

AN INSIDE HIGHER ED SPECIAL REPORT

# Diversifying Graduate Schools and the Faculty

**INSIDE**  
HIGHER ED

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BY KATHRYN MASTERSON





## Will Future Students Have the Same Opportunities I Did?

I came to the United States to pursue a graduate education in the late 1980s. I'm not sure whether the decision makers at the University of Georgia — where I would earn my master's and doctoral degrees — reviewed all of the materials I submitted with my application. Did they know that the Hispanic Philology program at the University of Barcelona, my undergraduate institution, had a phenomenal reputation throughout Spain? Perhaps they understood how the 10-point GPA in Spain correlated with the 4-point GPA system in the United States? Did my GRE® scores help me be seen among domestic candidates whose backgrounds and connections were more familiar? I may never know.

But I do know that, however it happened, my acceptance to UGA spurred a lifelong love for academia. I joined the professoriate first at Radford University, then Arizona State University, and eventually rose to faculty head in my department, became a visiting professor and scholar at prestigious institutions like the University of Pennsylvania. As I begin a new role as Executive Director of the GRE Program at ETS, I've been reflecting on various decision points in my journey and wondering what forces opened doors for me that otherwise might have been shut.

Today, there are three times as many master's and doctoral degrees conferred at U.S. institutions than there were in the 1980s, and twice as many international students are pursuing their graduate education here. More of those students are coming from Latin and South America, Africa and smaller countries in Asia — from more schools that faculty committees are likely to be unfamiliar with. While the cost of tuition and fees varies wildly, the average cost across graduate programs has quadrupled. Students themselves pay three-quarters of the tab, and half of that is borrowed, according to Sallie Mae®. Think of the challenges facing young people today, who are submitting their applications to overwhelmed and under-resourced faculty committees who may not be familiar with their undergraduate institutions, for a degree they aren't sure they'll be able to afford and may be paying off well into their adulthood. It's no wonder that institutions are having a hard time increasing student diversity.

Forty years before I left my friends and family in Spain for new opportunities in the United States, the nonprofit research organization I'm proud to represent today was founded. It was three years after the passing of the GI Bill, and the standardized testing industry took off as a way to help colleges deal with the influx of applicants, who would be considered based on their skills proficiency, rather than their family wealth. Over the years, although ETS warned against it, the use of cut scores has changed the reputation of the GRE test from a door opener that helps students of less advantaged backgrounds be seen, to a gatekeeper that prevents applicants who don't achieve a program-set minimum score from even being considered.

Moving toward holistic admissions — and reducing the overreliance on GRE scores or any single measure — is the only way to treat applicants ethically and equitably. GRE scores need to be part of the mix as the only common, objective measure that applicants submit that is designed to be as fair as possible. As a community, we need to figure out how to account for group score differences, not drop the tool that provides evidence of those differences. Underrepresented minorities, international students and applicants from families with less socioeconomic power already have so many odds stacked against them due to systemic educational and societal disparities. Let's prevent admissions bias from being another barrier to overcome. Let's agree that complex, systemic problems can't be solved by shortcut solutions, but rather, require investments in targeted initiatives that can help recruit diverse students, and then support them once enrolled.

More resources are becoming available to help the graduate community achieve these goals. Drawing on its 70 years of higher education experience and achievement gap research, ETS is helping by convening thought leaders, curating and sharing examples from peer institutions, and making research-based resources available at [www.holisticadmissions.org](http://www.holisticadmissions.org). We're embracing the call to broaden our role, and are doing so with support, suggestions and insights from deans and faculty who represent their peers as members of the independently managed GRE Board.

I hope that when my two sons, Alberto and Diego, are college age, they will be evaluated holistically, for everything they can bring to a program. I hope that they will be active participants in diverse, supportive and inclusive communities. And I hope that when they look back on their careers, they appreciate that all of us, working together, opened the doors for them to be successful.

**Alberto Acereda**  
Executive Director, GRE Program – Global Education  
Educational Testing Service

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# Introduction

Higher education has a diversity problem.

While colleges and universities are hiring more African American, Hispanic and Asian American faculty members than in the past, percentages of historically underrepresented groups among full-time faculty have not changed much over the last 20 years, even as diversifying the academy has become a top goal across higher education. And while colleges have made bigger strides in the diversity of their students, the professoriate has lagged behind.

Nationwide, three-quarters of full-time faculty—positions with the most security, support and resources—are white, according to the most recent numbers from the U.S. Department of Education. The majority of full-time faculty—56 percent—are male. Faculty diversity varies by field and by institution. For example, some fields have reached gender parity, while others, such as engineering and the physical sciences, feature more men.

“No campus in America can say it’s come as far as it needs to come,” says Freeman Hrabowski, president of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and an outspoken advocate for colleges to do more for minority students and faculty.

Even at the most thoughtful and innovative institutions, parity or equity typically is still a work in progress. While biases are human, Hrabowski says, “the only way we can have success is through people thinking carefully and deliberately about how to get beyond our tendency to choose people like ourselves.”

Good intentions and well-meaning discussions about diversity are not enough. What is needed, according to more than two dozen experts across higher education who work on issues of diversity, are systematic and cultural changes that in turn can create shifts in how institutions recruit, hire and promote faculty members, as well as how they admit graduate students.

That kind of change requires an examination of priorities, processes and incentives. Also needed is a willingness to look at one's biases and to have sometimes difficult conversations about why things are the way they are and what needs to happen for them to change. This requires resources and creativity, for both wealthy institutions and ones without a lot of money to spend.

Experts point to proven models for how to do this work right. While the lack of faculty diversity in higher education is a stubborn problem with multiple causes, a growing number of people and institutions are working on different points of the pipeline from graduate school to the faculty. They are collecting evidence and sharing it with others so that successes can be replicated and models can be adapted to different places.

"There is no silver bullet," says Elsa Núñez, president of Eastern Connecticut State University. "It is challenging work."



Eastern Connecticut has been able to bring up its share of faculty members from underrepresented groups to match the measure in its student population—30 percent of each group—through more than a decade of dedicated effort and hard conversations. A key to this effort, Núñez says, has been linking diversity to the university's values and repeatedly making the case why it is important for students. Núñez scrutinizes finalists for faculty jobs to make sure candidate shortlists are diverse. When they aren't, she returns to those values in conversations with department and search chairs.

This work can be disruptive and difficult. But experts say diversity at the top and in the faculty ranks serves students and makes an institution better. It opens up academic disciplines to new ways of thinking. And many in the field have moved beyond making the more altruistic case that it's the right thing to do, because that approach too often fails to change minds.

In many fields, higher-ranked departments tend to be more diverse. A diversity of ideas and backgrounds allows for creative and new ways of thinking. Today's students have grown up in an increasingly diverse world, which they expect in higher education as

well. The best new faculty members want it, too. And an institution that does not work to foster an environment where diversity can thrive and that does not improve its percentages of underrepresented minority faculty members may find itself at a competitive disadvantage.

Amid broad demographic change in our country, and at a time when racial, gender and social inequities are front and center, colleges increasingly cannot afford to ignore diversity.

Yet while undergraduate student enrollments are becoming increasingly diverse, the people teaching courses remain largely white, especially those in the most secure full-time positions. Among historically underrepresented groups, African Americans in 2015 accounted for 14 percent in the student population and 6 percent of full-time faculty roles. Hispanics were 17 percent of students and 5 percent of full-time faculty members. Native Americans filled less than 1 percent of faculty jobs.

The best ways to try to curb this imbalance link excellence and diversity. This report is based on interviews with experts to find the cutting edge of diversity work. It offers ideas and models for institutions that are

looking at faculty representation and know they need to do more.

These efforts range from focusing on the undergraduate years (and even earlier) through graduate school admissions and into faculty hiring and retention. All of it is necessary, experts say.

The work involves myth busting. For too long, mistaken notions have gotten in the way of proactive efforts to diversify academic departments. These include the idea that candidates from diverse backgrounds with Ph.D.s do not exist (or that minority graduate students will only want to go to the wealthiest universities that offer the highest salaries), that faculty and administrators don't bring their unconscious biases to hiring committees, and that diversity and excellence are mutually exclusive—that by focusing on finding diverse candidates, the academic quality of a department or university will decline.

That last myth is especially critical. Research has shown that the opposite is true: diversity of race and gender has a positive relationship to rankings at research universities. Many students and faculty want to be in diverse environments, where people have a range of backgrounds and perspectives.

Those working on these issues say their diversity programs have not triggered a decline in quality. Academic excellence should be the biggest consideration when choosing faculty members, fellows or students. Some say so explicitly by calling for “inclusive excellence” in their mission statements or strategic plans. And some elevate diversity scholarship or community-focused scholarship.

At graduate schools, some of the most promising models include a shift toward more holistic admissions processes, partnerships with historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), bridge programs that provide an alternative path to admissions, and disciplinary societies stepping up to play a role in diversifying their fields. For current students from underrepresented backgrounds, a growing number of organizations offer financial and emotional support and provide a community and a nationwide network to help them persist and earn their doctoral degrees.

Some groups are focused on undergraduates, by preparing students to apply to and succeed in graduate school—giving them mentors, research experiences and a cohort of peers that can provide support and understanding.

On the faculty side, some of the most

promising efforts are centered on training for search committees and looking at the diversity of candidate pools and recruiting methods. Colleges are trying alternative or enhanced approaches, such as open searches not tied to a narrow specialty, cluster hires with topics connected to diverse experiences, the use of diversity statements to consider a candidate's commitment to diversity as part of their portfolio of hiring qualifications and peer education on the best ways to do an inclusive search and interview.

Retention efforts also are critical to faculty diversity and getting more consideration in recent years. That work is being done through midcareer awards or grants, travel funds, and working on a creating a more welcoming culture in a department, where faculty members spend most of their time.

The stakes are high, experts say.

"College and university students have every right to demand better," says Armando I. Bengochea, director of the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows program. ■

# Connecting Graduate Admissions Practices to Program Goals

Implementing an effective holistic admissions process to identify the right applicants and effectively meet institution and program goals is a complex task. Now, there's a website with information, tools and resources to help you navigate holistic admissions practices.

- Examine key considerations and tools for identifying, recruiting and admitting the right students for your graduate program.
- Explore promising admissions practices, based on research and literature, as well as experiences and observations shared by deans and faculty.
- Uncover how to use GRE® scores to help enable fairer and inclusive admissions decisions.

Visit [HolisticAdmissions.org](https://HolisticAdmissions.org) today.



ETS — *Measuring the Power of Learning*®

# DEFINING DIVERSITY

**What do we mean when we say diversity?**

**Inclusion? Inclusive excellence? Equity?**

**Diversity:** The things that make us different, which can include race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender orientation, ability, socioeconomic status, whether someone's parents went to college, and the region of the country or world someone is from. Others would consider status as a veteran of the U.S. military. Still others consider political and other views. Yet much of the discussion in higher education is about race and ethnicity, and that is the focus of this special report.

**Underrepresented minority:** A group whose representation in education, an academic field or employment is smaller than their representation in the U.S. population. At American colleges and universities, this generally includes people who are black or African American, people who are Hispanic/Latino, and Native Americans or Alaska Natives. Some Asian American groups—particularly those who are recent immigrants—may be considered underrepresented, even if Asian Americans as a whole are not considered underrepresented. At many public universities, the relevant comparison is the state population, which is why state diversity strategies vary. And while women are not underrepresented in American higher education (and are a majority of undergraduates and new medical students, for instance), they are underrepresented in some fields and programs.

**Inclusivity:** Engagement with diversity in a community, in order to have an environment where all people feel they belong and are valued. An environment where all members of a community can thrive in their personal and professional lives and excel to their potential.

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) describes inclusivity as the “active, intentional and ongoing engagement with diversity—in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication and empathic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions.”

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## DEFINING DIVERSITY

### CONTINUED

**Equity:** Fairness in educational opportunities, and helping those who have not had an equal chance at realizing their full potential because of inequalities. Differs from equality in that promoting equity may not mean everyone gets an equal amount, but that more (support, resources, etc.) may be given to those who need it to catch up. AAC&U describes it as “the creation of opportunities for historically under-represented populations to have equal access to and participate in educational programs that are capable of closing the achievement gaps in student success and completion.”

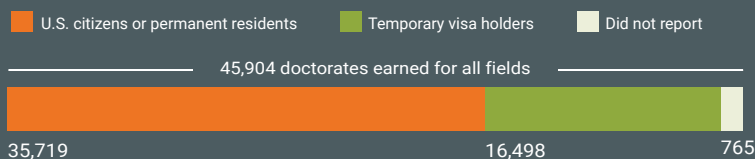
**Race/ethnicity:** The U.S. Department of Education defines this as “categories developed in 1997 by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that are used to describe groups to which individuals belong, identify with or belong in the eyes of the community. The categories do not denote scientific definitions of anthropological origins. The designations are used to categorize U.S. citizens, resident aliens and other eligible noncitizens. Individuals are asked to first designate ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino or not Hispanic or Latino. Second, individuals are asked to indicate all races that apply among the following: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or white.” ■

# Infographic: How Diverse Are the Professoriate and Graduate Schools?

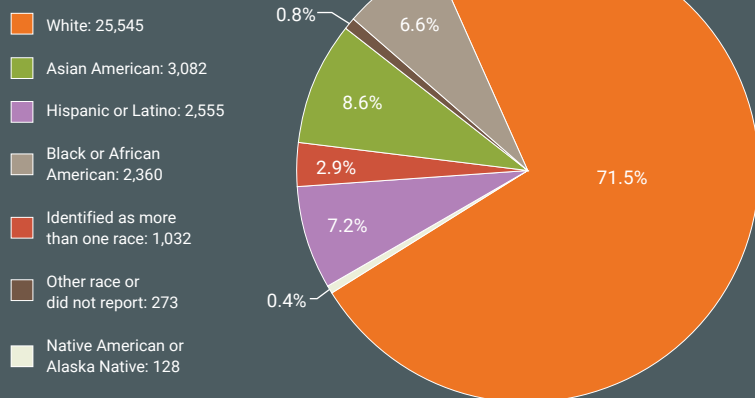
Determining success in diversifying the professoriate and doctoral programs depends on how one looks at the numbers and what one compares them to, says Martin Finkelstein, a professor of higher education at Seton Hall University who studies the faculty. That said, those working on efforts to improve diversity—especially the number of scholars from underrepresented minority groups—say examining data on a particular institution, discipline or applicant pool and comparing them to national figures are critical to identifying shortcomings and areas of improvement.

