

Hiring the Next Generation of Professors: Will Myths Remain Excuses?

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Ten years ago, one of us, Daryl Smith, described in *The Chronicle* the myths that were impeding colleges' efforts to diversify their faculties — especially to recruit African-American, Latino, and American Indian faculty members. As she explained in that article, hard data from a national study simply did not support common assumptions about bidding wars, the appeal of often higher-paying jobs in industry, and the dearth of academic opportunities for all faculty members. Consciously or unconsciously, such myths served to stifle dialogue and action on campuses by attributing the lack of progress to external forces beyond institutional control or influence.

In short, the myths became excuses.

Now, a decade later, increasing the diversity of faculty members and administrators is still a high priority for many institutions. Yet progress remains slow. The myths persist, and colleges continue to lack data — or to not use existing data — to guide their diversity programs and develop the best approaches.

Meanwhile, a new study that we have conducted suggests that colleges are in the process of hiring the next generation of tenured and tenure-track faculty members. If institutions are not more aggressive in their diversity efforts, they will be severely disadvantaged.

Why is a diverse faculty important? For years the primary rationale for diversifying the faculty has been the growing diversity of the student body. Professors from diverse backgrounds who not only teach but also serve as mentors and models can clearly play important roles for students — especially those in science, mathematics, and other technical fields where the lack of diversity among students from the United States is becoming a national crisis.

But the desire to reflect student diversity cannot be the only rationale for diversifying the faculty. Diversity is a matter of equity in hiring and retention, as well as a central component of higher education's ability to develop more relevant and varied forms of knowledge. It is vital to building relationships with different communities outside the campus and essential for creating a work environment that is attractive to people from different backgrounds.

Moreover, colleges and universities need faculty members from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in order to make fully informed decisions at all levels. With so few minority faculty members on many campuses, and with colleges increasingly making diversity an institutional priority, those professors who do bring diversity are spread too thin. Greater diversity is essential if departments and institutions are to have the expertise and perspectives that they need. Finally, and perhaps most overlooked, a relatively homogenous faculty limits the future development of diversity in leadership, as most academic administrators come from faculty ranks.

Because faculty diversity is so crucial, it was a key aspect of a study led by a team of researchers from Claremont Graduate University and the Association of American Colleges and Universities that included ourselves and Alma R. Clayton-Pedersen, vice president for education and institutional renewal at the association; Sharon Parker, a senior research associate at Claremont; and Daniel Teraguchi, now dean for diversity and academic advancement at Wesleyan University. We assessed the impact of the Campus Diversity Initiative, a six-year, \$29-million effort supported by the James Irvine Foundation. The purpose of the program — which involved 28 private California institutions, including research universities, liberal-arts colleges, comprehensive colleges and universities, and small, special-purpose institutions — was to increase the access and success of historically underrepresented and low-income students and to build institutions' capacity to develop and evaluate diversity efforts.

As part of the larger study, the team examined the trends in tenured and tenure-track faculty members and new hires from 2000 through 2004 at the institutions in the Irvine Foundation project. Because of the foundation's focus, our work placed significant emphasis on race and ethnicity, in particular the hiring of African-American, Latino, and American Indian faculty members. (When we refer to an underrepresented minority, we mean those specific groups. Also, data on gender, while important, were not available for our study.) The results, to the extent that they are being replicated across the country, have significant implications for higher education as a whole and for individual campuses.

We found that, over the five-year span at the Irvine Foundation higher-education institutions, the proportion of underrepresented-minority faculty members increased from 7 percent to 9 percent. The numbers of Latino faculty members grew on average from 4 percent to 5 percent, African-American faculty members from 3 percent to 3.6 percent, and American Indian faculty members from 0.4 percent to 0.6 percent. The proportion of Asian-American faculty members grew on average from 7 percent to 8 percent. Those numbers show progress, but they certainly do not accord with the widespread myths that in hiring only diversity counts. As with all our analyses, there were significant differences across institutions, with many campuses showing little or no change.

Because research demonstrates that the change in faculty demographics will generally lag behind the changes in new hires, we also examined data about the new faculty members hired from the beginning of 2000 to the end of 2004. During that time, on average 12 percent of the total new hires were

underrepresented-minority faculty members. Latino faculty members made up 6.9 percent of new hires, African-American faculty members 4.8 percent, and American Indian faculty members 0.6 percent. In addition, Asian-American faculty members made up 12.2 percent of new hires. Thus new hires were somewhat more diverse than the overall faculty profile, although again there was considerable variation among individual campuses.

If the rate of new hires was greater than the change for overall faculty, why did those new hires have a limited impact on faculty diversity as a whole? We began to explore the factors that might explain it. Many campus leaders in the study said it was because the number of new hires represented a small percentage of the overall faculty. But we found that, to the contrary, campuses across our sample were hiring in a rather rapid fashion. During the span of our study, they replaced on average almost one-third of their faculty. If that holds for other institutions, as we sense it does, higher education is truly creating the next generation of faculty members.

We know, for example, that the University of California and the California State University systems anticipate hiring almost the equivalent of their current faculties over the next eight to 10 years. Thus California alone will have thousands of opportunities to create a more diverse faculty — if higher-education leaders in the state choose to do so.

