

Faculty of Color in Academe: What 20 Years of Literature Tells Us
A Journal Article by Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood

Taj'ullah Sky Lark
May 2013

Introduction

Classrooms have become increasingly diverse within the last 10 years, and continue to be diversified; however, the majority of Universities and Colleges are operating in a crisis mode when it comes to the diversity of its faculty in particular the representation of underrepresented minorities. There has been abundance of research work done on this crisis in higher education over the last 20 years and suggestions of how to combat this problem yet the percentages of underrepresented minorities in leadership positions are at an unacceptable low, more importantly, how does this lack of diversity affect program development, and learning outcomes?

Diversity Crisis in Higher Education

The definition of diversity has expanded over the years to include race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, to disability, and the student body of today's universities and colleges is reflective of this. However, the characteristics of the leadership in these universities and colleges have not changed very much since its conception and despite more than two decades of affirmative action.

According to *The Higher Education in a Global Society Achieving Diversity, Equity and Excellence (Advances in Education in Diverse Communities: Research Policies and Praxis, Volume 5)*, the problem of the 21st century is rapidly expanding diversity along side stubbornly persistent status and power inequalities by race, ethnicity, gender, class, language, citizenship and region. The statistics illustrate the results: 80-90% of faculty and staff in most colleges and universities are still white.

Why, despite the best intentions, are most of these programs and policies failing to increase the faculty/staff diversity? (Kayes, 2006). Kayes continues to say that there are serious repercussions of a mono-cultural faculty and staff serving a multicultural student body.

Some experts in the field believe that if the current administration status stays as it is, universities' and colleges' full potential will not be reached as a catalyst for educational excellence and social change without actively committing to increasing multicultural leadership (Bowen & Muller, 1996).

Despite earning doctorates in ever-increasing numbers, Trower and Chait (2002) claim many women and persons of color are eschewing academic careers altogether or exiting the academy prior to the tenure decision because both groups experience social isolation, a chilly

environment, bias, and hostility. These authors state that the common concerns include their limited opportunities to participate in departmental and institutional decision-making; excessive and "token" committee assignments; infrequent occasions to assume leadership positions or achieve an institutional presence; research that's trivialized and discounted; lack of mentors; and little guidance about the academic workplace or the tenure process.

So what does 20 years of literature on the subject of faculty diversity tell us? Authors Caroline Turner and J. Luke Wood of the Division of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Arizona State University in conjunction with Juan Gonzalez of the Division of Urban Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Missouri-Kansas City analyzed the works of more than 300 authors who addressed the issues, experiences and the statuses of faculty of color from 1988-2007 producing a synthesis literature review of 252 publications.

In their 2008 collaborative literature review article entitled: *“Faculty of Color in Academe: What 20 Years of Literature Tells Us”*, authors Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood utilized a methodology that would focused on:

- Departmental
- Institutional context
- National context
- Documents Supports
- Challenges
- Recommendations

The following diagram (figure 1) illustrates the findings from the focus areas of Departmental, Institutional, and National context.

