

Campus Climate and Faculty Diversity at U-M: Three Critical Factors

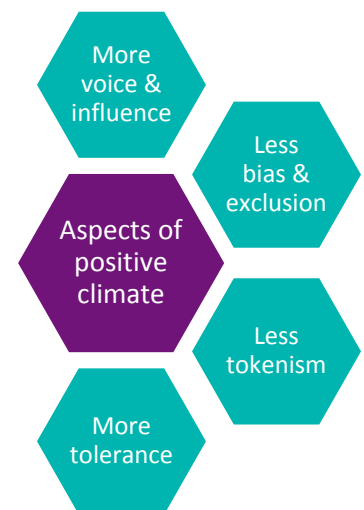


Findings from the ADVANCE Program's most recent campus-wide climate study suggest aspects of the broader University climate continue to be less welcoming for women faculty and faculty of color on the tenure track.¹ Here we describe three critical factors linking campus climate and faculty diversity that underscore the importance of recruiting and retaining underrepresented faculty.

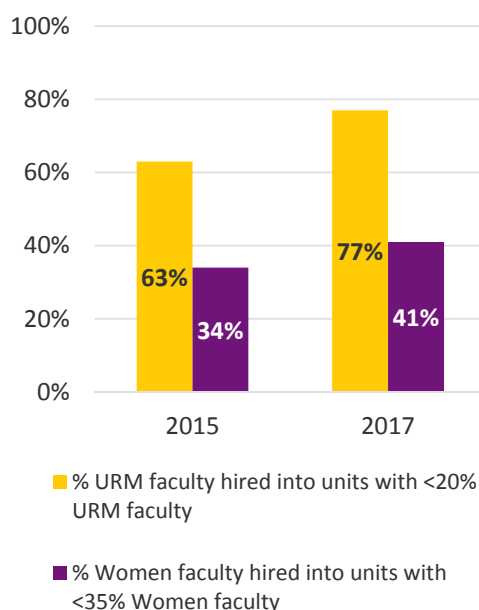
1. Diverse departments have more positive climates.

Women and underrepresented minority (URM)² faculty experience a more positive workplace climate in departments where they enjoy a critical mass³ of faculty with similar demographic identities, according to climate assessment data from tenure-track faculty in more than 60 U-M departments collected by ADVANCE over the last ten years.⁴ Specifically, in departments with a critical mass of women faculty, women rated their department environment as more tolerant and more gender egalitarian. Women also reported having more voice and influence, and fewer experiences of bias/exclusion and tokenism. Similarly, URM faculty rated their departments as more tolerant and reported having more voice and influence in departments with a critical mass of underrepresented minorities; they also reported experiencing less bias and tokenism.

Further analyses showed that men and non-URM faculty generally also reported a more positive climate in departments with a critical mass of women and underrepresented minorities. Taken together, these findings provide important evidence that a diverse faculty within an academic unit is associated with a more positive department climate for all faculty. If we hope to cultivate an inclusive and welcoming climate for all faculty, we must continue to recruit, support, and retain underrepresented faculty, particularly in departments that have not yet achieved a critical mass for these groups.



2. Underrepresented faculty are being hired into less diverse departments.



Efforts to diversify the faculty have broadened across campus; one consequence of this increased hiring is that more women and URM faculty are being hired into departments that do not yet have a critical mass of underrepresented faculty. In AY2018, just half of all departments employed a critical mass of women and only 10% of departments had achieved a critical mass of URM faculty. We examined U-M faculty hiring data at two time points (AY2015 and AY2017) and found that an increasing proportion of newly hired women joined departments that lacked a critical mass of women (from 34% in AY2015 to 41% in AY2017).

The same trend was observed for newly hired URM faculty: in AY2017, 77% of URM new hires joined departments without a critical mass of URM faculty (up from 63% in AY2015). Given that underrepresented faculty hired into departments without a critical mass of women or URM faculty may experience their department's climate more negatively, we must strengthen our efforts to support and retain them.