## Graduate Studies

### Doctorates earned in the U.S. in 2016



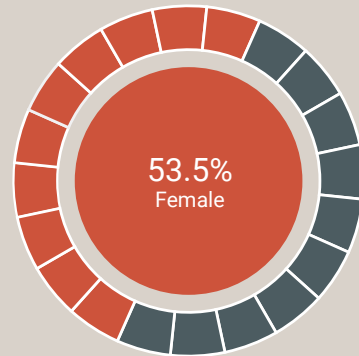
### U.S. citizens or permanent residents who earned Ph.D.s, by ethnicity



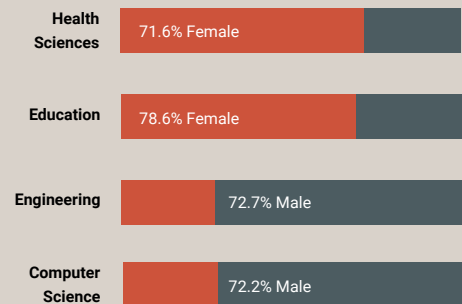
Source: National Science Foundation

### Gender breakdown of doctoral students entering fall 2017

- Female students: 43,101 (53.5%)
- Male students: 37,443 (45.6%)

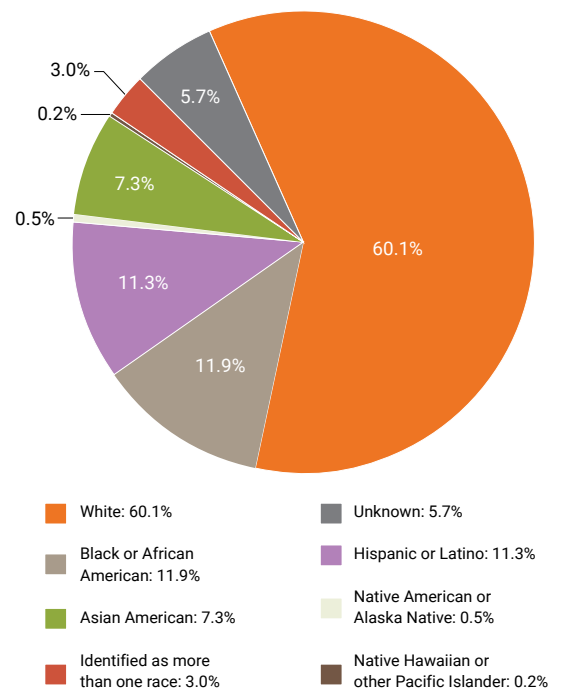


### Gender breakdown by fields for first-time doctoral students



Source: Council of Graduate Schools and GRE Board

### First-time graduate students, by race/ethnicity, including enrollment in master's degrees and certificate programs

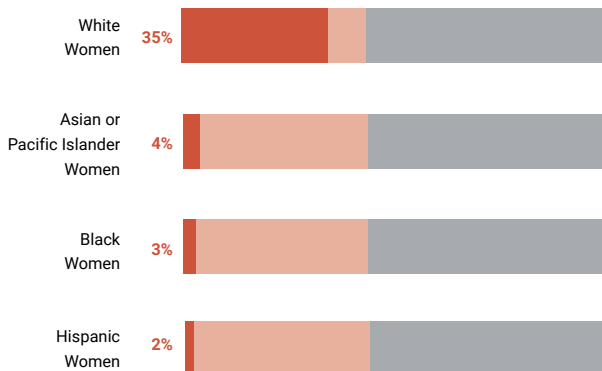


Source: Council of Graduate Schools and GRE Board

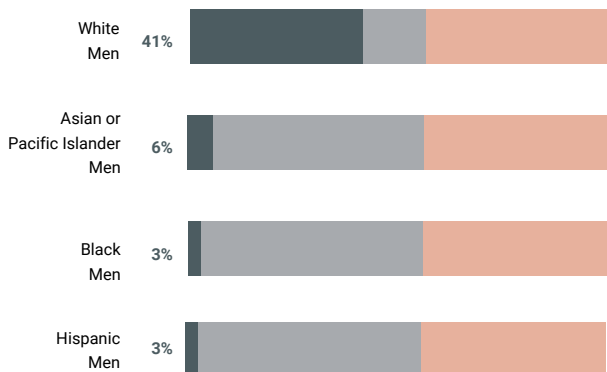
# The Faculty

Breakdown of full-time faculty members, by gender and ethnicity in fall 2016

44% of full-time faculty members are female.



56% of full-time faculty members are male.

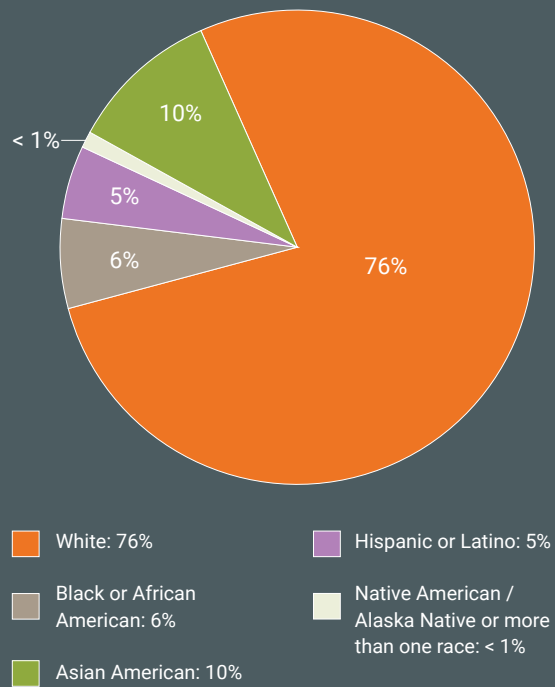


## Full-Time Faculty

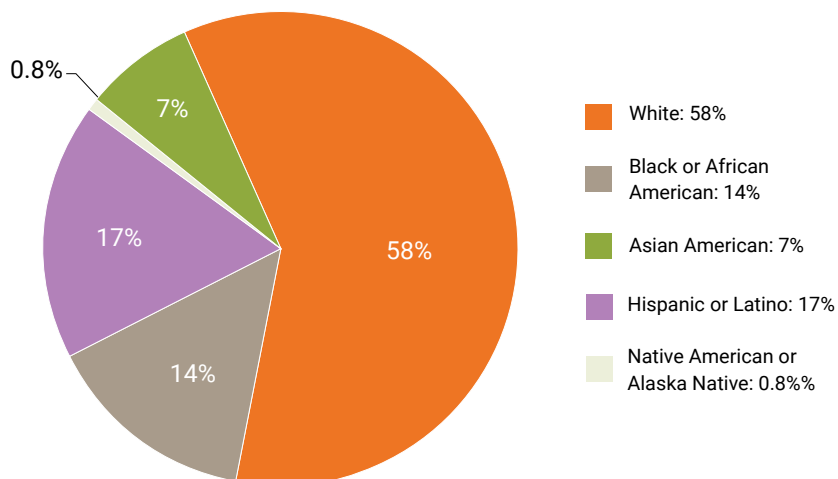
Nationwide, full-time faculty positions—the positions with the most support and resources—are predominantly held by white faculty members, and the majority are male.



Full-time faculty, by race/ethnicity, in fall 2016



Undergraduate students, by race/ethnicity at degree-granting institutions



Faculty representation varies substantially from a student population that is increasingly female and diverse. Women comprise the majority of college students (graduate students, too).

In 1976, white students were 84% of total national enrollment.

Most recently, white students were only 58% of total national enrollment.



# The Graduate School Pipeline

Diversity efforts exist on a continuum. Some begin early, with attempts to expose high school students (or even middle schoolers) to academic fields and research. Others focus on graduate school recruitment and admissions, or helping ensure that doctoral students complete. Meanwhile, many colleges are working to hire, retain and promote more professors from underrepresented groups.

Graduate school is a major segment of the diversity pipeline, one that has several points of access and potential blockages. It's also the path most scholars take to faculty jobs and is a requirement if someone wants to work as a college professor.

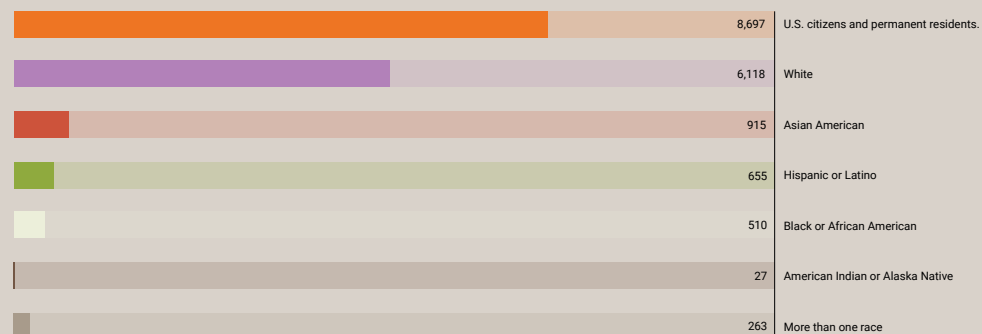
"If they want to be faculty, they can't without a grad degree," says Amy L. Freeman, an associate research professor and administrator at Pennsylvania State University. Freeman is director of Penn State's Millennium Scholars Program, which seeks to develop highly qualified minority students in STEM fields into cutting-edge scholars who are successfully admitted to graduate school. It is modeled after the University of Maryland, Baltimore County's highly successful Meyerhoff Scholars program.

People who are working to improve the diversity of graduate schools are looking at different points along the way, from the undergraduate years to the final phase of completing a Ph.D. Different areas of focus include the graduate school admissions process; support programs for current graduate students (including financial, academic and social support); rigorous undergraduate programs that prepare

## Earned Doctorates for 2016 by field

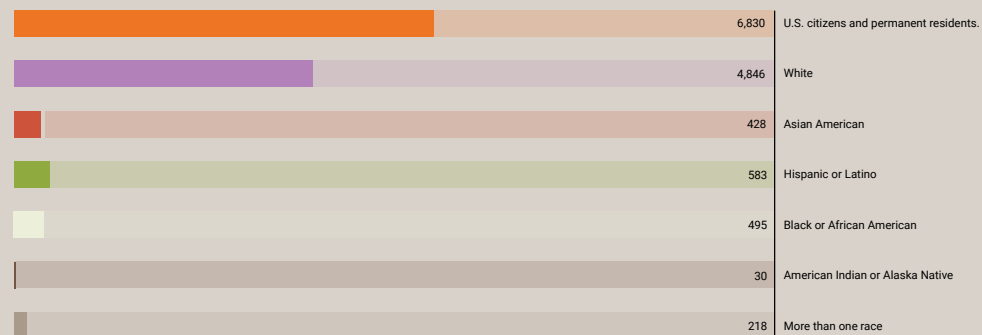
### Life Sciences

12,568 doctoral recipients



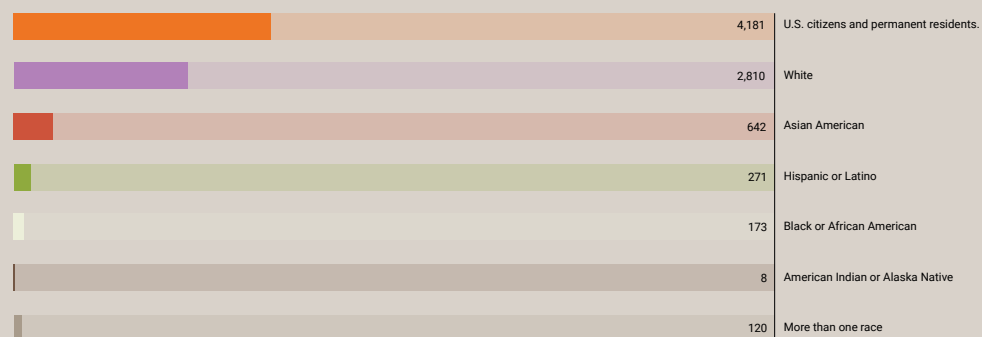
### Psychology and Social Sciences

9,078 doctoral recipients



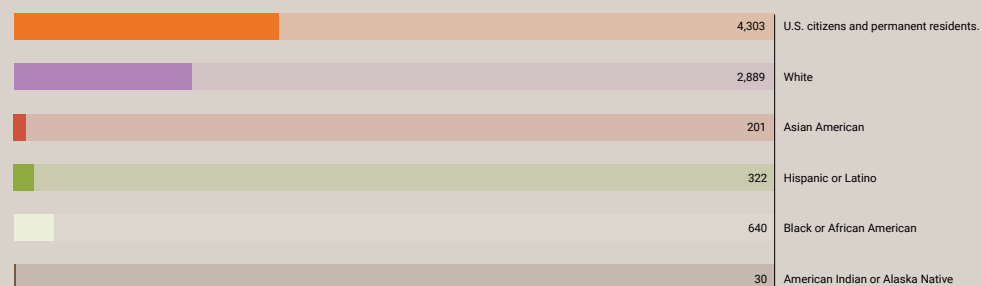
### Engineering

9,469 doctoral recipients



### Education

5,153 doctoral recipients



Source: Survey of Earned Doctorates for 2016

“

“If you’re not increasing the pool,  
you’re taking people out of  
other universities because you  
can afford it.”

Bernard J. Milano

President  
KPMG Foundation

students for a graduate school experience; bridge programs that help undergraduate or master’s students get to the doctoral level; and recruiting more diverse candidates for Ph.D. programs.

What does diversity in doctoral programs look like today? Of the 35,719 U.S. citizens and permanent residents who earned their Ph.D.s in 2016, 25,524, or 71 percent, were white. Black or African American students numbered 2,360, or 6.6 percent. Asian Americans earned 3,082 doctorates, or 8.6 percent of the total. Hispanic or Latino scholars earned 2,555 doctorates, or 7 percent. American Indian or Alaska Native scholars earned 128 doctorates, less than 0.05 percent. And 1,032 doctorates, or 3 percent, were earned by people of more than one race.

Diversity varies by field. In education, African American or black scholars earned 640 doctorates in 2016, accounting for 14.8 percent of the total of 4,303 for U.S. citizens and permanent residents in the field. Those numbers

are lower in STEM fields. In physical sciences and earth sciences, for example, African American or black scholars earned 97 doctorates in 2016, 2.6 percent of the total of 3,666 in the field. (The American Physical Society has started a bridge program, detailed on [page 22](#) to address this issue.)

Among all first-time graduate students—potential Ph.D. students, including those who were enrolled in both master’s and certificate programs—a survey by the Council of Graduate Schools/GRE of fall 2017 enrollment found that 60.8 percent were white, 12.6 percent were black or African American, 10.4 percent were Hispanic/Latino, 6.6 percent were Asian American, 0.5 percent were American Indian/Alaska Native and 0.2 percent were Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander. Students identifying as two or more races accounted for 2.8 percent of the total, while 6.1 percent were unknown. (Enrollment in master’s programs far outnumbers doctoral enrollment, so many of the 1.8 million graduate students included in the survey are not likely Ph.D. students.) And the survey’s authors said minority students were substantially underrepresented in graduate STEM fields.