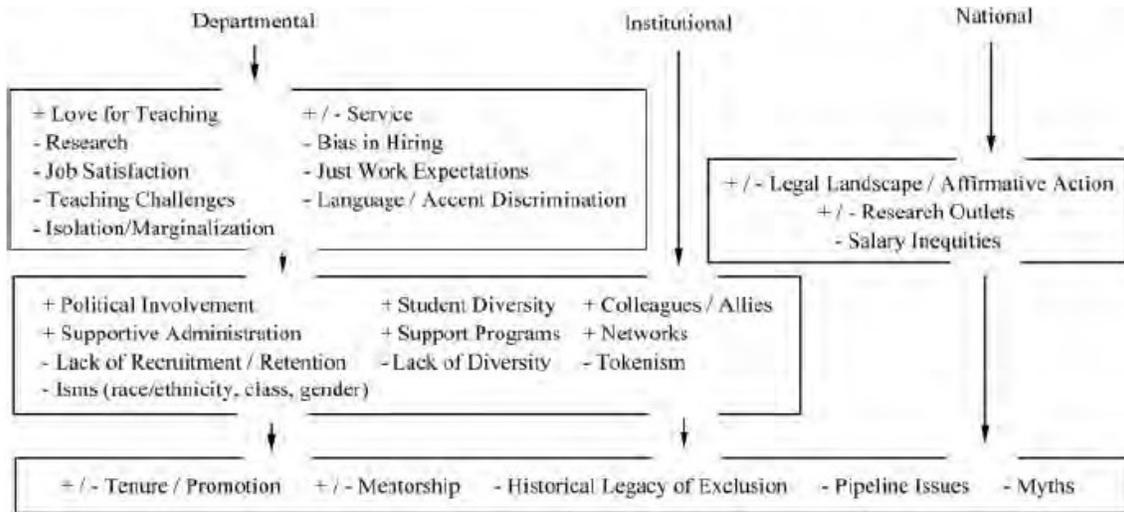


Figure 1. Supports (+) and challenges (-) within and across departmental, institutional, and national contexts.

Turner, C. S. V., González, J. C., & Wood, J. L. (2008).

Figure 2 provides a companion diagram for suggested recommendations.

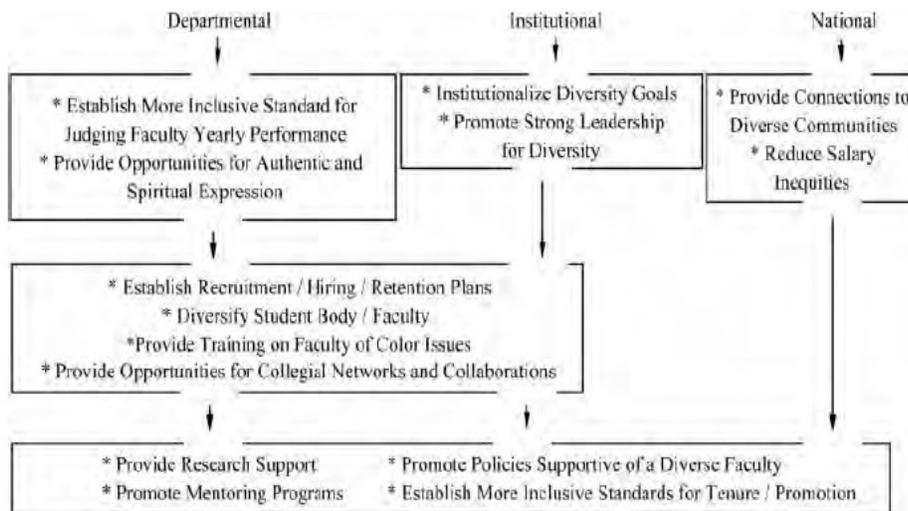


Figure 2. Recommendations for departmental, institutional, and national contexts.

Turner, C. S. V., González, J. C., & Wood, J. L. (2008).

Emerging negative themes from the literature shared by faculty of color consisted of:

- Teaching Challenges
- Isolation & Marginalization
- Bias in Hiring
- Unjust Work Expectations
- Language Accent Discrimination

Issues shared by institutions reviewed consisted of:

- Lack of Diversity
- Lack of Recruitment/Retention
- Isms
- Tokenism
- Legal Landscape/Affirmative Action
- Research Outlets
- Salary Inequities
- Membership
- Pipeline Issues
- Historical Legacies of Exclusion
- Myths

Recommendations consisted of:

- Establish More Inclusive Standards for Judging Faculty Yearly Performances
- Provide Opportunities for Authentic & Spiritual Expression
- Institutionalize Diversity Goals
- Promote Sharing Leadership for Diversity
- Establish Recruitment/Hiring Retention Plans
- Diversify Student Body/Faculty
- Provide Training on Faculty-of-Color Issues
- Provide Opportunities for Collegial Networks and Collaborations
- Provide Connections to Diverse Community
- Reduce Salary Inequities
- Provide Research Support
- Promote Policies Supportive of a Diverse Faculty
- Promote Mentoring Programs
- Establish More Inclusive Standards for Tenure and Promotion

Turner, C. S. V., González, J. C., & Wood, J. L. (2008).

Conclusion

The inclusion of minority faculty and administration in higher education plays a significant role in the academic outcomes of minority students. To serve current and future populations, multiple diverse perspectives are imperative at every level of college teaching and governance.

The racial interactions between teachers and students can influence student performance in several ways. Pupils may feel a connection, trust and respect someone with whom they share a salient characteristic, allowing the learning process easier. Likewise, a teacher of the same race or cultural background as students may play a significant role in diversifying curriculum, boosting students' confidence and enthusiasm for learning and academic success.

