# CREATING A DIVERSE DEPARTMENT: BEST PRACTICES

WHY DO DEPARTMENTS NEED TO FOCUS ON DIVERSITY?

Currently, most universities have relatively limited diversity. The National Center for Education Statistics shows that in 2018, more than two thirds of all university faculty are white, 10% are Asian and Pacific Islanders, 5% are Latinx, 1% are Multiracial, .4% are Indigenous and 5.5% are Black. Black and Latinx faculty are particularly underrepresented among STEM fields.
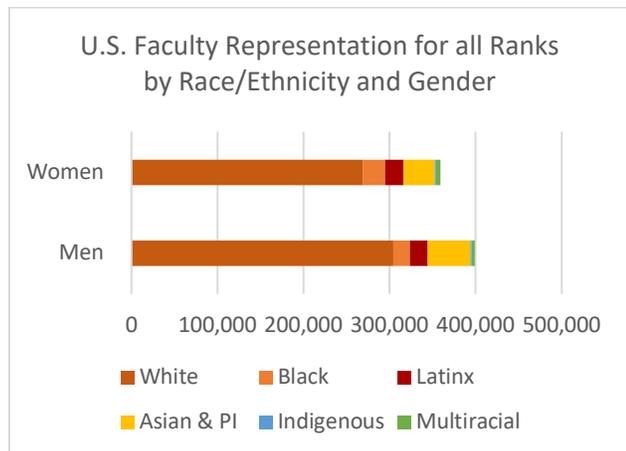
Many universities aim to increase diversity. High level diversity positions are increasingly common, along with formalized university plans for diversity and inclusion. These facilitate good policies and practices aimed at recruiting and retaining women and Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) faculty members. Yet, department leadership is another key to ensuring that universities attract and keep a diverse faculty. In this brief, drawn from the work of Adia Harvey Wingfield, we suggest key practices that universities and departments should adopt.

HOW CAN DEPARTMENTS BECOME MORE DIVERSE?

There are three key factors that can lead to universities creating more diverse departments, both in terms of bringing in new faculty, and ensuring that faculty thrive and want to remain at the university.

These include:
- Intentional commitment at multiple leadership levels
- Allocation of university resources
- Cultivating a race-conscious, rather than race-blind, organizational culture.

HOW CAN LEADERS SHOW INTENTIONAL COMMITMENT?
- Take responsibility
- Broad recruitment
- Internal recruitment checks

University leaders should not only generally support, but specifically take responsibility for building a racially diverse faculty, seeing that as one of their key goals. Leaders who are diverse by race and gender benefit this process. Leaders must communicate the importance of diversity in hiring as explicitly valued, and encouraged. At the department level, leaders must embrace diversity in hiring as a central approach to ensuring excellence in research and creative activities within the department, as well as effectiveness in creating an inclusive environment for an increasingly diverse student population.

Recruitment strategies within the department need to be consistent and broad. Rather than relying on one central job advertisement to draw in applications from diverse populations, the recruitment committee should reach out to a broad array of social networks to attract candidates, including directly recruiting candidates who would diversify the department by race/ethnicity, gender, and other valued statuses.

In addition, the university and department need to maintain internal checks to ensure that there is a diverse pool at the initial stage of applications, at the longlist, the long shortlist of top applications, and among the shortlist of those invited to campus. Checks at each stage improves the chances that excellent diverse candidates are included. Departments should directly engage with university level programming aimed at enhancing faculty diversity, leveraging existing resources. University leaders need to engage with departmental leaders, working in tandem to achieve racial diversity.

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WHAT IS THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY RESOURCES?

- Cluster hiring
- Space allocation & research support
- Retention packages

University resources play an important role in ensuring that diversifying the faculty at the department levels is successful. This includes that administrators are committed to creating faculty lines. For example, in departments that are not currently diverse, hiring and retaining faculty is more successful when a "cluster" of faculty are brought in together. Thus, rather than allowing one hire every three or four years, university leaders might allow one department to hire three excellent faculty in a given year to diversify the department in important ways. Administrators also should create physical space, including office spaces, but also spaces that allow faculty to engage with one another and with students. Making connections among faculty in a diverse department is much more difficult if there are not appropriate spaces that allow faculty to do their work, and connect with colleagues.

Resources also play a central role in retaining diverse faculty. Many universities work to "cherry pick" successful individual BIPOC and women faculty members, rather than committing to "growing" a successful diverse faculty. Retaining a diverse faculty requires creating collegial and supportive environments, resources necessary to carry out research, plus genuine respect for the research itself, including work focused on communities of color. These approaches make it more difficult for other institutions to "raid" departments. In addition, administrators must devote resources to retention packages, demonstrating their commitment to faculty members whom other departments are trying to attract.

HOW CAN DEPARTMENTS CREATE A POSITIVE, RACE AND GENDER CONSCIOUS DEPARTMENTAL CULTURE?

- Create connections
- Acknowledge and address different experiences
- Highlight work of women and BIPOC researchers

By creating an inclusive and supportive departmental culture, women and BIPOC faculty members are more likely to come and want to *stay* in the department. Inclusive departments are departments in which everyone feels valued for their research, their teaching, their mentoring, and their leadership. Creating inclusive departments requires creating connections between the members of the department, including opportunities to learn from one another.

Particularly critical, however, is developing a gender and race-conscious departmental culture that recognizes and acknowledges the different experiences of students, staff, and faculty, by race and gender. Much research shows that "color-blind" approaches are not useful; instead, gender and race-conscious cultures recognize and support a more diverse approach to assessing scholarship, teaching and mentoring students, and considering leadership and service in the department.

All disciplines, including STEM fields, can better recognize and meet the needs of BIPOC and women students and faculty. A gender and race-conscious culture recognizes the additional mentoring and leadership requests made to women and particularly women of color, compensating with, for example, "service sabbaticals," course releases, or funds for research assistants. A gender and race-conscious culture might mean that department courses regularly feature the work of women and scholars of color. Chairs and senior faculty should be vigilant about listening to, recognizing, and addressing challenges women and BIPOC faculty face— including being stereotyped, assumed incompetent, and isolated.

WHAT RESOURCES EXIST FOR CREATING DIVERSE DEPARTMENTS?

- This brief is drawn from Adia Harvey Wingfield's article in *Harvard Business Review* about building a diverse department.
- The UMass Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion provides STRIDE training, and programming, aimed at the needs of members of underrepresented groups on campus; the Washington University in St. Louis Diversity Office suggests best practices.
- UMass ADVANCE provides trainings on developing inclusive departments and decision-making processes.
- The Office of Faculty Development and Associate Provost for Equity and Inclusion provide a wide array of resources that support faculty.
- The faculty union, Massachusetts Society of Professors, has won a number of excellent provisions and supports for diverse faculty.