-study, if no offer is made to a minority individual among the finalists, that institution’s Affirmative Action Office requires a written report to explain the reason for not hiring that individual.

If an offer is declined, conduct a follow-up interview with the candidate to determine the reason. You may learn something that will help the next search be more successful.

Not a good idea... Whine and throw up your hands in public surrender. A program whined that its university “has no extra funding for minority candidates [so] potential candidates do not apply for our position since they can demand far greater salaries at other institutions.” As if that weren’t enough whining, the statement continued: “Minority candidates are reluctant to come to a place where there are few minority faculty members. This Catch-22 is difficult to fight.”

Don’t whine. It is appropriate to cite legitimate difficulties in recruiting women and minority faculty, but read your statement with the eye of an outsider. If the language angles toward woe-is-us, then rewrite it to be more businesslike.

**A diversity plan says:
'All other factors
being considered
equal, minorities
and women will be
given preference
over male members
of the majority.'**

If the diversity plan sounds woe-is-us, rewrite it to be more businesslike

Here are two examples of businesslike language: “We have found it difficult to attract enough qualified minority candidates for faculty positions, and difficult to make successful offers to those who do apply” and “To recruit a more diverse faculty, we will need more salary resources to be competitive with other universities attempting to hire the same people.”

Avoid the language of surrender, as in this case: “Unfortunately it is evident that few doctoral degree holders are being produced in fields taught by the unit. We must compete for the limited number of qualified candidates, let alone minority and women candidates, with major research universities and nationally known colleges.”

We know this is true. There is a shortage of qualified applicants in some fields, and fierce competition exists for well-qualified applicants. But how is a particular program trying its best to serve its students by having a diverse faculty? That is of more interest than seeing a program throw up its hands in futility.

A prestigious journalism school notes that it had a largely white male faculty 15 years ago and a number of minority candidates used to decline interviews because they didn’t want to move to the Midwestern locale. This is less of a problem than it was a decade ago because of the low cost of living, good public schools, and high rankings as a good place to live. The self-study concluded, “Now that we have a critical mass of minority faculty who can help recruit others, our task is becoming a bit easier. Still, [the school] intends to work hard to identify excellent candidates. We will not lower our hiring standards just to hire a person of color.”

A few programs face special obstacles related to faculty credentials and religious imperatives. A Research I program said it is unable to take advantage of the larger pool of professional, non-doctorate-holding female and minority faculty applicants because its tenure-track positions require a doctorate and a clear research agenda.

In a different twist, a journalism program in the Southwest notes that all faculty, permanent and adjunct faculty alike, must be professing Christians because of the institution’s religious affiliation. While justified, such requirements narrow an already slender candidate pool, causing a department to need to work even harder to create a diverse candidate pool.

ADJUNCT FACULTY

Adjunct faculty are essential in higher education these days. Most programs do not conduct formal searches for adjunct faculty. Instead, they recruit their local area for eligible professionals. JMC programs typically look for individuals currently working in professional settings and with a graduate degree in the field.

Urban universities have a huge advantage in being able to hire women and minorities as adjunct faculty. A JMC program in an urban setting said it periodically advertises and continually maintains a diverse pool of professionals in the city, from which adjunct faculty can be drawn as openings occur, sometimes quickly.

Programs in less-diverse regions often lament their geographic realities. One school’s diversity plan notes that “it is extremely difficult to find minority candidates” as adjuncts because they must have a master’s degree and be a working professional living in the local area, which has only an 8 percent minority population. Another unit cites its “relative remoteness” as limiting the recruiting of women and minority adjunct faculty.

'Now that we have a critical mass of minority faculty who can help recruit others, our task is becoming easier'

Another lament is more universal, and one school didn't mince words: "The low pay for part-time teaching is so bad [in this school, \$500 per credit hour] there aren't many people interested in serving as adjuncts."

SUPPORTING AND RETAINING

Building a diverse faculty is the first step; supporting and retaining that faculty is the next step.

This can be an awkward area of a diversity plan. After all, schools and departments should want to support and retain all good faculty – white males as well as Hispanic females – and prune away any faculty who do not meet standards of quality, regardless of gender or race.