Programs to improve the diversity of graduate schools, and to support students from diverse backgrounds, are not new. More established efforts include helpful lessons for newer programs and for college leaders and faculty members who are looking to experiment with proven methods. For example, the Ph.D. Project for business schools, the Southern Regional Education Board Doctoral Scholars program, the Mellon Foundation’s Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows and UMBC’s Meyerhoff Scholars program all have been around for 20 years or more, and

willingly share their knowledge and best practices with other institutions.

Attention to diversity issues at the graduate level has increased in recent years, along with a willingness in some places to experiment with recruiting, admissions or student supports. There is a willingness in some fields to look at data on diversity and take concrete steps to bring those numbers more in line with the racial and ethnic breakdowns of undergraduate populations, institutional peers, or the diversity of states or the nation. And many recognize that the diversity discussions or initiatives of the past haven't brought the kind of deep change needed to truly move the needle.

Universities—especially wealthier ones that make splashes with announcements about putting significant money into diversifying their faculty—have a responsibility to build the pipeline, says Bernard J. Milano, president of the KPMG Foundation. Milano is also president of the Ph.D. Project, which has helped to quintuple the number of minority faculty members with Ph.D.s in the nation's business schools by recruiting potential doctoral students from corporate America and offering professional development and networking opportunities. There were 294 minority faculty with doctorates when the program started in 1994. Now business schools employ more than 1,500 Ph.D.-holding minority faculty members, according to the project.

## OHIO STATE'S RECRUITMENT COLLABORATIVE

Proactive recruiting of a diverse pool of candidates requires new ways of thinking and acting for those who are looking to hire. It can make sense, especially for larger universities, to look for ways to coordinate among departments and colleges in order to share ideas and maximize their resources and reach.

That's the idea behind Ohio State University's Diverse Faculty and Postdoc Recruitment Collaborative, a group that seeks to increase the diversity of the applicant pool for search committees in six OSU colleges, says Donnie Perkins, assistant dean and chief diversity officer for the College of Engineering.

"We think we're stronger together," says Perkins, who chairs the collaborative.

The effort started three years ago with three colleges, Perkins says. It has expanded to include representatives from the Colleges of Engineers, Arts and Sciences, Veterinary Medicine, Public Health, Social Work and Food, and Agriculture and Environmental Science, as well as from the university's diversity and inclusion office, graduate school office, the office of communication and its new office of postdoctoral affairs.

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## OHIO STATE'S RECRUITMENT COLLABORATIVE

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Perkins and other collaborative members visit conferences attended by scholars from diverse backgrounds, such as the Southern Regional Education Board's annual Institute on Teaching and Mentoring. At the events they make connections with doctoral students and faculty members from underrepresented groups. They collect information (for example, the potential hire's dissertation topic, research focus and how close they are to completion) and pass it on to various departments when they return to Columbus.

The collaborative is still working on the best ways to get the names and information of promising candidates into the hands of faculty who make decisions on whom to hire, Perkins says. "We'd love to see more faculty get involved." ■

Milano is critical of short-term solutions to improve a university's diversity, such as hiring from other institutions or adding visiting professor positions, which can put more minority professors in front of classrooms but are not the same as bringing in hires from underrepresented groups for long-term, tenure-track jobs.

The Ph.D. Project model recruits working adults to apply to graduate school and supports them throughout their doctoral programs. Milano wants to expand the project to other fields.

"If you're not increasing the pool, you're taking people out of other universities because you can afford it," he says.

## Getting In

Many experts say parts of the current admissions model—the way graduate admissions are conducted across the country—either consciously or unconsciously reinforce the status quo.

Julie R. Posselt, an assistant professor of higher education at the University of Southern California, pulled back the curtain on graduate admissions in her book, *Inside Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity and Faculty Gatekeeping*. Posselt spent time with six highly ranked departments at three research universities and found an overreliance on Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores, preferences for prestigious undergraduate institutions and a wariness about admitting some international and nontraditional candidates.

Untrained admissions committees can play a part in keeping a department homogenous. Unlike undergraduate admissions, which are conducted by admissions professionals and scrutinized, faculty members who serve on a department's graduate admissions committee typically work on their own without much public attention. The committees may not have training in unconscious biases, committee members may not represent a diversity of backgrounds and committee members may bring in their own biases about what makes a good doctoral student or who might be likely to fail. In addition, faculty members who help decide which graduate students to admit may prefer applicants who attended their alma maters, or who have studied with people they know.

Posselt observed that committees tended to be friendly and value collegiality over confronting one another about candidate evaluations. If there was a difference of opinion about an application—in one instance she observed, a student from a Christian college—it typically was handled with humor rather than a serious and difficult discussion about biases. Collegiality among members of the department was prioritized over a thorough talk (which might be uncomfortable for colleagues) about better and fairer ways to evaluate someone from a nontraditional background.

Her book observed institutional prestige influencing admission decisions, with committee members favoring candidates from the Ivy League and other

## CAMPUS VISITS

One way colleges that are seeking to attract more diverse job candidates can showcase their institution is to bring underrepresented minority candidates to campus for a visit, to meet current faculty members and get a feel for the institution.

Cameryn Blackmore, a doctoral student in political science at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, visited Clemson University last year after meeting a recruiter at the Southern Regional Education Board's annual conference for minority doctoral students. The recruiter took her email address, and Blackmore was invited to apply to Clemson's faculty exploration program. She was accepted, and the university flew her and several other doctoral students out for a two-day visit. "It was an amazing experience," she said.

Blackmore, who studies K-12 education policy and how the judicial branch affects it, met with university faculty members to talk with them about her interests and the tenure process at Clemson. The tenure discussion was useful for Blackmore, who has thought about her dissertation and how it connects to her goal of working at a research university.

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## CAMPUS VISITS

### CONTINUED

Blackmore, who is in her fourth year, has stayed in touch with Clemson's diversity coordinator. "It makes you see that people do care not only about diversity but making sure we have ... the tools that we need to actually be successful in the job market and beyond."

Wherever she applies, Blackmore will be considering the environment. Her department at Alabama, where she is the only black doctoral student, is supportive and nurturing. And she says faculty members go out of their way to help her do her best work. Blackmore was recently named a fellow with the American Political Science Association's minority fellowship program, an honor Alabama's political science department highlighted on its website.

"That's the type of support I'm going to be looking out for in the job market, because I definitely don't want to be somewhere that's just treating diversity as a checkmark," Blackmore says. "I definitely don't want to be somewhere where I feel as though I'm just the token black woman. I want to be somewhere that is interested in my research and interested in helping me to develop as a professor." ■

highly ranked institutions, including elite liberal arts colleges and public flagship universities. Personal experiences also factored in, with some faculty members giving favorable consideration to their alma maters (or peer institutions of one's alma mater) when gauging institutional quality.

The GRE also plays a big—many say outsize—role in admissions. Even though research has found performance gaps in test scores for female and minority test takers, admissions committees typically use score cutoffs to weed out applications in the first round. This is done despite the fact that score cutoffs don't actually show differences in the candidates or serve as the best indicators to predict how a student will do in graduate school. (The testing firm that administers the GRE, Educational Testing Service, a sponsor of this report, says it discourages using cutoff scores.)

ETS also says it goes to great lengths to make its assessments as fair and unbiased as possible, Alberto Acereda, executive director of the GRE and college programs, said in a written statement. Efforts include forming diverse teams to review test questions and removing questions that seem to unfairly bias any one group.

The test provides valuable comparative data, ETS says, and should be considered in tandem with other types of application materials that highlight an applicant's strengths. "The key is to balance the art and the science, and the

way to do that is to consider multiple sources of evidence about an applicant's knowledge, skills and other attributes when making admissions decisions," Acereda writes. "By using scores as they were intended — as just one piece of evidence about a candidate's readiness for graduate level work—the GRE test can provide tremendous value in helping institutions and programs achieve their enrollment goals."

The point at which the GRE is taken into account during the application process can have an effect. In Posselt's research, she found that even committees that look at more individual character aspects of applicants missed out on some candidates because of their reliance on the GRE (often for efficiency's sake) in the first round, leaving other considerations until later in the process.

There are two pathways toward more equitable enrollments, Posselt writes. Admissions committees can keep doing what they're doing and wait for changes in equity among institutional affiliations and student scores, accepting that until those change, admissions decisions may reproduce the gender and racial inequalities in society. Or they can step back from their screening customs and assumptions about student quality, consider diversity as a dimension of quality from the beginning of the review process, and reconsider how they use the GRE.

Posselt advocates for the latter approach. She is working with two organizations, IGEN and AMIGA, that encourage a more holistic review of graduate applicants.

In graduate admissions, as well as faculty hiring, the tendency is to focus on achievements rather than the potential for

growth. But in an education system that does not produce equal outcomes, focusing on accomplishments prevents change, Posselt says. "Rethinking what counts as accomplishments and potential is important for both of those."

Holistic review means not just looking at academic achievements but at qualities known to encourage success. The process should be comprehensive, Posselt argues, meaning committees should examine different backgrounds and look at qualities that are known to encourage success. It should be contextual as well, with committees considering the broader life situation faced by different candidates (for instance, giving different consideration to students who worked 35 hours per week as undergrads versus those who did not have to work). And she says committees should consider a candidate's potential for growth.

Her ideas have received plenty of interest. Since the book was published, Posselt has given dozens of presentations to graduate schools, disciplinary societies and other groups on how to move toward a more inclusive, holistic evaluation of graduate school candidates.

Changing the way a department does its graduate admissions can require faculty members to have difficult discussions about how the department has done it in the past, where blind spots and biases may exist, and how those issues may have unintentionally shut out good students from underrepresented backgrounds. That kind of self-reflection can be challenging, particularly if the department feels its approach to admissions generally has worked well.

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“The reality is that graduate admissions is an art and a science, and we need a balance of both. When we drop the science—the one measure with 70 years of validity research and that goes through extensive fairness reviews—we rely more on the measures that are qualitative and subjective in nature.”

David Payne

Vice President and COO, ETS

One recent study raises questions of whether STEM departments should use GRE scores in doctoral admissions. The study, published in the journal *PLOS ONE*, looked at academic performance and GRE scores in the STEM fields at four flagship universities. It found that while men had significantly higher quantitative scores, there were no gender differences in completion rates or time to degree. Most surprisingly, men in the bottom quartile of GRE quantitative scores had a higher completion rate—74 percent—than those in all other quartiles, even in engineering. (The highest-scoring quartile of men had a 56 percent completion rate.) The completion rate for women was around 60 percent, regardless of GRE scores.

The study’s lead researcher, Sandra L. Petersen, a professor of molecular neuroendocrinology of reproduction and director of the STEM Diversity Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, says the reliance on cutoff scores is common.

ETS disputes the relevance of the study, saying the findings were based on claims that the

nonprofit testing firm does not make. “The GRE test does not predict graduate or doctoral completion rates. It was never intended to do this,” David Payne, vice president and COO of ETS, said in a written statement. “Rather, the test provides a measure of graduate school readiness by assessing skills that are necessary to handle graduate-level work: verbal and quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and analytical writing.”

Instead, Payne suggests a refocus of research efforts on the issue. “Investing more money in research that proves the same point over and over is wasteful when there is so much need in the graduate community for research that identifies what characteristics are correlated with completion, develops more inclusive admissions processes that will help to identify which applicants have the academic skills as well as the personal attributes to be successful and creates programs that will support students in their chosen programs.”

Going test optional has been more common in undergraduate admissions. However, a department at an Ivy League university last fall

said it would go beyond test optional and no longer look at GRE scores. The University of Pennsylvania's philosophy department now does not require GRE scores, nor does it look at scores of applicants who submit them. Faculty unanimously approved the change, and the department issued a specific invitation to underrepresented students to apply. In explaining its decision, the department cited the cost of the test and sending scores to various institutions as being a burden for low-income applicants. It also says significant gaps in GRE performance do not predict academic success in graduate school but keep women and underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities from being accepted to programs.

In a written statement announcing the decision, Penn said, "In our judgment, nothing of significant epistemic value was gained by our use of the GRE that we couldn't figure out from looking at transcripts, writing samples etc. So, women, minorities and low-income applicants, apply to Penn philosophy! We will not discriminate against you based on an outdated, expensive, biased and predictively invalid test."

Payne, said dropping the GRE may open the door to the kinds of bias such decisions are designed to avoid.

"The reality is that graduate admissions is an art and a science, and we need a balance of both. When we drop the science—the one measure

## GOING ONLINE TO FIND CANDIDATES

*We couldn't find them. They don't exist.*

New online search tools for minority Ph.D.s may help put some of those excuses to rest for search committees that have been tasked with finding a diverse pool of applicants.

In the last year, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the University of Southern California's Race and Equity Center have introduced searchable databases of minority candidates who are looking for faculty or administrator jobs in higher education. The databases, which contain candidates' CVs and other information, aim to offer an easy way for colleges to connect with diverse candidates in a range of disciplines.

"We're trying to help them be more active and deliberate," says Shaun R. Harper, founder and executive director of USC's Race and Equity Center.

USC's database is called PRISM. It includes searchable profiles of people of color who are looking for jobs in academe, Harper says. The profiles allow candidates to upload their CVs and examples of their work. It's free for job candidates to post profiles, while institutions that wish to post job ads pay a subscription fee.

PRISM will also serve as a virtual space for networking and connecting, Harper says. Candidates can share information about

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## GOING ONLINE TO FIND CANDIDATES

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grants or other opportunities. It will include a place for minority candidates to seek advice or collaboration opportunities with more experienced scholars of color. Harper says he gets about 100 emails a week from black men who are graduate students and looking for advice or asking to collaborate. "They don't have faculty of color in their department who can advise them," he says.

Harper is unable to help them individually, and he hopes PRISM's community functions will allow him and others to offer assistance in a more efficient way (for example, in an "ask me anything" session about their scholarship).

The Mellon Foundation's tool is a searchable database of its Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows who have gone on to earn Ph.D.s and are on the job market. It includes candidates who are enrolled in the fifth year or beyond of doctoral programs or who have earned Ph.D.s within the last three years and wish to provide their information to search committees, Armando Bengochea, director of the fellows program, said.

The foundation has long been a source for proactive administrators and faculty members who want to know where its fellows are earning Ph.D.s and when they go on the job market.