In *Grutter v. Bollinger* 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court emphatically affirmed the value of diversity, and argued that the state has a compelling interest to promote diversity on college campuses (Sullivan, 2006). Arguments to the Supreme Court about the importance of racial/ethnic diversity to the mission of higher education, faculty diversity-or the lack thereof-serves as a harbinger of the Academy continuing educational, academic, and social legitimacy.

A diverse staff will mean better educational outcomes for all students. The more diverse faculty members are, the more likely all students will be exposed to a wider range of scholarly perspectives, and to ideas from a variety of life experiences (Shufelt, 2002). Shufelt continues to state that beyond the obvious reasons of equity, most scholars contend minority faculty are essential because they provide students with diverse role models, help provide more effective mentoring to minority students, and are supportive of minority-related research and other areas of non-traditional scholarships. These students need diverse mentors and role models who are able to successfully illustrate pathways to overcome traditional barriers to success, and in order

to serve current and future student populations, perspectives that are multiple and diverse are needed at all levels of college teaching and governance (Shufelt, 2002).

Collins & Kritsonis, (2006) stress that the diversity of faculty is not keeping up with the growth of the diversified student, and that the demographic changes in the U.S. by the year 2020 that will have a unprecedented impact on all colleges. The authors stress the importance of students learning under leadership that embodies diversity, learning from faculty of diverse backgrounds and experiences. With diversity of faculty brings diversity in teaching methods, course content and curriculum, all of which lead to a more effective learning experience and school (Collins & Kritsonis, 2006).

The 20 year review of the literature on the presence of faculty of color in higher education substantiated what is already visible in higher education while providing a synthesis of the combined literature and chronic themes that continue to persist in diversifying faculty. The plethora of literature analyzed by Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood acts as a resource for future research, while pin pointing many of the critical problems in higher education, and in support of diversifying faculty to combat this crisis of lack diversity, and inclusion in leadership representation. This analysis of the literature clearly illustrated the complexities of faculty of color showed a consensus in higher education that with the expansion of what defines diversity, and the rate of our growing racially and ethnically diverse student body, that it is imperative that our faculty reflect that population, and be an important valuable asset to higher education programming. The inclusion of faculty and administrators of color provides an invaluable opportunity for the development of progressive, evolved students. The question still remains as to why no strides are being made to make diverse faculty and administrative leadership in

education a given? Is it that lack of knowledge or resource information on the issue of faculty diversity, or is it simply stubborn resistance from the dominant culture?

“There is a gift that ‘outsiders’ often bring to an institution. Women and minorities, precisely because they are outsiders, often bring a fresh point of view to the institution, seeing it with different eyes and coming up with new ideas. If we do not have a supportive environment for them, we waste talent and ultimately the academy is the loser” (Sandler & Hall, 1986).

References

- Bowen, R.C., & Muller, G.H.(1996). *Achieving administrative diversity: New Directions for Community Colleges*. ERIC #JC960486.
- Collins, Crystal J., & Kritsonis, William A. (2006) National Viewpoint: The Importance of Hiring a Diverse Faculty, *Doctoral Forum National Journal For Publishing And Mentoring Doctoral Student Research* v3 n1.
- Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003).
- Kayes, Pauline E. (2006). *New Paradigms for Diversifying Faculty and Staff in Higher Education: Uncovering Cultural Biases in the Search and Hiring* (Multicultural Education, v14 n2 p65-69 Win).
- Sandler, Bernice & Hall, Roberta. (1986)*The Campus Climate Revisited: Chilly for Women Faculty, Administrators and graduate students. Project on the Status and Education of Women*, Association of American Colleges, Washington, D.C.
- Shufelt, Brett Stratton. (2002 May). *Minority Administrator and Faculty Recruitment at Two-Year Community Colleges in the Northeast United States*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Mississippi State University.
- Sullivan, Patrick (2006). *Diversity, Leadership, and the Community College: A case Study*. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, v30 n5-6 p383-400 Jun-Jul 2006.
- Trower, Cathy A.& Chait, Richard (2002 March/April). *Faculty Diversity, Too Little For Too Long*. (Harvard Magazine).
- Turner, C. S. V., González, J. C., & Wood, J. L. (2008). Faculty of color in academe:What 20 years of literature tells us. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*,1(3), 139-168.