Unfortunately, a few diversity plans are written in ways that seem discriminatory toward those not in the minority. One school pledges to use its private resources "to provide research support and other opportunities for women and minority faculty." And not for others on the faculty?

Conversely, some programs throw just about every good faculty support strategy into the diversity plan, whether it's aimed at improving diversity or not. They pledge to provide competitive salaries, faculty mentoring, continuing education opportunities, help with spousal hires, and flexible scheduling for faculty members who are parents or primary caregivers.

These broad-based faculty support strategies belong in a faculty development plan that applies to all, rather than being isolated in a faculty diversity plan. When such statements are placed in the diversity plan, a number of schools use language such as this: "All faculty members on tenure track, not just the minorities, get plenty of help from the rest of the faculty." Here is a particularly elegant way of saying it: "[We] support the personal and professional growth of all our employees and see varied opportunities for them to expand their skill set and exposure to leadership and diversity activities."

Certain faculty support strategies are, in fact, directly linked to diversity rather than to the faculty as a whole. For example, one school promises to diligently monitor faculty salaries for gender and racial inequity and to adjust those inequities. Another school made its workplace more family-supportive by establishing a private nursing area for a faculty member and a staff member who both became mothers. Another provides special funding for any faculty member whose research is designed to "advance the study of diversity issues."

Good idea... Support faculty research on diversity issues. One school encourages its faculty to engage in scholarship that "fosters an understanding of communication's social responsibility in promoting acceptance of diversity and presenting a representative picture of a culturally diverse society." Another school set a goal of one new funded research project each year that focuses on a diversity issue or that includes a minority faculty member as a principal investigator.

Good idea... Encourage all new faculty and staff to attend a diversity workshop within the first year. The diversity plan at one school makes it more explicit: All newly hired faculty and staff are required to attend the university's diversity training program during their first month of employment to learn how to work effectively in a multicultural organization.

Some diversity plans seem discriminatory toward those not in the minority

Commit to an annual project or program related to workplace diversity

Good idea... Develop a partnership with an HBCU. Students at predominantly white institutions and HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) both benefit from more exposure to diverse populations. A few universities have formally created partnerships for ongoing activities, with a signed letter of agreement outlining specific activities such as a faculty exchange and a joint symposium or lecture series.

In the South, a mostly white private university and a nearby public HBCU periodically bring students together for special events and have twice exchanged faculty members, with an HBCU professor teaching media management at the private institution and a professor from that institution teaching media law at the HBCU.

Good idea... Commit to at least one service project or professional outreach program each year that relates to diversity in the workplace. Not only does this keep diversity front and center for your faculty, but the diversity theme reaches off-campus through a service project, workshop or short course for professionals.

The faculty is the heart of a JMC program, and we return again to the rhetorical question that began this chapter: “What better way...?”

Diversity at HBCUs

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Although institutional diversity will provide students the intellectual, cultural, civic, religious and personal experiences of a range of students, reflecting the richness of this heterogeneous, pluralistic society, most Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) do not incorporate a diversity plan into their university strategic plans.

The lack of a diversity plan stems from the historical fact that HBCUs were originally established in the early and late 1800s, when Black Americans were not afforded the same educational opportunities as White Americans. This resulted in the building of numerous HBCUs to educate Black Americans. These institutions typically hired (if the professors were not founders) educated Black American professors to teach various academic courses.

In the later years, HBCUs began to enroll other ethnic groups to include Asians, Mexicans, Latinos and Africans, which called for the hiring of other ethnic professors. This interaction was thought to have included the necessary diversity so that students would learn the tolerance, co-existence and the spirit of shared values and common destinies that make America strong.

If all HBCUs would take the initiative to develop a plan to diversify their campuses, departments of journalism and mass communication that are required to develop and implement diversity plans would not experience the rigor and loss of time obtaining approval from higher administration.

Although it appears that most HBCUs want to diversify their campuses, good intentions do not substitute for a well-organized diversity plan that could benefit students of all nationalities and races.