So far, 220 fellows and institutions are using the tool, Bengochea says. It is free to use and password protected. Faculty and administrators who wish to use the database should email the foundation for access. ■

with 70 years of validity research and that goes through extensive fairness reviews—we rely more on the measures that are qualitative and subjective in nature," he says. "Being human and therefore subjected to implicit bias (yes, all of us), our decisions can be swayed by the status and eloquence of the letter of recommendation author, by the reputation of the undergraduate institution, by the applicants' work, internship and other experiences. Applicants from 'majority' groups and who belong to higher-income families are more likely to have the social networks and other means to submit a letter of support from a senator, a transcript from a top-tier undergraduate institution and experience from an unpaid internship."

Comments posted to *Daily Nous*, a website aimed at philosophy scholars, varied on Penn's decision. Some cheered it, while others said the GRE can be helpful to students with weaker grades or who come from a less prestigious undergraduate institution.

For example, one faculty member described how a strong showing on the GRE may have played a big role in their ability to enter the academy: "Just one small data point: I had somewhat poor grades (in non-philosophy classes) as an undergraduate for a variety of good and bad reasons. I think I had somewhat strong letters from somewhat known people. I also had notably strong

GRE scores. My impression is that the scores helped significantly when applying to grad school, since without them the strong letters and the poor grades would have sort of canceled each other out. I think I was a relatively strong grad student and, in any case, I now have tenure.”

Recruiting is a key part of seeking to diversify graduate programs—specifically attempts to find people from underrepresented backgrounds with an interest in research and teaching, and getting more of these students to see graduate school and faculty jobs as a viable and fulfilling path.

Outside groups can help with the outreach work, including nonprofit organizations, foundations and disciplinary societies.

For example, the Ph.D. Project, which was started with funds and staff from the KPMG Foundation, targets students who have graduated with a bachelor’s and already have started their careers [see sidebar on [page 28](#)]. The group works with more than 100 corporations to get the word out and runs a website that serves as an information clearinghouse on going to graduate school. It invites anyone who is considering a doctoral program in business to go to the group’s annual conference (it covers their costs) to learn more about what graduate school is really like, and to meet current doctoral students and faculty members who can share their experiences.

What makes the project special, says David A. Thomas, president of Morehouse College and the former dean of Georgetown University’s School of Business, is that it reaches students who have the capacity, curiosity and right skill sets for graduate studies, but who needed or

wanted to enter the working world after finishing their undergraduate studies.

This model is good for people who take a more circuitous or nontraditional route to graduate school, with a different first career or obligations that did not allow them to spend another five years or more in school.

Other programs, such as the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, identify students when they are undergraduates, giving them networks, support and research opportunities to help prepare for graduate school. (It also helps support them in graduate school and beyond.) The program is open to students in a range of humanities disciplines, from anthropology and art history to linguistics, literature and sociology. It is named for Benjamin E. Mays, who was a pastor, civil rights activist and longtime president of Morehouse College, and is revered for his intellectual and spiritual leadership.

The fellowship supports humanities scholars at 51 colleges, universities and consortia (see sidebar on [page 19](#)). Each chapter typically chooses five fellows a year, while consortia choose between 10 and 25, says Armando Bengochea, senior program officer and director of the fellowship for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Its mission is twofold: to help individual scholars pursuing their Ph.D.s, and to develop the pipeline of minority scholars into the professoriate. To date, 835 fellows have earned Ph.D.s, while another 700 are enrolled in doctoral programs. More than 550 are teaching at the college level.

The program places students in cohorts, offers mentoring and gives students research opportunities as undergrads. It also works to

demystify the academic space, Bengochea says, so humanities scholars understand what is required at every step of their careers.

“This kind of strategic training and transmission of social and academic capital can be especially important for students from communities who have not traditionally felt invited to study and work in certain academic spaces,” he says.

## Outside Help and Working Together

Bridge programs or partnerships between colleges, including historically black colleges and universities, are another way individual graduate programs have increased their diversity.

One such relationship that serves as a model, experts say, is Fisk and Vanderbilt Universities’ master’s-to-Ph.D. program, which was created to improve representation in STEM fields. Students apply to Fisk University, an HBCU, in biology, chemistry, physics, interdisciplinary materials science or astronomy. During their studies, students develop relationships with faculty members and advisers at nearby Vanderbilt. The goal is that when they apply to Vanderbilt’s doctoral programs in these areas, professors will know them and will be better able to conduct a holistic review. While the bridge students are not guaranteed admission, their applications are fast tracked.

The focus is at the master’s level, because research has shown that underrepresented minority students are more likely to use master’s programs as a stepping-stone to a doctorate.

The bridge program offers a free tool kit on its

website with strategies, lessons and tools for other institutions. The program “was developed with the hope that the lessons learned, strategies and tools we have developed would inspire and provide concrete guidance to other practitioners in the field seeking to develop similar programs,” the site says.

The partnership was a model for a similar one at Tennessee State University, the only public HBCU in Tennessee, which has partnered with Vanderbilt on a bridge to doctorate programs for students who attended TSU or other minority-serving institutions that belong to a consortium of institutions working to increase the number of underrepresented students earning bachelor’s and graduate degrees in STEM, which receives funding from the National Science Foundation.

Administrators at the Fisk-Vanderbilt program also offer consulting to other groups and have served in advisory roles to the American Physical Society’s minority bridge program.

That effort is an example of disciplinary societies playing an active role in improving the diversity of academic fields. The society conducts outreach to find more underrepresented minority candidates for graduate school and offers a second chance for those who are not accepted through the usual application process.

The program, which aims to improve the number of underrepresented minority students earning physics Ph.D.s, grew out concern about the imbalance between the percentage of underrepresented students who earn bachelor’s degrees in physics and those who go on to earn doctorates, says Theodore Hodapp, the society’s director of education and diversity. While 12 percent of

# A SUSTAINING NETWORK

Every fall, approximately 1,000 African American, Hispanic and Native American scholars come together for the nation's largest gathering of minority doctoral scholars. It's a chance for graduate students and doctoral degree holders to network with potential employers, take professional development workshops and connect with others who know what it's like to be one of the only people like you in a department or on a campus.

The Institute for Teaching and Mentoring is a centerpiece of the Southern Regional Education Board's Doctoral Scholars Program, which seeks to increase diversity in the faculty ranks by supporting minority students in Ph.D. programs. SREB started the work 25 years ago and since then has helped graduate more than 900 scholars, nearly three-quarters of whom are now teaching at colleges and universities.

The program grew out of concern about the dearth of minority faculty members, says Ansley Abraham, its founder and director. To persist and succeed, doctoral scholars need financial support. But they also need emotional and social support to counter the isolation that many feel. He says that sort of alienation can have ripple effects, spreading into a student's work, professional relationships and opportunities.

Currently, 400 scholars are participating in the program, sponsored by states and institutions. The organization also opens

the institute to participants in fellowships and other programs dedicated to improving diversity in graduate schools and faculty ranks. Attendees come from a range of institutions, including HBCUs, tribal colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions, major research universities and smaller colleges and universities. Participants are from across the United States, not only the Southern states that make up the SREB.

Those who have attended an institute conference say the experience is a profound one, especially when they see hundreds of Ph.D. students and faculty members from underrepresented minority groups in one place. They describe a sense of belonging and a reassurance that they deserve to be where they are. It's comforting, they say, to be around others who share your experience in academe.

"It's always been a home," says Christopher M. Whitt, vice provost for institutional diversity and inclusion at Creighton University. He has not missed an SREB annual conference in the 15 years since he first attended as a doctoral student at the University of Maryland at College Park. The institute is a place where Whitt and others can "recharge themselves for the year."

Whitt now recruits potential faculty members at the conference. Previously, when he worked as a political science professor at Augustana College, he brought the college's provost and Augustana's Diversity Dissertation fellows, a group of doctoral students from other institutions who come to the private college in

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## A SUSTAINING NETWORK

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Illinois to work on their dissertations and help teach classes. Last year, Whitt represented Creighton, which was the university's first appearance at the institute.

The professional connections scholars make at the conference are lasting, Whitt says. "It becomes a network that goes beyond every October. That network can help sustain people as they move throughout their career."

Robert Osgood, an associate professor of microbiology at the Rochester Institute of Technology, hasn't missed an SREB institute in almost two decades. Osgood says he attends as someone willing to help however he is needed—setting up rooms, moving chairs or whatever is asked.

Many universities that are actively looking to hire more diverse faculty members are aware of the opportunities to meet scholars and promote their institutions that such a gathering offers.

For example, Ohio State University brought a group of 20 to 25 faculty members, administrators and doctoral students to the most recent conference, says Donnie Perkins, chief diversity officer and assistant dean in the university's College of Engineering. Ohio State also hosted an evening reception to meet more potential faculty job candidates.

With one of the largest contingents, Ohio State also is trying to be a good partner by offering opportunities for collaboration, Perkins says. The university is looking for ways to be a partner with SREB, to be mindful of the other

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“The network can help sustain people as they move throughout their career.”

Christopher M. Whitt

Vice Provost for Institutional Diversity and Inclusion  
Creighton University

institutions and to look for ways to connect scholars over research or other benefits they may be able to provide.

Beyond formal opportunities to network, mingle at receptions and talk to recruiters, the conference offers scholars opportunities to discuss their research and to brainstorm new ideas or collaborations.

Cameryn Blackmore, a political science doctoral student at the University of Alabama, has attended two institutes. At the most recent one, a meeting with a friend in the hotel lobby led to a potential dissertation breakthrough when her friend suggested a book on research methods. Blackmore ordered the book and brought it to her dissertation chair when she returned to campus.

Blackmore says the experience gives scholars a boost as they return to their research and dissertations. "It re-energizes you to go back and just want to slay dragons." ■

undergraduate physics degrees were earned by students from underrepresented minority groups, that percentage was between 6 and 7 percent for doctoral degrees.

It works like this: the society runs a national recruitment campaign, reaching out to faculty at university physics departments to find students who may not be considering applying or who are likely to be rejected in the regular admissions process (for example, if they did poorly on the GRE or did not take the test). After programs make their admissions offers, APS circulates applications for its bridge program to six university physics departments, then to 40 other partner departments.

APS works with six original sites, including the University of Florida and the University of Central Florida, and 40 partner departments it brought on board after running out of space at the original sites. How each university handles the bridge applicants varies, Hodapp says. They may get an extra line, use them to hire for unfilled slots after accepted students accept or decline, or they may reserve some of their slots for the bridge program from the beginning.

While physics programs may take only a few students each year, the nationwide effort adds up. APS gets about 90 applications a year, and about half go into graduate programs. About two-thirds of those applicants had applied to programs on their own but were not accepted.

The programs are eager to have a chance to work with the students and have embraced the bridge project, Hodapp says. In the past, when talking about the low diversity of their doctoral programs, some would say they could not find minority scholars. The program answers the question “Where are they?” and

goes to the next step by providing departments with multiple candidates.

Each site must commit to providing several supports for students. They include a comprehensive induction program to grad school and making sure students are matched with the right course work—Hodapp says students may need to repeat core courses if they did not have a challenging enough undergrad version. The bridge program also features comprehensive mentoring, which includes a research mentor, an academic mentor, a social mentor and, often, peer mentors.

The society has seen signs of success. The retention rate for its bridge scholars is 80 to 85 percent (compared to about 60 percent over all for the field). Currently, 160 doctoral students are in the program’s six cohorts. And the first cohort is about to graduate.

In order to match the diversity of undergraduate physics programs, they’d need about 35 more Ph.D.s from underrepresented minority scholars a year, Hodapp says. Now they’re getting 45. “We think we’ve actually plugged this particular leak,” he says.

Now the society is expanding its bridge program model to other disciplinary groups in the physical sciences, including the American Chemical Society and the geophysical and astronomical societies.

Disciplinary groups tend to take different approaches to addressing the diversity issue in their fields, depending on their culture, membership, leadership, goals around diversity and funding sources.

In the humanities, the American Historical Association sees its major areas of influence on the field as being its ability to convene

(at an annual convention) and in the power to legitimize different types of scholarship by what it chooses to publish—or not—in its journals and other publications.

Being published by the AHA sends a signal to grad schools and faculty about what is highly valued in historical scholarship, says James Grossman, the association's executive director. And changes are afoot, with an effort to elevate a greater diversity of voices and scholarship. Last year, *The American Historical Review's* editor wrote an essay called "Decolonizing the AHR," which outlined specific changes the journal has made to boost diversity. And the association's magazine recently published a cover story about trans history.

Before this effort, the *AHR* was criticized in 2017 for assigning a review of a book about inequality and urban education to a professor who many criticized as a white supremacist.

"This discipline is not the discipline it was a generation ago," Grossman says. "It's changed in the types of things we're interested in as historical scholarship; it's changed in the ways we think about what historians study, and how the gates are maintained."

The society is also opening its annual convention wider in an effort to increase the field's diversity, offering free or discounted admission to local students and teachers. They also have added an undergraduate poster contest. The message is: "This is a discipline that wants you," Grossman says.

The AHA's council is scheduled to discuss whether it will do away with the convention's job center, where job seekers typically interviewed. It's seen as a diversity issue because

requiring scholars who are on the hunt for a job to travel to the conference can give an advantage to wealthier students. Participation in the center already has declined significantly, Grossman says. At the last conference, 20 institutions were part of the job center, while in years past it was 10 times that number. "The marketplace has made the decision," Grossman says.

## Persistence and Finishing the Degree

Support is critical during the graduate school years. The journey to a Ph.D. is long and hard, and many students drop out before finishing. But when a student is the only member of an underrepresented group in their program or among faculty members in their department, feelings of doubt, isolation or impostor syndrome can be amplified.

A range of programs seek to provide support for minority students, either on campus or nationwide. The cohort model is a popular one, which provides encouragement to students as well as the message that they are not alone in their struggles.

A 2014 study from the Council of Graduate Schools suggested that one way higher education could diversify the Ph.D. pool was by holding on to more black and Latino students who start a program but leave before finishing. The study, which looked at the progress of more than 7,000 black and Latino graduate students who were enrolled from 1992 to 2012 at 21 research universities, found that 44 percent of black and Latino Ph.D. students in STEM (with STEM defined to include

behavioral and social sciences) earned a doctoral degree within seven years. Another 20 percent were still enrolled in their programs without a Ph.D., while 36 percent had left.

The study also explored how students felt about their treatment in programs, with 77 percent reporting that standards were the same for all graduate students. Only 13 percent reported that they experienced racism, and 31 percent reported that they felt faculty members understood issues that affect underrepresented minority students. A much higher number—95 percent—reporting feeling supported by a network of students.

One place minority doctoral students say they find that kind of peer support is at the Southern Regional Education Board’s annual Institute on Mentoring and Teaching (see sidebar on [page 23](#)). This largest gathering of minority doctoral students typically attracts 1,000 scholars (both grad students and faculty members), and includes professional development workshops and networking opportunities with institutions looking to hire diverse faculty. In recent years the board has invited students’ mentors, so they can hear firsthand the experiences of other minority scholars and faculty members.