Not only was there considerable hiring on the Irvine Foundation campuses during the period that we studied them, but the overall size of the tenured and tenure-track faculty increased about 5 percent on average. That counters another myth: that tenure-track faculty positions are being replaced by non-tenure-track positions. While those latter positions may have increased, as current research suggests they have, tenure-track positions have also grown. That in turn has implications for the myth that white faculty members are losing job opportunities to members of minority groups. In our study, while the percentage of white faculty members shrank, the actual number of white faculty members grew by about 2 percent.

With that amount of hiring, we asked ourselves why the overall diversity of the faculty had not improved more. In looking at the data it became clear that some of the new minority hires were replacing minority faculty members who had left. So a campus might hire three new underrepresented-minority faculty members, but if they simply filled the places of three other such faculty members who left, they would not increase the net number.

To examine that more carefully, we developed a quantitative indicator, the Turnover Quotient, using three readily available data points: the number of underrepresented-minority faculty members in 2000, the number of new such hires, and the number of underrepresented-minority faculty members at the end of 2004. In the example above, a campus with no turnover would expect to have six underrepresented-minority faculty members in 2004 — three in 2000, plus three new hires. A campus

that both hired and lost three would have a TQ of 100 percent, meaning that all new hires went to replace people who left. Such a campus would see no change between 2000 and 2004. (See accompanying box.)

In our study, the average campus TQ was 58 percent. What that means is that three of every five new underrepresented-minority hires went to replace underrepresented-minority faculty members who had left. Again, there was considerable campus variation. Indeed, 11 of the campuses had a turnover of zero — all new hires added to the existing diversity. In contrast, the remaining campuses had turnover approaching 100 percent, meaning that most new hires were replacing faculty members who had left.

While many issues are involved, there was a significant correlation between the changes in faculty diversity over the five-year period and the TQ. Knowing the TQ can help alert colleges to issues of retention along with issues of hiring. Many of the Irvine Foundation campuses had no idea that retention was a significant issue and had little information on the sources of the turnover, including departure or retirement. In the absence of data, they often reverted to the largely debunked myths that we have mentioned. That cycle could easily be broken if campuses conducted more research or examined the data they have already collected about their specific hiring trends.

Moreover, on many of the campuses we studied, progress from year to year was often erratic. Colleges that had a "good year" would, upon further analyses, find that they had had only one good year. Highlighting their progress in attracting diverse faculty members, such institutions often referred back to that single year's success as typical, regardless of the overall patterns. That in turn served to demoralize faculty and staff members working daily to support the campus in its efforts to improve the situation. Institutions must be willing to confront the impediments as well as celebrate the successes — and to do so through regularly assessed empirical data, not through anecdotes.

The findings of our research suggest:

- Institutions should monitor progress on a regular basis and over time by tracking, analyzing, and interpreting relevant data. They should gather and evaluate similar information in the development of candidate pools.
- Turnover must be understood and taken into account so that all the effort going into hiring and identifying talent won't go to waste.
- At the institutional and departmental levels, search committees often lament the low percentage of minority doctorates in the national labor pool even though, at the departmental level, the need is to hire only one or two persons — a small fraction of the available pool. Indeed, the hiring is far less than the overzealous accounts that we've heard as part of the myths.

- Effective strategies focus on making aggressive efforts to diversify the candidate pool, writing job descriptions that consider the kinds of new knowledge and competencies that candidates need, and targeting candidates that bring the expertise required.
- Success in diversifying the faculty depends on the degree to which diversity is central to the campus mission and deeply embedded in core institutional processes. While the current legal discourse may put campuses on the defensive, the hiring and retention of faculty members, as in other areas, needs to be understood as being focused on expertise, talent, skills, and institutional and departmental requirements. Locating diversity at the center of an institution's mission and educational and scholarly priorities is both effective and legal.
- Decentralization of both graduate admissions and faculty hiring impedes change unless there is a deep understanding of the significance of diversity for larger institutional progress, mission, research, and educational needs.
- Doctoral education and the development of future faculty members need to be part of the strategy to diversify the faculty, especially with the robust hiring underway. Despite improvement in diversifying doctoral programs by race and gender, the rate of progress is not sufficient. According to our study, for example, underrepresented-minority graduate enrollment at the eight doctoral-granting institutions was only 14 percent, even though undergraduate enrollment was 22 percent.

There is urgency and opportunity, yet again. We are now replacing the current faculty at a fast pace. If our findings are to be generalized, one third of the faculty has been replaced. Ten years from now, will we have the new generation of professors prepared and competent to fulfill higher education's mission in society, in creating new knowledge, and in successfully graduating a diverse group of students at all levels and in all fields?

Higher education is an industry that produces its own labor pool and has significant latitude in deciding who it admits and hires. We have only ourselves to look to for positive change.

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THE TURNOVER QUOTIENT

Any higher-education institution can determine whether it is truly increasing its diversity or simply replacing underrepresented-minority faculty members who have left by calculating its Turnover Quotient, or TQ. In the formula below, *URMFac* is an abbreviation for underrepresented-minority faculty members, and *NewURMHires* stands for new underrepresented-minority hires.

$$TQ = [1 - \frac{2004URMFac - 2000URMFac}{NewURMHires}] \times 100$$

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