



Best Practices: Recruiting & Retaining Faculty and Staff of Color

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Western's Plans and Initiatives in Creating a More Diverse Workforce

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Introduction

Western's commitment to recruiting and retaining a diverse work force is integral to its mission of "Engaged Excellence." Diversity is a fundamental core value of our campus community. On Western's Diversity webpage, President Shepard states that "open acceptance of our differing viewpoints and perspectives is integral to higher education and is at the center of learning and knowledge."¹

Having diversity in the higher education setting is critical to the growth of all who are involved. It is a key ingredient of a quality education, scholarly discourse, and reflection. Faculty, staff and students alike can benefit from learning to function within a setting that allows or demands that one adapt to the complex social structures of having to learn from, teach or work with those who are not like oneself.² In fact, it can be said that working with or learning from or among diverse groups of people is an education in itself.

While Western's Engaged Excellence has provided our faculty, staff and students with an education and working environment, respectively, that is truly top-notch, we have struggled to provide an environment that is representative of society's ethnic diversity. Western, in spite of its huge commitment to diversity is still under-represented by ethnic minorities among its faculty and staff who represent 13% of the total workforce. Out of Western's seven academic colleges, five have fewer faculty of color than we would expect, given the availability of minority Ph.D.s in specific disciplines throughout the nation. And, out of 15 employee job groups, there are eight which are underrepresented by staff of color, proportionate to their availability in the labor force.³ With increasing ethnic diversity in Washington State, Western's students of color continue to grow -- from 13% in 2000 to 18% in 2008. Thus, it becomes even more critical to have faculty and staff of color who can support these students and serve as role models. And with efforts aimed toward increasing diversity in our workforce, we must identify and undertake efforts that will help ensure a climate that is inclusive, embracing a wide array of differences that will be "value added" to the institution. Efforts of recruitment and retention are necessarily interdependent and work together toward the goal of diversifying faculty and staff.

As Western strives to become the nation's premier comprehensive university, it is critical that we reflect the nation's growing diversity of faculty, staff and students. The James Irvine Foundation Campus Diversity Initiative found that "If

¹ <http://www.wvu.edu/diversity/>

² <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~pgurin/benefits.html>

³ 2009 WWU Affirmative Action Plan data

higher education does not succeed in diversifying the group of faculty currently entering the Academy, an entire generation's worth of opportunity will be lost."⁴

This paper was developed to identify "best practices" and strategies from higher education institutions that have been effective in recruiting and retaining faculty and staff of color. We have chosen to list both recruitment and retention strategies together, due to their intertwining nature. Some strategies serve both recruitment and retention efforts; others are clearly aimed at either recruitment or retention.

This paper is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather serves as a "working document" that can help guide our efforts. Therefore, we view the strategies presented in this paper as being able to be adjusted to best work for Western, giving us maximum flexibility to best define how to successfully reach our goals. Further, we identify initiatives that are on-going at Western so they can be further examined for possible enhancements as well as ways to make our on-going search processes more effective in reaching out to recruit faculty and staff of color.

Best Practices/Strategies in Recruiting & Retaining Faculty/Staff of Color

A review of faculty and staff of color initiatives at other universities suggests that many universities are actively engaged in promoting diversity of their faculty and staff. While some initiatives were better developed or better funded than others, some common themes emerged that are useful to consider for Western's Initiative in recruiting and retaining faculty and staff of color. The matrix at Attachment A provides a summary listing of these "best practices" and strategies.

1. Funding Initiatives

Centralized Funding can be effectively utilized for a variety of hiring incentives:

a. **Competitive Beginning Salary and Start-Up Incentives** (e.g. provision of labs, equipment, teaching assistant, etc.)

- UC Santa Cruz

⁴ http://www.irvine.org/assets/pdf/pubs/education/insight_Revolving_Door.pdf

- University of Colorado – Boulder
 - California State University – Los Angeles
- b. **“Bridge” Funding** to hire a diverse candidate in anticipation of a retirement, and then use centralized funding to “bridge” funding until that retirement
- Northwestern University
 - University of Minnesota
- c. **Funding for Faculty of Color Research Projects**
- University of Colorado at Denver
 - Minnesota State University -Mankato
- d. **Internal Grant Program** – to provide financial support to departments for new hires
- Eastern Washington University
 - University of Arkansas – Fayetteville
 - Oregon State University
- e. **Shared Funding**
- Oregon State University/Oregon University System (*The program provides a maximum of \$60,000 per award to support up to 75% of the appointee’s salary for up to two years, and/or start-up costs. In practice, the awards were split between three or four appointments for which hiring units applied each year, resulting in individual awards of \$15,000 to \$20,000 per year over a two-year period*⁵.)
- f. **Fundraising Campaign to Support faculty and Staff Diversity**
- University of Rhode Island

⁵ <http://oregonstate.edu/admin/aa/faculty/diversity.html>

2. Cluster Hiring

The term cluster hiring is used in two ways. The first describes the practice of hiring a group of people at all levels that are well versed in more than one area and can float between disciplines. The advantage of this is to have a cohort of flexible and dynamic minority scholars well suited to the new challenges facing them in an ever changing environment.