SREB supports its scholars financially, with grants paid for by participating states and institutions, Ansley Abraham, the program director, says. In recent years, some states have cut back, and SREB has more demand than funds, he says.

The program is successful because it addresses financial needs as well as the social and emotional needs of underrepresented minority students who are pursuing a doctorate. Feelings of alienation

and isolation are “twin barriers” for minority students who work in departments with little diversity, Abraham says.

“They impact how those students are interacting with their departments, with their disciplines,” Abraham says. “It has a ripple effect through everything they’re doing concerning earning that Ph.D.”

## Community of Scholars

Communities and cohorts are key to success, especially for students who don’t see people who look like them at the front of the classroom.

These are key elements of the Meyerhoff program at UMBC, the highly successful attempt to increase the number of minority students in STEM fields who go on to graduate school to earn a doctorate or a medical degree. Cohorts of 48 to 70 students are brought in every year, and the university currently enrolls 271 Meyerhoff Scholars. The students take classes together, live together and help each other study and succeed. When one struggles, others step in to help.

“It’s empowering,” says Michael Summers, a chemistry professor at UMBC who has been involved since the program’s early stages and often has its students working in his lab. “There really is strength in numbers,” he says.

Faculty mentors play a big role in the Meyerhoff model, sharing research opportunities and identifying issues in classes before students fall too far behind and consider switching majors. Keeping students in the STEM pipeline is a major goal, and studies

# FROM THE CORPORATE WORLD TO BUSINESS SCHOOL, AND BACK

When Nicole Fuller was an undergraduate studying business at Georgetown University, one of her professors suggested she consider graduate school. But Fuller, the first person on her father's side to go to college, needed to find a well-paying job after graduation and to become financially independent.

Several years later, while feeling unfulfilled in her corporate-finance job, Fuller got back in touch with her professor. He told her about the Ph.D. Project, a program that recruits minority professionals in the corporate world to attend graduate school to become business school professors. Now, Fuller is an assistant professor of management at the University of New Orleans.

The project's mission is to create more diverse faculties at business schools and to increase diversity in the corporate workplace. The idea is that more minority faculty members will encourage more minority students to study business, and those students in turn will take their education to work in various industries.

What makes the program different, say those familiar with it, is its approach of looking for promising graduate school candidates outside higher education. This approach captures people who have the aptitude for and interest in research but who started working after college or may not have been exposed to the possibility of becoming a business

professor during their undergraduate studies.

The Ph.D. Project holds a three-day conference each year. Potential candidates can network there with graduate students and representatives from various business schools to learn about what the life of a Ph.D. student is really like, says Bernard J. Milano, president of the project and the KPMG Foundation, which created the program in 1994 and continues to sponsor it.

Fuller attended her first annual conference in 2010. Three years later she moved to Texas to enter the doctoral program at Texas A&M University. In 2018, she started her faculty job at the University of New Orleans.

Since the KPMG Foundation started the program in 1994, the number of minority business professors with doctorates has gone from 294 to 1,470, according to project data. Another 270 minority scholars are in the pipeline, working toward their Ph.D.s.

The program could be replicated in other fields, Milano says. Its organizers are willing to share what they know about how to diversify faculties by building a pipeline. And the program's website describes how to apply to graduate schools and the experience of being a student and a faculty member.

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## FROM THE CORPORATE WORLD TO BUSINESS SCHOOL, AND BACK

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The project has formed peer networks for various business concentrations, such as accounting, management and marketing. Each one has its own conference, which the project sponsors. These networks provide a support system for minority doctoral students who are scattered across the country, and for faculty members in different institutions, who may be the only people like them in their departments. The conferences include professional development workshops on topics like preparing to go on the job market, where current faculty share their applications as models for doctoral students who are looking toward their next career step.

Ph.D. Project organizers are now seeking to expand the influence of minority business scholars by getting more tenured professors from minority groups into administrative leadership roles. Working toward that goal is the related Project AHEAD (Achieve Higher Education Diversity), which is a partnership between American Express and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, the specialized accreditor for business schools. They are also looking at corporate board training, Milano says.

Fuller is happy she made the switch from the corporate world to the academy, and she already is seeing the influence her presence has on students in her classes. For example, a black woman student who is a senior recently told Fuller she was glad she was teaching, and that she was the first black professor the

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“I feel like I’m finally doing something I was genuinely called to do.”

Nicole Fuller

Assistant Professor of Management  
University of New Orleans

student has had. And Fuller says there also is a benefit for white students to see a black woman in a position of authority. In their jobs after college, these students will be better prepared to work in a diverse, global marketplace with managers from many different backgrounds.

The work is meaningful, Fuller said. “I feel like I’m finally doing something I was genuinely called to do.” ■

show while black and Hispanic students enter college with same interest in those disciplines as their peers, they are less likely to graduate with a STEM degree.

“No one makes it alone,” UMBC president Freeman Hrabowski says. Faculty members act as champions for the students, which he sees as a responsibility more faculty members at many types of institutions should take on. If every tenured faculty member acted as a champion for one student from an under-represented background, he says, “Higher ed would be transformed.”

Summers is one of those champions. He describes the early days of the program on the UMBC campus as a mind and culture shift on expectations about who can succeed in science and math. Meyerhoff students would fill the front row in classes, come in early, ask hard questions and score the top test grades. That helped shift faculty and student thinking, too.

The program has had great success, with 1,100 alumni, more than 200 students currently enrolled at UMBC and more than 300 graduates now pursuing advanced degrees in STEM fields. Six years ago, its model was exported to Penn State and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in an experiment to see if Meyerhoff could be replicated in different universities, without the force of Hrabowski, who created the program as provost at UMBC and has been its champion as president.

Representatives from the two universities came and spent the summer in UMBC’s bridge program. The two programs—Penn State Millennium Scholars and UNC’s Chancellor’s

Science Scholars—used what UMBC learned along the way and have had better student outcomes earlier while raising millions of dollars to endow the programs, Summers says.

Early results are positive. At Penn State, two cohorts—a total of 29 students so far—have graduated (some in the second cohort are finishing a fifth year). Of the first cohort, 65 percent went on to graduate school. The university expects higher numbers as the program matures and the size of the cohorts grow. At UNC, 45 scholars have graduated. Of those, 54 percent are pursuing an advanced degree in a STEM field. (Going forward, Chancellor’s Science Scholars will be required to apply to graduate schools as part of the program, says Thomas C. Freeman Jr., its executive director.) For undergraduates, the UNC program has a 90 percent retention rate in STEM majors, and its students have a higher GPA than a similar group of students not in the program. The university has received gifts of \$10 million and \$5 million to endow the program.

Like at UMBC, the newer programs start before students even arrive. High school students who interview for the program attend a summer program where they build a community and bolster their advanced math skills and get a taste of the challenges of college STEM courses. The approach features a strict set of rules intended to build community among the scholars—no cellphones for most of the day, students studying in groups and each member sharing the lowest grade, to encourage people to give and receive help. At UNC, the program first did not adopt some of these rules, but is now adding them, says Thomas Freeman.

Here is some of what the two universities have learned so far with their Meyerhoff spin-off programs:

- It's expensive and requires a long-term commitment to resources, but works in a way less complete programs do not, says Amy Freeman, who directs the Millennium Scholars program at Penn State. The programs come with full scholarships as well as mentoring and undergraduate research opportunities. While that is a large expense, Amy Freeman, who has done diversity work for decades, says this helps keep a larger number of students on track by meeting a variety of needs not covered by other programs, which may instead target only financial need, student communities or summer bridge programs. "All of the factors are put in place all of the time," she says.
- The financial commitment needs to be long term, because the program is elevated when alumni who are in doctoral programs or who have completed Ph.D.s return. That journey obviously takes years. If the program is stopped too quickly, it won't be able to produce strong enough results. Penn State, for example, is preparing to have its first alumni panel at the interview weekend this year.
- Programs need to be visible and require political capital on campus. Given the cost and the culture change it is trying to create, the effort needs a prominent spot, Amy Freeman says. At Penn State, it is one of the few programs directly under the university president's purview.
- While many of the essential parts of the Meyerhoff are needed, that approach can be adjusted to fit the specific culture of an institution. At Penn State, for instance, the Millennium Scholars complete undergraduate theses like those the honors college requires—a way to demonstrate the program is on the same level of academic standards.
- The program can create a culture change beyond its students. Faculty involved in the program report a ripple effect (higher GPAs for all minority students at UMBC, for example, as well as improvements to graduate programs based on what they've learned from Meyerhoff, Summers says). UNC has seen a major shift in how faculty members treat struggling students, says Thomas Freeman. Where once students might have struggled alone because of the size of the university, now faculty members come to him to ask what's going on if a Chancellor's Science Scholar is struggling in their course. Sometimes, they'll even come to him to talk about a struggling student they think is a Chancellor's scholar, but who isn't. In that case, Thomas says he talks to the faculty members about students and offers to talk directly with students to see if he can help. "My door is always open to that," he says. "I try not to limit my assistance and support to just the students in the program. I try to help as many as I can, even if they didn't get in."
- Fund-raising will require a lot of time in order to create an endowment for the program. Also, unexpected things

happen. Last year, part of Thomas Freeman's job was to help students dealing with racial unrest on campus about the Confederate statue Silent Sam. Some were upset with the chancellor, who was at the center of the decisions about whether Silent Sam would be preserved on campus, and that their program bore her title. Thomas Freeman held a forum, and together they talked through how the university is governed and why the chancellor might be acting in a certain way. They wrote a letter in support of her to the governing boards in which they strongly supported completely removing the statue. Not every student signed it, but 100 did.

Administrators and faculty involved with the Meyerhoff program and its replications say the model has the potential to spread to even more campuses (especially ones that graduate a high number of Ph.D.s but not from underrepresented groups). If it were to spread to more universities, they say such programs could make a "huge dent" in the graduate school diversity issue.

As diversity numbers improve and more students graduate and earn advanced degrees, programs like this may help change old ways of thinking in the academy about the best way to teach, and about who is capable of succeeding.

"Maybe there's a better way of engaging students," Thomas Freeman says. "Maybe just because a student doesn't look like or think like you doesn't mean they aren't intelligent or aren't capable of making significant contributions. If they can see that in students, maybe they can start to see that in faculty candidates. Maybe they can see it in people who are already on campus that they might have overlooked before. It will be a glacial change, but I think we are having the impact that I believe we should have. It hasn't been that long, but I think it's starting to take root." ■

# The Problem in Graduate Admissions Is Culture, Not Testing

By Jonathan Malesic

Graduate admissions is an inexact science. Faculty committees, sitting around conference tables for hours on end, have plenty of data to decide about applicants, including their transcripts, personal statements, letters of recommendation and *GRE*® scores. Problem is, it's not always clear just what the data mean. That makes it easy for biases to slip in undetected. And now there are growing concerns that the admissions process, including the role standardized testing plays in it, is standing in the way of greater gender, racial and socioeconomic equity in Ph.D. programs and the professoriate.

Concerns about diversity in graduate programs are well-founded. But standardized tests like the GRE test are not what's holding the academy back from attaining greater diversity. The problem arises instead in those long meetings in conference rooms. Faculty have limited time to make important decisions, all while navigating departmental politics and seeking to raise their program's prestige. So as Julie Posselt, an education professor at the University of Southern California, shows in her recent book *Inside Graduate Admissions*, faculty often end up trying to simplify a tricky process by choosing applicants who remind them of themselves. In short, the problem is rooted in human psychology and faculty culture; it demands a human-centered solution.

The American Astronomical Society (AAS) in 2016 recommended that graduate programs in astronomy stop requiring GRE scores for applicants. The AAS argues, in part, that when admissions committees establish cutoff GRE scores for applicants, they end up reducing the demographic diversity of their candidates for admission. Because of well-known disparities in scores between test takers of different races and genders, the AAS and some others believe that setting an arbitrary minimum score will disproportionately eliminate female, African American and Hispanic candidates from the pool.

The AAS is right to push for greater diversity in the field. And it's true that an astronomer — or sociologist or historian — is more than his or her GRE score. But ignoring the test will not solve the academy's inequities. That's because the GRE test is not the problem. In fact, when GRE scores are viewed in their proper context — including the known gender and racial score differences — they enable direct comparisons between candidates that no other criterion does. Evidence from undergraduate admissions suggests that making standardized tests optional does not produce more diverse student populations.

To understand the culture of graduate admissions, Posselt interviewed faculty and sat in on admissions committee meetings at 10 top-ranked graduate programs across the arts and sciences. What she found was faculty using a wide, inconsistent range of standards to arrive at their decisions. She saw some faculty misuse the GRE test by establishing high cutoff scores in the first stage of review in an effort to trim a large stack of applications down to a manageable size. She also found that faculty apply arbitrary criteria inconsistently across the applicant pool. In one extreme case, a professor of classics speculated that growing up in a "pastoral" region of the United States might be conducive to one applicant's ability to master ancient languages.

Faculty in elite departments struggle to distinguish among all the high-GRE score, high-GPA applications they see, Posselt found. Emotion, therefore, ends up heavily influencing decisions. In the conference room, one professor's enthusiasm for an applicant can sway everyone else's judgment. This commonly happens when an applicant comes from a faculty member's alma mater, according to Posselt's findings. Faculty also have a strong incentive to keep the peace in their departments, which can mean deferring to each other to avoid conflict.

The shifting definition of merit that results, and that Posselt observed, is not inherently bad. That is precisely how unconventional applicants she saw committees consider — like a student with low test scores who grew up on a remote Himalayan mountainside — get admitted and eventually thrive. Still, faculty need to be careful that their subjective judgments don't reproduce longstanding inequities in their fields.

Posselt argues that in the final stages of the admissions process, many faculty lean on the shaky criterion of “fit.” Other gatekeepers to elite professions do the same. Recruiters for top finance, legal and consulting firms look for a certain kind of “fit” among prospective entry-level employees. Lauren Rivera, a professor of management and organizations at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, shows in her book *Pedigree: How Elite Students Get Elite Jobs* that “fit” means being someone the recruiter wouldn't mind being crammed into a rental car or stuck in an airport with.

In practice, this translates into recruiters looking for people like themselves: graduates of elite universities who are “well-rounded” in exactly the same way, right down to their hobbies. Diversity in hiring, therefore, often remains elusive.

Graduate admissions can produce similar results. That's not surprising, because, like private-sector recruitment, it is a human process. Humans are rational, emotional and social all at once. They're also often overworked, and so they can use help in making decisions that align with the higher-order goals of their institutions, such as expanding diversity.

Faculty understandably want autonomy in graduate admissions since they are choosing their apprentices and, in many programs, their employees. But human biases inevitably influence faculty members' choices in admissions. Universities therefore need to acknowledge those biases and work around them in order to diversify academia. This will mean changing faculty culture in order to align the admissions process with the university's diversity goals.

