

Actions to Retain BIPOC Faculty @ University of Michigan

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Efforts to diversify tenure-track faculty are hindered by faculty retention challenges

RESEARCH

The University of Michigan (U-M) ADVANCE Program completed multiple recent studies that capture the faculty experience and its impact on underrepresented faculty retention.

- *Climate studies: Assessing The Academic Work Environment For Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty (2012 & 2017)* report that aspects of the broader university climate continue to be less welcoming for women and faculty of color.
- Black, Indigenous and People Of Color (BIPOC) faculty, especially under-represented minority (URM) faculty, leave U-M at greater rates than White faculty (*ADVANCE Indicator Report (2019)*).
- *Exit Interview Study (2020)* included interviews with faculty of color who left U-M between 2011 and 2019. Faculty of color were less satisfied with their department leadership than White faculty and recommended improving transparency, accountability, and the workplace climate.
- *COVID-19 reports (2020 & 2021)* on the faculty experience indicated that there were differential impacts of the pandemic on distinct groups of faculty (i.e., junior faculty, women faculty, faculty who are parents).
- *BIPOC faculty focus groups (2021)* surfaced consistent challenges from both BIPOC faculty as well as administrators who are trying to retain faculty.

Methodology

- Annual review of faculty hiring, promotion, and attrition data by demographic groups
- Faculty exit interviews
- Periodic climate assessments of all faculty
- Ad hoc surveys and focus groups around particular issues (e.g., COVID-19)

Common Themes

- The decision to leave is usually the result of experiences over many months to years, rather than a single incident.
- BIPOC faculty retention challenges are not new or newly known. Top challenges for faculty include:
 - » Departmental climate
 - » Leadership (e.g., lack of opportunities)

- » Structural inequality (e.g., epistemic exclusion*, bias in teaching evaluations, exclusion from critical networks)
- » Service inequity (e.g., the invisible service of supporting BIPOC students)
- » Family needs (e.g., job opportunities for partner, childcare, location)
- » Financial resources (e.g., research support, salary, housing costs)
- Efforts to diversify the faculty must be addressed through both faculty recruitment and faculty retention.

“*I chose Michigan initially and I want to keep choosing Michigan again*”
~said a U-M faculty member who identifies as BIPOC”

FACULTY RETENTION WORKSHOPS: STRATEGIES FOR LEADERSHIP

In response to these concerns, ADVANCE shared strategies for improving faculty retention in a five-workshop series for campus leaders during the 2021-22 academic year. Workshops were evidence-based, highly interactive, and presented over zoom.

Workshops

BIPOC Faculty Departures at U-M

ADVANCE reported on the experiences of BIPOC faculty (primarily tenure-track faculty) at U-M and the implications of faculty departures for making progress on faculty diversity. Participants explored ideas, potential policies, and practices to improve the retention of BIPOC faculty.



The Roles of Individual and Structural Bias in Hiring and Advancement of BIPOC Faculty

Participants were presented with an analysis of individual and structural biases as well as examples of the ways in which schemas, service loads, teaching evaluations, and faculty support affect the careers of BIPOC faculty. For example, BIPOC faculty may work in areas outside the traditional center of a given discipline and may be devalued for doing so. Interactive elements included an exercise on identifying and mitigating this subfield bias*.



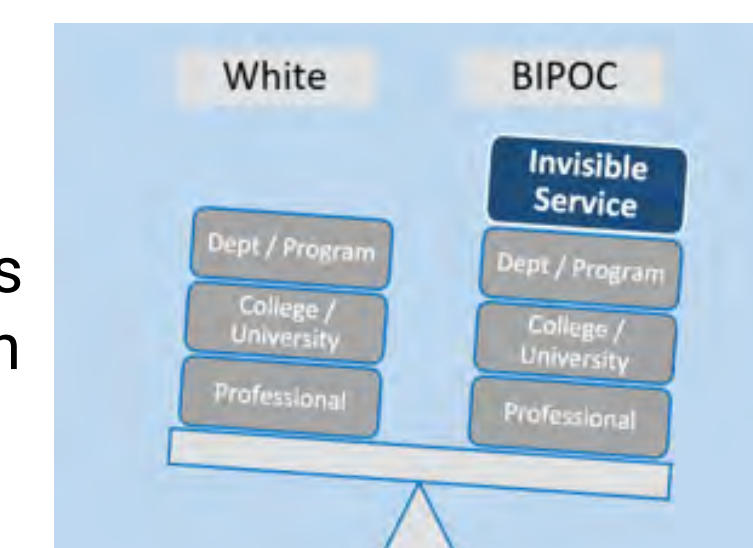
Faculty Retention: Panel Discussion with Department Chairs and Deans

Trying to retain faculty after they have an offer elsewhere is often too late. This workshop focused on strategies that unit leaders have used for preemptive retention, such as helping faculty develop leadership skills, advising faculty on their careers and future at U-M, and ensuring equity. Panelists also discussed the more time-sensitive moment of a retention offer.



Invisible Service and Service Equity

BIPOC faculty often engage in so-called “invisible service,” including meeting special requests, care work, and cultural taxation. This workshop provided strategies for making such service visible, for example, by giving credit for the informal mentoring of students that often falls disproportionately on BIPOC faculty. Participants also learned other strategies for approaching service equity. The CRLT Players, a U-M theater group, provided a sketch to help participants understand the impact of service inequity on a BIPOC faculty member.



Cultivating Climate for Faculty Equity

This workshop, presented by ADVANCE’s RISE Committee**, described the forces that shape unit climate and shared eight levers for shifting climate to one where all people feel respected, supported, and valued. This workshop focused specifically on dismantling the climate barriers that BIPOC faculty face.



Graphic adapted from Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005

Future Activities

- Ongoing data collection including annual review of faculty HR data, faculty exit interviews, faculty climate surveys
- A multi-year faculty retention effort of education, engagement, and resource development.

REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

U-M ADVANCE Reports: advance.umich.edu/research

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* Settles, Isis. Subfield Bias in Faculty Hiring Decisions <https://advance.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ADVANCE-subfield-bias-in-hiring-060321.pdf>

**Respect in Striving for Excellence (RISE) Committee offers resources, programming, and community-building opportunities that focus on building respect and inclusion in academic workplace climates.