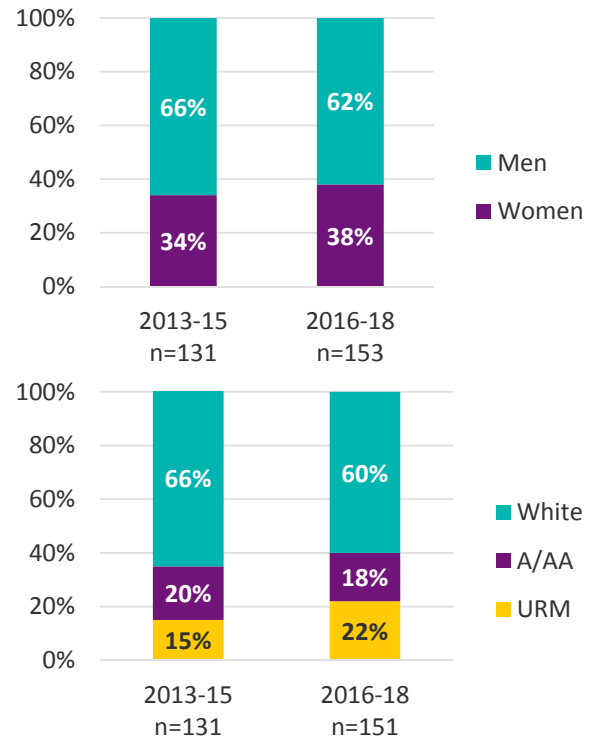
3. Underrepresented faculty are choosing to leave at higher rates than majority faculty.

Hiring of underrepresented faculty may be offset by women and URM faculty choosing to leave the university. Data gathered from tenure track faculty who voluntarily left U-M since 2013 indicate that women and URM faculty are choosing to leave at higher proportions relative to their representation on campus.⁵ From AY2013-AY2015, 34% of the faculty who voluntarily left U-M were women, a proportion that was slightly higher than their overall representation on campus during that time period (32%). From AY2016-A2018, 38% of the faculty who voluntarily left were women, which was again higher than their overall representation on campus (34%). For URM faculty, these differences were much larger. Despite representing just 10% of the faculty during A2013-AY2018, URM faculty comprised 15% of the faculty who voluntarily left in AY2013-AY2015 and 22% of the faculty who left during AY2016-AY2018.

Proportionally more women and URM faculty are choosing to leave than what we would expect based on their representation on campus.⁶ These proportions have increased over time, although the changes between the two time periods were not statistically significant. Nevertheless, this trend is troubling, particularly in the case of URM faculty, and underscores the importance of retention in our work to diversify the faculty at UM.

Together, these three factors demonstrate the important relationship between faculty diversity and campus climate. Challenges associated with hiring and retaining underrepresented faculty continue to hinder our efforts to increase the representation of women and URM faculty and to improve the campus climate. Focusing our attention on the intersections between demographics and climate is critical to making progress in these areas.

Percentage of Faculty who Chose to Leave U-M by Gender and Race-Ethnicity



Notes:

1. A full report of our findings can be found on the ADVANCE Program’s website: <https://advance.umich.edu/research/>.
2. Underrepresented minority (URM) faculty include African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American/American Indian.
3. Critical mass is a concept that emphasizes the importance of ensuring adequate representation of minority populations to mitigate the marginalization of these group members; the threshold for critical mass is generally defined as around 30 percent, although it may range from 18-35 percent. In our analyses, we defined a threshold of 35% for women and 20% for URM faculty. Critical mass alone may not sufficiently address the isolation and exclusion of minority group members, but increasing the numbers of traditionally underrepresented individuals may help to reduce the detrimental psychological pressures associated with being the sole representative of their social group (i.e. “solo” or “token”). For a review of this literature, please see Thompson, M., & Sekaquaptewa, D. (2002). When being different is detrimental: Solo status and the performance of women and racial minorities. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 2(1), 183-203.
4. The ADVANCE Program works with academic units to conduct systematic assessments of units’ workplace climates using quantitative survey methods. Over time, we have compiled the data from these individual studies into an aggregated data file containing approximately 2,000 respondents from more than 60 academic departments.
5. The ADVANCE Program recently completed its seventh annual exit interview study with faculty who left U-M voluntarily as part of an ongoing assessment of issues that may affect faculty at the university and contribute to their decisions to leave. The aggregate findings from this study drew on interviews with 143 faculty who voluntarily left between September 1, 2009, and June 1, 2016. The most recent report is available on the ADVANCE Program website: <https://advance.umich.edu/research/>.
6. A report summarizing faculty members’ reasons for leaving U-M can be found at <https://advance.umich.edu/research/>.