There are plenty of ways deans and provosts can help faculty accomplish this. They can offer incentives, like increased faculty research budgets, to programs that graduate a higher number of female, Black or Hispanic Ph.D.'s. They can also encourage more active student recruitment, reaching out to promising undergraduate students from underrepresented groups. Institutions that want to increase the population of Black and Hispanic Ph.D. students might build cooperative programs like the Fisk-Vanderbilt Bridge, which prepares students at a historically Black university for graduate programs at a neighboring research institution. Columbia University has a bridge program open to students from underrepresented



groups who want to pursue a Ph.D. in natural sciences. The American Physical Society sponsors a bridge program, too.

Admissions committees might also benefit from changing the sequence and information context of their admissions decisions. (Management scholars call this choice architecture.) Some tech firms have attempted to diversify their workforces by masking applicants' biographical information in the first round of review. Universities might consider something analogous. To keep faculty from immediately eliminating all candidates below a certain GRE score threshold, a department might withhold GRE scores from admissions committees until faculty have first reviewed other elements of the applications and identified the strongest minority candidates.

Because admissions committees typically look at GRE scores early in the process and consider diversity late, as Posselt found, such a change would completely reverse a familiar sequence. It would take some getting used to. But it would also address one of the American Astronomical Society's (and ETS's) chief concerns: the overreliance on GRE scores, without their full context, to vet applicants right away.

Decisions are hard. But information — including everything that goes into a graduate school application — is not the reason they're hard. They're hard because information, on its own, doesn't tell you how to use it. Culture does. By focusing on the culture of graduate admissions, universities can help faculty make decisions that improve the academy's diversity.

**Jonathan Malesic** is a former full-time faculty member at King's College and freelance writer who contributes occasionally to *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed*. He is currently writing a book on the spiritual costs of the American work ethic.

# The Faculty

Even as student diversity grows, college and university faculties remain largely white.

Nationwide, three-quarters of full-time faculty members—including tenured and tenure-track professors, who have the most security, support and resources—are white, according to the most recent numbers from the U.S. Department of Education. And these numbers have not changed much in the last 20 years compared to the changes in student demographics and the American population. The growing number of colleges that classify as Hispanic-serving under the federal definition, for example, reflect rapidly shifting student demographics.

Along gender lines, while the majority of undergraduate students are female, 44 percent of full-time faculty are women. The gender breakdowns vary by field, with some fields being majority female and others, such as engineering and the physical sciences, being predominantly male.

Faculty diversity varies by institution type. Community colleges generally employ more diverse faculty members than four-year institutions. Minority-serving institutions tend to as well.

Even well-intentioned colleges that have talked about improving diversity for years have found it difficult to enact change that lasts. As more research and discussion emerges about the benefits and barriers to greater diversity, these institutions and higher education



organizations are recognizing that they must make systematic changes to the way faculty are hired and supported once they come to campus. Moving the needle in a significant way requires a culture change, according to a wide range of experts.

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“Institutional transformation takes a lot of work at every level. It has to be sustained, and it has to be iterative.”

Patrice McDermott  
Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs  
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Changing the culture of an institution or profession is hard, and it takes a long time. Those working to diversify the professoriate say it's also a continuum; the work does not end when faculty members from diverse backgrounds are offered a job and accept. It's just as important—perhaps even more so—to do the work of changing a campus or department culture so that new faculty can thrive in their work and lives and want to stay.

“Institutional transformation takes a lot of work at every level,” says Patrice McDermott, vice provost for faculty affairs at the University

of Maryland, Baltimore County. “It has to be sustained, and it has to be iterative.”

Efforts are under way across the higher education landscape at individual institutions (some of which are pledging large sums of money), government-funded organizations such as the National Science Foundation (NSF), disciplinary societies and private fellowships and nonprofits. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent on the profound challenge of creating a more diverse professoriate.

## What Is Happening Now?

Why has progress been so slow? Improving diversity is not a new topic in higher education. But good intentions haven't made the big changes desired.

Taking a wider view, the disparities in faculty positions are similar to the racial and gender inequities found across institutions in America. Lack of diversity is not a problem unique to higher education.

“These are American challenges,” Hrabowski, of UMBC, says. “These are challenges we face as a nation.”

And if fields like health care and law, among many others, are going to improve their diversity, addressing the postsecondary pipeline has to be part of the solution.

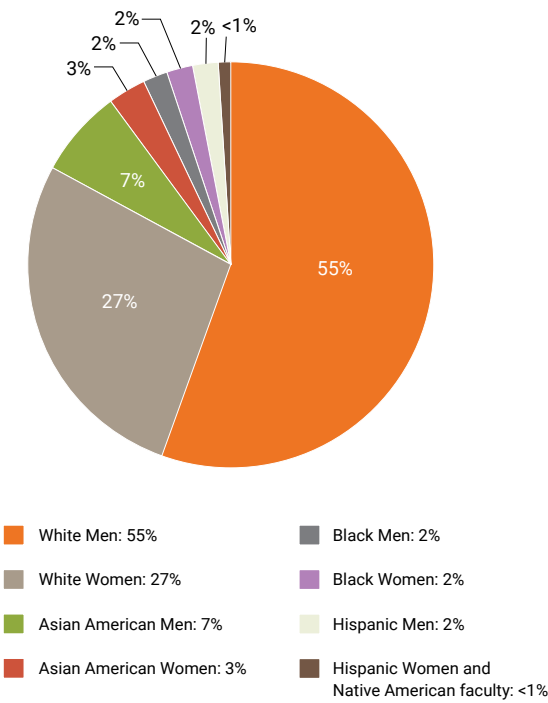
Yet higher education, which prides itself on speaking truth, needs to step up and take a harder look at the truth of where it is in diversity efforts. That means carefully studying data on representation and being honest about what is working and what hasn't.

Part of that involves looking at how a university hires its faculty and examining ways to improve different parts of the process. For institutions with more financial resources, increasing the number of hires can help boost diversity. Wealthier universities that have pledged to make hires where they have come up short are Ivy League institutions such as Columbia and Yale Universities, which are directing \$100 million and \$50 million, respectively, to increasing their faculty diversity over five years. The University of Southern California has pledged \$50 million for a similar effort. These big-money initiatives have been viewed warily in some parts of higher education for possibly driving raids of less wealthy colleges' faculties for diverse professors.

Hiring isn't enough, though. Experts say lasting, meaningful change involves taking a closer look at the issue of retention. While efforts until recent years have concentrated on hiring diverse candidates, now institutions are increasingly looking at the issue of retention and how they can ensure that their new hires feel welcomed and want to stay. (Columbia's \$100 million effort, for example, includes faculty retention efforts, including dual-career support and mid-career grants.)

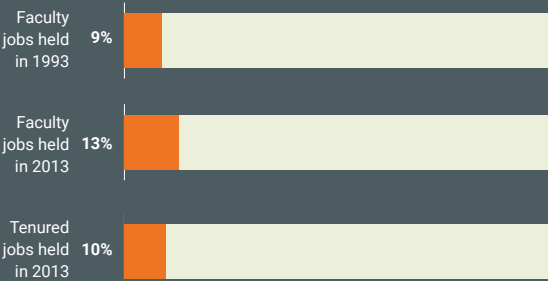
Different institutions will have different approaches. A small college or university that conducts a handful or two of searches a year, with some departments conducting a new search once every several years, faces different challenges than a large research university that hires 100 new faculty a year. Institutions with more money obviously can devote more resources to the effort, although less well-off colleges can be

Faculty Diversity, by rank, including full professors (federal statistics for 2016)



There is more diversity in the part-time, adjunct categories of faculty jobs. Most gains in the number of faculty from underrepresented groups have been in these non-tenure-track roles.

Faculty positions held by underrepresented minority groups (African Americans, Hispanics and Native Americans)



Faculty positions held by women



Source: Finkelstein and others for the TIAA Institute

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“These are American challenges.  
These are challenges we face as a nation.”

Freeman Hrabowski  
President, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

creative and make changes that don't require millions of new dollars.

“We're really in trouble if it takes large sums of money, because a lot of campuses don't have it,” says Kerry Ann Rockquomore, a sociologist who started the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, which offers trainings and resources to help faculty advance in their careers and thrive where they are. (Rockquomore is a regular contributor to *Inside Higher Ed*.) For example, one workshop focuses on being the only one of your identity group in a department or college.

Intention matters, Rockquomore says. Energy and focus do, too. For example, a university may not be able to hire more faculty positions than it usually does, but it could provide training to its search committees. Implicit bias training, which focuses on the biases we each carry and how they influence our actions, can be provided without a large extra cost.

At UMBC, for example, the university found that retention was an issue. Professors from underrepresented groups were coming but not staying long. “We came to the conclusion every level in the institution had to change,”

McDermott says. The university has embraced the idea of “inclusive excellence” and included it in its strategic plan.

Another example of providing support to search committees is the peer-to-peer education model that UMBC adapted from one at the University of Michigan. The STRIDE program brings white faculty members together with departments in the process of a search and offers guidance on advertising a position, developing a diverse candidate pool and reducing bias in interviews and when making short lists.

Understanding where search committees encounter problems or how their typical process tends to favor majority candidates is an important step in diversifying the faculty.

The idea that qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds are not in the Ph.D. pipeline is a myth, says Shaun Harper, professor and executive director of the Race and Equity Center at USC. “With the exception of certain specific, obscure fields, it's not true,” he says. (See box on [page 8](#) for data on the graduate school pipeline.)

# LEARNING FROM HBCUS

Historically black colleges and universities have educated generations of African American students. These institutions tend to have a more diverse faculty, whose members serve as role models for students.

Some major research universities that are looking to diversify their graduate school programs have partnered with HBCUs to increase student opportunities and the number of African American students in their institutions or academic fields.

For example, the University of California System started an initiative in 2012 in which HBCU students who are interested in research can spend a summer as interns on various UC campuses. The interns work with faculty members in a range of disciplines, including STEM fields, social sciences and humanities. Students live on campus for eight weeks and attend workshops—some of which feature GRE prep—intended to help them get into graduate programs.

More than 400 HBCU students have gone through the program. Among former interns, 42 currently are enrolled in UC doctoral programs, and two are enrolled in graduate programs. One doctoral student and five master's students have already graduated.

A longer-running HBCU partnership is considered a model for institutions that combine forces to help students. The bridge program from Fisk and Vanderbilt Universities has graduated 29 Ph.D.s in physics, astronomy

and materials science since it began in 2004. It's on track to graduate three to five doctoral students a year. The partnership between the two Nashville, Tenn., universities—Fisk is an HBCU and Vanderbilt is predominantly white—allows master's students at Fisk to work closely with Vanderbilt faculty as teachers and mentors, and gives them a “fast track” into Vanderbilt's doctoral admissions.

Program administrators have consulted with other universities and disciplinary societies that are trying to replicate its model or start their own. (The program also provides a free tool kit on its website, [fisk-vanderbilt-bridge.org](http://fisk-vanderbilt-bridge.org), for those interested in learning more.)

Dina Stroud, the bridge program's executive director, has seen growing interest from predominantly white institutions in partnering with minority-serving institutions. She recently visited the University of Michigan and is scheduled to speak at Michigan State University and the University of Alabama on the topic. At Vanderbilt, a committee is now looking into starting a similar partnership in the humanities, Stroud says.

The key to a successful partnership is seeing both institutions as having valuable things to teach and offer each other and the students, she says. For instance, HBCUs strive to offer a supportive family environment where students, staff and faculty feel cared for. Scholars are treated as whole people and not valued only for their research and productivity. When a family member of a staff or

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## LEARNING FROM HBCUs

### CONTINUED

faculty member at Fisk dies, for example, the university sends out an announcement. There is a recognition that life outside the university affects the work inside it.

It's an attitude that's more common at HBCUs, Stroud says, and one the program brings to its mentoring.

For majority institutions that are considering a partnership with minority-serving institutions, it's important to remember that MSIs offer lessons about creating a caring culture that helps people succeed, Stroud says. "There is something to be learned about student success and about community building, in particular, and resilience from MSIs, who are always doing more with less."

David A. Thomas, the president of Morehouse College, has seen the benefits of both sides as a dean at Georgetown University (and a professor at Harvard) and now as president of an HBCU. Morehouse graduates the most African American men who go on to earn doctorates in the STEM fields.

The key, Thomas says, is giving students role models, such as African American men with Ph.D.s, especially in the sciences. Close relationships with faculty, ones that enable students to work on research, also are important, he says, as is expressing high expectations that students will succeed and are capable of becoming leaders in their field.

"I think that it is possible for students to get that encouragement from white professors or nonblack professors," he says, "but it starts

with those professors being able to see those students and what their possibilities and capabilities are."

High expectations are crucial, he says. When Thomas was a Yale undergraduate who wanted to pursue a Ph.D., he says faculty members were surprised when he asked them to write recommendation letters.

"Except by the accident of me thinking I could do this, and the discovery of a graduate student who was African American who was getting his Ph.D. in that field, I probably never would have found my way onto this track." ■

Instead, what keeps out minority candidates, Harper says, is the habit of search committee members only hiring candidates that went to the same universities—or to similar types of universities—that they did. That often means looking only at graduates from highly selective, elite private research universities and ignoring candidates who attended institutions that graduate more minority Ph.D.s.

Search committees use those credentials as a proxy for intelligence, Harper says, and believe attending those institutions means “they’re smart.” Because they are familiar with those universities, search committee members feel “those are places we can trust.” And that excludes candidates from other institutions who may be equally talented and have had exceptional training.

Similar to the pattern in graduate school admissions that Julie Posselt wrote about in her book, which is discussed in depth on [page 14](#) of this report, picking candidates, picking candidates who went to the same universities as current faculty, or who attended the most selective institutions, can also serve as a shortcut when a busy search committee has to cut through hundreds of applications.

Harper also says another issue is that departments often won’t hire their own Ph.D.s for faculty jobs. He understands the mind shift required to think of a prior student as a colleague, but “if you have an extraordinary person in your program, why wouldn’t you hire them?”

A mind-set change about who deserves to be a faculty member is necessary for universities to be successful in their diversity efforts, Harper says. That perspective shift

goes beyond a candidate’s alma mater to include which journals they publish in, their path to graduate school or the focus of their scholarly work.

Current professors may not be familiar with the type of scholarship practiced by scholars of color, especially if it covers topics of diversity. They may be unfamiliar with the journals those applicants publish in and so discount their scholarship when evaluating it. Having someone with an understanding of the scholarship and journals—whether it is inside the department or an outside consultant—is critical.

Widening networks also is important. When department members rely on their own networks to announce a job, they’re keeping that information within a closed network that often has similar racial and gender demographics, as well as similar alma maters. Harper and other experts recommend that departments look to diverse-pipeline programs and organizations to find new ways to reach doctoral students. That requires a shift from a more passive approach to announcing an opening—placing job ads in industry publications and reaching out to your networks then waiting for candidates to come to you—to a more proactive one.

“When you do what you always do, you get what you always got,” Harper says.

One event recruitment-savvy universities use to look for more diverse candidates is the Southern Regional Education Board’s annual Institute on Teaching and Mentoring, the largest gathering of minority doctoral students in the country. (See sidebar on [page 23](#).) Institutions ranging from large research universities to midsize institutions

and small colleges attend the four-day gathering to meet hundreds of African American, Hispanic and Native American Ph.D. students and faculty members and to promote their institution as a place to consider when looking for a job.

Part of Christopher M. Whitt's job as Creighton University's vice provost for diversity and inclusion, a new position for the institution, is increasing the diversity of search pools, as well as helping to create and nurture conditions that would make the university an inclusive place that is seen as a destination for diverse scholars looking to thrive intellectually and socially. Last fall, Creighton University recruited at the SREB Institute for the first time.

Not everyone is as open to new ways of thinking. Some people in the academy don't want to change, says Marybeth Gasman, a professor who recently announced she is moving from the University of Pennsylvania to Rutgers University. While many working in this field believe that people have good intentions, Gasman says racist attitudes are still common in higher education. Likewise, some academics with racist beliefs think the push to diversify is bringing down the quality of scholarship. "They want to protect the academy as it is," she says.

Gasman knows firsthand. In 2016 she published a column in *The Washington Post* about how colleges don't want more minority faculty members. In response, she received about 7,000 emails, many echoing her points about untrained search committees or hiring faculty with similar backgrounds and profiles as those working in a department. About 500 of the messages were vile and

racist, she says. Many used derisive terms about black faculty, even though her column never mentioned African Americans. And some of the emails were sent from university email addresses.

Gasman is writing a book she describes as "a call to action" that will expand on the column and use research she is gathering from around the country. The book, which she is calling *We Don't Want Them*, will offer practical solutions and also feature data on the problem, because otherwise academics will dismiss it, she says. "I'm not going to mince words," Gasman says.

Part of her call will be for white faculty members to speak up when they see minority job candidates being dismissed. "It's not right for white faculty to hold a majority of the seats," Gasman says. As part of her research, she has been speaking with people on campuses about faculty diversity. Afterward, Gasman gets emails thanking her for talking about difficult topics. "Instead of sending private emails, speak up," she says.

These scholars do not want to take any risks, she says. And she understands where that mind-set comes from. Faculty are taught to focus on their individual work and careers. And calling out racism in a department will be uncomfortable—people might not think of someone as collegial if they challenge how things are always done.

But white faculty members—especially those with tenure—have an obligation to speak up, Gasman says. Faculty are the ones who make the hiring decisions for a department, she says, and therefore the ones who keep the professoriate white.

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“Demography is often  
the point we stop.”

Tabbye Chavous

Director, University of Michigan's  
National Center for Institutional Diversity

“If you have tenure, you really have an obligation to be speaking up about these things,” she says.

The University of Michigan’s National Center for Institutional Diversity has moved away from describing diversity among faculty as an issue of right or wrong, says Tabbye Chavous, the center’s director.

“We don’t want to depend on goodwill,” Chavous says. Framing the discussion and efforts as a moral good puts it in the “realm of ‘political correctness.’”

When people link diversifying the faculty with political correctness or a moral good, it can become something they do grudgingly. Some critics think diversity and quality are two different things, perhaps even mutually exclusive ones, and that scholars from under-represented groups are diverse first and scholars second.

Michigan’s center—established around the time of legal challenges to the university’s use of affirmative action in admissions (and later

hiring)—focuses on evidence-based research showing why diversity is important for thriving institutions and disciplines, how it benefits the education system, how it can be achieved, and advancing excellent scholarship from scholars from diverse backgrounds, with the emphasis on excellence.

The focus on excellence over demographics is something many successful programs and people working in this space emphasize, both because it is necessary to change the mind-set of those in positions of power, and, just as important, because it helps scholars from diverse backgrounds feel equal to their faculty counterparts—to be seen as scholars first, not just their demographic identity. And that is key to allowing professors to thrive creatively and professionally—and to retention for institutions that put time and resources into bringing diverse faculty to their campuses.

And if people focus on the demographics of hiring only, Chavous says, those in the majority group can pat themselves on the back after the hiring is done and not think about the deeper work of building community and creating an inclusive culture where people can thrive. “Demography is often the point we stop,” she says.

Michigan puts the excellence first in its Collegiate Fellows Program, which specifically connects diversity to strong scholarship. The model is spreading to Michigan State and Texas A&M University, Chavous says.

The program, which came out of strategic planning around diversity inclusion, works like this: the center works with departments in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts to see where they would like to expand. Fellows who have an interest or specialty in diversity

# RETAINING FACULTY MEMBERS

The work of improving the professoriate's diversity does not end with hiring candidates from underrepresented backgrounds. Retention is a significant part of the diversity pipeline, too, and a factor institutions are taking increasingly seriously. Working to improve diversity in candidate pools and faculty hires but not paying adequate attention to what life is like for faculty members once they arrive can lead to a revolving door of diverse candidates who don't stick around long.

"It's not enough to hire," says Philip Kass, vice provost for academic affairs at the University of California, Davis. "They have to be happy here or they leave."

Faculty members change jobs for a number of reasons. They may leave for a more preferable geographic location, a higher salary or a more prestigious appointment. But more personal reasons often are factors—they do not feel welcome in their department or feel they are seen as a "diversity hire" and not as a scholar on equal footing to their colleagues.

Faculty departures come with significant costs, including money for start-up packages and the search committee's time and resources. Students lose potential mentors and instructors when the faculty member takes intellectual and creative talents elsewhere. Departures of well-regarded minority faculty members can be particularly painful. The reality is that many minority students view such scholars as mentors and advocates—and departments often are so overwhelmingly

white that a single departure can have a significant impact.

As a result, many colleges have introduced retention strategies aimed at helping both new and established faculty succeed in their work and get settled in their personal lives. On the professional side, this can include teams of mentors, peer networks for support, grants for additional travel or research, awards to recognize diversity-focused scholarship or contributions to diversity and an inclusive environment, and access to outside professional development resources from organizations such as the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity.

In addition, retention strategies can include help settling into a new place, dual-career support for spouses who are looking for work, child or elder care, and programs that allow a faculty member to stop the tenure clock when caring for a new child. Many of these strategies are aimed at retaining all faculty—those from underrepresented minority groups as well as from majority groups. Dual-career assistance may be particularly important for minority scholars, especially in college towns that are not known for their diversity.

And the quest to retain professors from diverse backgrounds shouldn't stop at tenure. For example, Columbia University has touted its \$100 million faculty diversity initiative's

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## RETAINING FACULTY MEMBERS

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focus on recently tenured faculty, with mid-career awards “for faculty who contribute to Columbia’s diversity.”

Just as colleges that are seeking to do more to diversify their professoriate must examine their hiring practices, experts say institutions should look at the culture of their departments and institutions. Do all faculty members feel welcome? Is the environment such that they can do their best work, the scholarship and teaching a college hired them for?

The more diverse an institution is, the more important this effort becomes, says Tabbye Chavous, director of the University of Michigan’s National Center for Institutional Diversity.

At Michigan, the university is looking for ways to reward faculty members who are doing good work on diversity and inclusion. One example: midcareer awards that recognize diversity scholarship. Chavous says the awards are designed to give that kind of work, which often goes unseen, prestige and visibility.

How do faculty from underrepresented groups really feel about an institution? It can be hard to get at the truth, especially if people leave without a good exit interview that digs deep into reasons for their departure or what a university could have done to make them stay—or if there are political consequences for speaking out.

UMBC in the past has struggled with departures of diverse faculty. The university was

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“They are the group that speak truth to power.”

Patrice McDermott

Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs  
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

hiring more faculty from underrepresented minority groups, but its overall diversity percentages were staying the same. It now includes a number of community-based affinity groups, including ones for black and Latino faculty, as well as an LGBTQ faculty group. The leaders of those groups are members of an executive committee at the provost level for the recruitment, retention and advancement of underrepresented minority faculty, says Patrice McDermott, UMBC’s vice provost for faculty affairs, where they can share views about the realities of life for professors.

“They are the group that speak truth to power,” McDermott says.

At these meetings, members talk through common problems, she says. Her office is then charged with finding the best way to fix the problem, rather than asking the underrepresented faculty members to make the changes for them.

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## RETAINING FACULTY MEMBERS

CONTINUED

### Best Practices

Peer networks are an underappreciated but important strategy for retention, says KerryAnn O'Meara, a professor of higher education, director of the ADVANCE program and associate dean for faculty affairs and graduate studies at the University of Maryland at College Park.

"This means helping plug new underrepresented-minority postdocs, junior and senior faculty into institutionally created or organically created peer networks of faculty," O'Meara said. "Meeting once or twice a month, such groups create a safe space to share challenges and brainstorm strategies to transgress them. Through the University of Maryland ADVANCE program, and in my research more generally, we have found peer networks support faculty retention and advancement by creating more connective tissue between colleagues across campus. Peer networks foster strategic relationships that continue outside meeting spaces and can be engaged as faculty need them."

At Adelphi University, the office for diversity and inclusion created a Faculty of Color Network, which Perry Greene, vice president for diversity and inclusion, described in a column for *Inside Higher Ed*. "This multi-racial network is led by the faculty director for diversity and inclusion, and it strives to fully engage faculty of color, particularly new ones, with the broader academic life of the campus. It realizes that no one wants to stay at a place where they don't feel they belong. Members of the network meet socially over

the course of the academic year, but more important, they collaborate on research, provide peer mentoring and hold intensive research writing workshops."

Faculty members who can serve as mentors, especially in a faculty member's early years, can make a difference. At Eastern Connecticut State University, new faculty members are assigned mentors. Faculty also get counseling about teaching evaluations and scholarship that can help point them in the right direction if they are getting off track as they work toward tenure, says Elsa Núñez, the university's president.

Likewise, the CAMPOS program at UC Davis, which is designed for Latina scholars in science, includes a team of mentors who serve as a launch committee for new professors, helping them successfully start their careers. The program came from the university's ADVANCE grant, which is funded by the National Science Foundation and aims to increase the number of female professors in the STEM fields.

In the last four years, UC Davis also has conducted a salary equity review, in order to reduce the incentive for professors to seek outside job offers in order to raise their salaries. The university offers a number of benefits aimed at retaining faculty members, including paying for childcare when someone is interviewing or attending an academic conference, stopping the tenure clock for those caring for a young child, programs to help new faculty members find housing and work for their spouses, and offering work-life advisers, who can help faculty members who are going through life transitions, such as being a new parent. ■

and inclusion are selected for two years. The position comes with reduced teaching and no service requirement, so scholars can work on their research. The program sends a strong signal that Michigan values and supports diversity, and it also gives scholars time to envision themselves personally and professionally thriving at Michigan, a place they might not have considered before, Chavous says.

The program is highly selective: Michigan had 760 applications the first year and 925 the second year, Chavous says.

In the first two years, the university brought in 16 fellows, 10 of whom were later offered tenure-track jobs and hired. The others are under evaluation. The program's goal is to hire 50 faculty members from diverse backgrounds over five years.

The effort also provides a cohort model, offering a community for scholars who join departments that are still working on their diversity, Chavous says.

Putting diversity and inclusivity into strategic plans and messages from university leaders is critical, those working in the field say. Support and real commitment need to come from the top, as well as in departments that do the hiring.

Also crucial is understanding where the obstacles and gates are in the hiring process. As more is learned about what structures, processes and decisions reinforce the status quo, such as using the same networks and recruiting strategies and shorthands for "quality," institutions are experimenting with ways to break down those barriers. And they are looking to each other for knowledge and examples.

AT UMBC, inclusive excellence is in the strategic plan. The university employs majority faculty to do peer education about the best practices of a search process with committees that are conducting active searches. (The university believes minority faculty already are asked to do extra work, and doesn't want to add this task.)

Examples of UMBC's multiple approaches include changing the institution's academic and intellectual mission to include community-based research that has impact, rather than just high theory. For example, the university identified health disparities as a focus, which allows it to do cluster hires and attract scholars who are doing community-based work in this area.

The university also uses peer education through its STRIDE program to change the way departments do business. Department-level work is where most faculty spend their time, says McDermott, vice provost for faculty affairs at UMBC. From her work with the NSF program ADVANCE, she saw that departments are "the hardest nut to crack."

It's difficult work and often disruptive, she says. For example, at UMBC searches that do not produce a diverse pool of candidates that is similar in demographics to the Survey of Earned Doctorates are not allowed to proceed and must go back to reconfigure their outreach work in order to reach a more diverse group of candidates. (It's not 100 percent, however. Adjustments sometimes need to be made, and exceptions can be made when a popular department needs to hire enough faculty to meet student demand.) But to work, this approach requires the support of deans.

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“Majority faculty need to step up and do the work.”

Christopher M. Murphy

Professor of Psychology  
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

With STRIDE, high-status majority faculty have closed-door conversations with professors on search committees, presenting research about the benefits of diversity and talking through biases that can come up in search processes. They help craft ads that project inclusiveness, create a list of ways to advertise the position and a rubric of qualities the department is looking for, and talk about barriers to diversity that can come up while going through the application and interview process. Examples include giving weight to a letter from a friend who knows a candidate when a personal recommendation is not specifically cited in a job description or included in the rubric.

The majority of the STRIDE members are white. That’s because of the belief that faculty of color already do an extra share of work with mentoring students of color and educating people in the majority about diversity. In this way, the institution isn’t making underrepresented faculty members do the work of creating change; the

institution is doing the work of diversifying. Someone in McDermott’s office, for example, is in charge of comparing the various departments’ candidate pools to the Survey of Earned Doctorates.

“Majority faculty need to step up and do the work,” says Christopher M. Murphy, a professor of psychology and former department chair at UMBC, who is a member of STRIDE.

Each department has its own history and culture, and some have been more open than others, he says. Institutions have their own cultures, too. And UMBC decided a conversation model would work better at their institution than the workshop model used at Michigan.

STRIDE faculty meet three times with search committees at different parts of the process: when crafting the ad, when deciding how to reach out to potential candidates, and when evaluating applications and interviewing candidates. Part of the goal is that STRIDE members can talk about searches they have been involved in, which breaks the ice to talk about strange or interesting things that might have happened during their own interviews or during searches on which they have worked.

Murphy also talks about misconceptions—for example, the notion that you can have either diversity or excellence. STRIDE members cite research from two colleagues that shows how greater racial and gender diversity in university departments is related to higher program rankings. They also dispel the myth that all the “best” minority candidates will be snatched up by universities with higher salaries and more prestige. People also

# CULTURE CHANGE AT EASTERN CONNECTICUT

For professors and administrators who are ready to have the challenging conversation about the lack of diversity in a department or graduate program, how does one push beyond pleasantries?

Eastern Connecticut State University has increased its proportion of underrepresented minority faculty members in tenure-track positions to match the university's student demographics. When Elsa Núñez became the university's president 13 years ago, underrepresented minority professors made up about 10 percent of tenured and tenure-track faculty. Now that number is 30 percent, a change she says has brought opportunities and a sense of pride to the campus.

Núñez shared what worked for her university:

- **Talk face-to-face.** Núñez looks at finalist lists for faculty searches. If the finalists are not diverse, Núñez will invite the department chair for a conversation. In that talk, she will reinforce the institution's values around diversity and why it matters for their students. She will ask the chair if he or she values diversity and listen to the answer. Very rarely has someone responded that they do not see diversity for faculty and the institution as an important value.
- **Have more than one conversation.** Núñez says she doesn't impose anything in the first conversation—a discussion about values and diversity. She will share her concerns about the lack of diversity among candidates but may allow a hire to go forward. If the same thing happens again, she may not allow the hire to proceed. And because they've already talked, there are no surprises.
- **Share your personal story.** Núñez says she shares her experience as a first-generation college student at Montclair State University and how she felt unlike anyone else there. During her first year, she questioned if she belonged there at all. "I felt so alone," she says. "I had no one to guide me." In conversations, she asks the faculty member if they've had a similar experience. "I always believe, start with how you feel," she says. From there, the question becomes "What is the right thing for our students?"
- **Explain why diversity is important at all levels, in all departments.** Núñez has discussed why it's not the same when diversity in a department comes from adjuncts, who don't advise students or work with student organizations or clubs. She also has heard that faculty diversity is more important in fields such as education and sociology, where students will be working with diverse populations in teaching or social work. "Students in STEM need role models, too," she says.

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## CULTURE CHANGE AT EASTERN CONNECTICUT

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- **Don't threaten.** While she has stopped appointments several times, Núñez says she never takes the line away from a department. "You want to build consensus," she says. And she's never forced a department to hire someone its faculty did not believe was qualified. She believes the faculty union watched her closely early in her tenure. "I think they were cautious, as they should have been."
- **Increasing diversity is a slow process, but it can gain momentum as faculty members see benefits and results.** Eastern Connecticut has seen both, which is attractive to outside organizations and job candidates. The university was selected as one of the partner locations for the Dream.US program, which supports students in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and sends a cohort of 50 to 60 DACA students to Eastern Connecticut each year. "The entire faculty is really proud," Núñez said. "That wouldn't have happened if we didn't have a diverse faculty."

Also, because diversity has become such a part of the university's identity, it is easier now for Núñez to make her case. Eastern Connecticut has strong candidates for its provost opening. And the faculty hiring effort has grown so successful that departments can hire white men without provoking controversy or worries about the makeup of departments. ■

choose a university employer for its mission and culture, Murphy says, and money is not the only incentive people respond to.

Department members sometimes push back on changing things. This occurred several years ago in Murphy's own department after an announcement about no longer doing interviews at conferences (because not everyone has the financial resources to attend the conferences, especially if they must travel there, and some candidates, particularly women and members of underrepresented groups, are not comfortable interviewing in conference hotel rooms). At first some in the department thought they would be missing out on the best candidates because others would still be doing interviews. But their pools did not suffer, and they attracted more diverse candidates. Now, Murphy sees more institutions looking at ending this practice and choosing instead to conduct Skype or video interviews with potential candidates. And in the case of other departments he's encountered through STRIDE, department members often come up with their own ideas about how they could expand their searches.

After three years at UMBC, it's hard to tell now how much STRIDE is moving the needle on faculty diversity, Murphy says. Compared to postdoc programs that lead to faculty jobs, which can shift diversity numbers more quickly, the peer-education model is playing a long game, trying to shift the way people think about diversity, and why it matters in terms of the university's research mission and how it serves students.

"What we're doing, I think, is trying to do a long-term change in what the culture and approach and philosophy is about hiring," Murphy says.

## Best Practices

### Cluster Hiring

Cluster hiring—recruiting a group of new faculty members in different departments whose work focuses on a similar theme and overlaps in some ways—is one way colleges and universities can work to bring in diverse faculty members while building areas of institutional distinction or excellence. When done right, the practice has been shown to be effective in increasing institutional excellence and faculty diversity.

Cluster hiring can be useful for smaller institutions or less wealthy colleges that are hiring fewer full-time faculty than wealthy research universities.

The University of Richmond, for example, is looking to cluster hiring as one way to help attract a more diverse group of faculty and create a community for them on campus. The university, which enrolled its first black student in 1968 (and honored him last year), has its first black president and has worked hard in recent years to increase the diversity of its student body. Richmond wants to improve its faculty diversity, too, says Patrice Rankine, dean of the School of Arts & Sciences and the school's first black dean.

Because the university is small and does not hire as many new professors each year compared to a major research university, it looks for ways to boost diversity in the hires it can make. (Arts & Sciences hires between 5 to 7 full-time tenure track faculty annually).

The cluster approach also allows a university to choose a specialty that can give a boost to the institution's stature and build on existing

strengths. For example, Richmond designated an Asian cluster, which includes positions in the departments of political science, journalism and biology. All three departments already were planning searches for new faculty. Designating a cluster, and providing opportunities and some extra funding for the faculty members to work together, can help attract stellar scholars and spark intellectual energy on campus, Rankine says.

“We want to be world-class,” he says.

Hiring in a cluster also provides a cohort for the new professors, and hopefully a supportive community, says Rankine, who is focused on the concept of faculty thriving and sticking around for a long time. Richmond recently created the position of assistant dean of diversity, thriving and inclusion, who will focus on both faculty and students. “We live better in communities,” he says.

Richmond’s broader attempt to improve faculty diversity and the diversity of candidate searches involves a strong role for the dean, who will check to make sure the applicant pool and the candidates brought to campus are diverse, Rankine says. Departments must submit a slate of acceptable finalists to the dean, a paradigm shift from years past when a department would have total domain over a search. Departments are encouraged to look to various pipelines for a diverse pool of scholars, such as national organizations for black chemists or the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows Program, which identifies underrepresented minority undergraduates with an interest in the humanities and encourages them to pursue Ph.D.s and a career in the professoriate. (Rankine, a classicist who is

black, was a Mellon Mays fellow at Brooklyn College and is one of 835 fellows to earn Ph.D.s since the program began in 1988.)

The University of California, Riverside, also has had success with cluster hiring. There, cluster hiring (as well as additional training and support for search committees) helped the university develop a more diverse faculty. For example, Riverside was able to increase its faculty from Native American backgrounds, in part with an indigenous studies cluster.

At Riverside, two recent hiring cycles included 35 new underrepresented minority faculty members, approximately 22 percent of all new hires. That percentage has historically been 13 percent. At Riverside, 45 percent of undergraduates are from an underrepresented background.

However, Riverside had to overcome initial challenges with cluster hiring. Some faculty were concerned it would supplant traditional departmental hiring and that the university was opaque in how it chose its clusters. Professors in surveys expressed a need for “far more rigorous articulation between cluster hiring and the departments in which cluster faculty are placed.” They also called for cluster hiring that builds on existing strengths and a lead role for departments in conducting cluster searches. Moving forward, the university said it was dedicated to making the process more transparent and collaborative.

Not all cluster efforts need to be so ambitious to make a difference. Boston College, for example, used a smaller cluster initiative to hire four African American faculty members with one funded proposal. The four new faculty members—two in English, one in arts and art history, and one in theology—all

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“Ultimately we want the student body to reflect California and the faculty body to reflect the California body as well.”

Philip H. Kass

Vice Provost for Academic Affairs  
University of California, Davis

have joint appointments in African and African diaspora studies.

## Open Searches

The University of California System has taken an active role in trying to get its tenured and tenure-track faculty to better match the broad and deep diversity of its student population. While students from underrepresented groups make up 28.7 percent of UC undergraduates, faculty from those groups make up 10 percent of the tenure-track professors. Women account for 53 percent of undergraduates and 33 percent of tenure-track faculty.

The system last fall announced it would spend \$7 million a year on current programs and new initiatives intended to diversify the faculty and strengthen its graduate school pipeline.

One new program at UC Davis will attempt to add professors from diverse backgrounds through open searches, which do not specify a specialization within a discipline but rather look for candidates' experience and potential for work with diversity and inclusion. The

pilot program, which is done with support from college deans, will be for eight searches. The university will conduct 45 searches at the same time in its usual way.

“Ultimately we want the student body to reflect California and the faculty body to reflect the California body as well,” says Philip H. Kass, vice provost for academic affairs at Davis.

Davis is close to becoming a federally designated Hispanic-serving institution, meaning one-quarter of its domestic, full-time students are Hispanic, while the university's faculty is currently just 9 percent from underrepresented minority groups.

Davis is piloting its open searches after visiting Michigan, which has had success with open searches, especially with hires of women as faculty. State laws ban affirmative action in public hiring in both California and Michigan.

Rather than being run by a department, the eight open searches at Davis will be conducted by a college or school. The Colleges of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences,

Biological Sciences, and Engineering; the Graduate School of Management; and the Schools of Education, Law, Medicine and Veterinary Medicine all are participating in the pilot.

Committee members will include faculty members who are nominated by their deans, as well as university administrators involved in writing the grant to fund the searches. Kass will participate in three of the searches. In addition to the mandatory training all faculty serving on a search committees receive, which covers implicit bias, use of diversity statements and proper practices, the open-search committees will receive additional training specific to their task. "These are unusual searches," Kass says.

Rather than looking first for a specialty in a discipline, these searches will cast a net for candidates who have demonstrated a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion among black, Latino, Chicano and Native American students and communities. They will be considering potential, too, in the areas of teaching, research and service. Search committees will look closely at candidates' statements of contributions to diversity, which demonstrate an applicant's commitment to that work and are required for faculty applicants across the UC System. Each committee will decide how to evaluate them.

Since the program was made public, Kass says, some of the reaction has been negative. For example, commenters argued that the open searches would lower academic standards. The underlying belief of those complaints is that diversity and excellence are not possible together, Kass says. But he says that assumption is wrong. He expects

the openings, which come with added benefits such as extra supports and additional money to hire their own students, will attract excellent candidates. "There will be no compromise in our standards of excellence," Kass says, adding that academic quality is "not declining one iota."

## Diversity Statements

Statements of commitment to diversity, required by Davis and all UC campuses, are getting more attention across academia as more institutions require them as part of a candidate's application packet. In the statements, candidates describe their contributions to diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as their planned contributions.

Diversity statements have attracted criticism as well as praise. A former Harvard University medical dean said they impinge on academic freedom. Supporters say they are one piece of a multipart application and give weight to work in equity and inclusion while also signaling to potential candidates that an institution has a serious commitment to equity and diversity for both students and faculty.

That signal may also work in reverse for institutions that choose not to use them. As more systems and colleges adopt the statements, it could also convey a shallower approach to tackling the issue of increasing diversity for those that don't. A document from the University of California, Los Angeles, explains: "as peer institutions increasingly adopt these practices, failing to ask for an EDI statement may signal tepid commitment to these values, which could put UCLA at a competitive disadvantage."

In a paper examining the content of diversity statements, Chavous and colleagues at Michigan found explanations of teaching and research, service, mentorship, skill building, and personal background experience as well as candidates' values and understanding of diversity and inclusion.

However a college or university chooses to examine its faculty hiring processes and then alter them to be more inclusive, the work is critical to the long-term health of the institution. Without attention, training and an examination of individual biases, it is unlikely the current trend of small gains in faculty diversity will result in the change colleges want.

"We may be missing a whole bunch of people with extraordinary potential," Kerry Ann Rockquemore says. ■



# Conclusion

Diversity in higher education's ranks does not happen by accident or on its own. A college needs to be intentional to improve the racial and ethnic diversity (and in some cases, the gender diversity) of its graduate programs, academic departments and professoriate as a whole.

That requires work on the institutional and individual level—from becoming familiar with research on diversity in admissions, hiring and retention to taking a closer look at the diversity in various faculty ranks to see whether most professors from underrepresented groups work at the lower levels. It takes a willingness to look at one's own unconscious biases and to examine hiring and admissions processes to spot barriers for scholars from underrepresented backgrounds.

There is no easy fix. At the same time, many people, institutions and organizations have been working for years on improving diversity in higher education, often sharing their models and data with others who are looking to

make real changes in the makeup of doctoral programs and in the hiring and retention of faculty members.

Different programs are tackling the components of the pipeline, from identifying promising students and helping them prepare for and get into graduate school to supporting current doctoral students and changing the ways departments conduct faculty searches. Many successful programs are expensive, but universities don't have to be wealthy to make a real difference in their diversity. Partnerships between institutions are a way to leverage resources, as are looking for creative ways to open up existing searches, such as using peer education from faculty members who are members of the majority or tapping new online databases of underrepresented-minority scholars.

One feature many of the most successful programs have in common is creating a sense of community for scholars from underrepresented groups. Campus cohorts, national

networks of scholars who meet to support one another throughout their careers and groups of mentors all keep scholars in the pipeline and help them thrive once they are in a faculty job.

Linking diversity to excellence is another key. By highlighting and rewarding diverse scholarship and creating opportunities for students to become cutting-edge scholars in their fields, colleges can help scholars from underrepresented groups be seen first for their research and teaching excellence.

Taking on the challenge of faculty diversity in a serious way will mean having uncomfortable, difficult conversations. People may be defensive or resistant. But approaching it in a friendly but firm way backed by research and institutional mission can help create new pathways for underrepresented-minority faculty and graduate students.

These efforts take time. And a sense of urgency is needed, because the professoriate's diversity continues to lag behind students and the general population. ■



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# About the Author

Kathryn Masterson is a journalist who writes about higher education, including new models of learning, ways to raise more money and profiles of faculty members doing interesting things. She has written for *Inside Higher Ed* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* on topics including faculty retention, undergraduate research, trustee orientation and alumni engagement. She has also written for *Prism* (the magazine of the American Society of Engineering Education) and numerous university magazines. From 2008 to 2011, Masterson was a staff reporter at *The Chronicle*, where she covered fund-raising and college leadership. Prior to *The Chronicle*, Masterson was a news reporter with the *Chicago Tribune's RedEye* edition, the Associated Press and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. She has also written for the *Washington City Paper*. She lives in Chicago.



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