The second method aims at hiring more than one person of color at a time, minimizing feelings of isolationism and overload. In the article, “Toward a Warmer Climate: The Impact of Campus Culture on Underrepresented Faculty,”⁶ Portland State University faculty shared these same sentiments about this.

It is possible that both types of cluster hiring may occur in one recruitment phase but not necessarily.⁷ Cluster hiring has been utilized at:

- Rutgers University
- Purdue University – College of Engineering
- Indiana University – Bloomington
- University of Michigan
- Columbia University
- University of Wisconsin – Madison
- Florida State University
- University of Houston
- Notre Dame University
- University of California System – James Irvine Foundation

3. Mentoring Programs

Mentoring is a critical component for professionally developing junior faculty. Universities across the nation (see below) have utilized mentoring programs to improve retention rates of underrepresented minority faculty and reinforce a respectful, positive work environment. Duke University has strengthened its mentoring “culture” and made mentoring a priority by regularizing sound mentoring practices among faculty as well as across the generations of undergraduate students, graduate and professional students, and post-doctoral fellows.⁸

⁶ http://www2ucsc.edu/ahr/resources_for_academics/original_docs_and_pdfs/01-02divawds.pdf

⁷ <http://www.diversityweb.org/Digest/W99/research.html>

⁸ <http://www.provost.duke.edu/pdfs/FacDiversityInitiative08.pdf>

Virginia Tech has also implemented a strong mentoring program to support women and minority faculty who are generally more likely than majority faculty to see academia as “chilly” and “alienating” (Aguirre, 2000)⁹. This institution wanted to provide a supportive opportunity for **junior faculty of color** to come together around issues important to their success.¹⁰

At the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, **welcoming events for new faculty of color** are held.

Some exemplary mentoring programs were identified at:

- Duke University
- Virginia Tech
- University of Nebraska - Lincoln
- Oregon State University
- University of Colorado at Denver
- Notre Dame University
- University of Rhode Island
- University of Iowa
- University of Michigan
- New York University

4. Campus-Wide Diversity/Cultural Competency Training for New and Existing Faculty and Staff

A number of institutions have identified the need to inform faculty and staff about diversity issues and provide cultural competency training for them. Among these institutions are:

- California State University – Northridge
- University of Rhode Island
- University of Colorado - Boulder

⁹ Aguirre, A. (2000). Women and minority faculty in the academic workplace: Recruitment, retention, and academic culture. Eric Clearinghouse on Higher Education. Document HE 033 595, 4 pages

¹⁰ http://www.multicultural.vt.edu/proceedings/GRANT_Faculty_Retention_Art.pdf

5. Comprehensive Diversity Plan

Including Outcome Assessment (Supported by President and Provost Commitment to Achieving Diversity of Faculty and Staff)

Some of the institutions with Diversity Plans seek opportunities to have visiting and/or exchange programs, as a beginning step to help provide a presence of ethnic diversity among the faculty on campus. They do this through:

a. Visiting Scholar Programs

b. Faculty Exchange Programs

Institutions that have Plans, outlining a number of the above efforts, along with many other initiatives, include:

- University of Wisconsin – Madison
- University of Nebraska - Lincoln
- Indiana University
- University of Colorado - Denver
- George Washington University
- University of Minnesota
- University of Michigan
- Arizona State University

6. Campus Climate Assessment

Building an environment that is perceived inclusive to all people will go a long way in helping a person to feel safe and comfortable in their new position. A key to doing this is to understand our current “climate” with respect to valuing and appreciating differences, and to be able to benchmark progress we can make in this area.

Conducting **climate assessments** is one first step that all department/units can take to assess the “inclusiveness” of their environment and to begin to identify how to ensure that all feel welcome. There are many climate **assessment instruments**¹¹ available. Additionally, periodically held **focus groups** with employees can help identify strengths and weaknesses in this area, as departments/units build their own plan to create and maintain an inclusive

¹¹ http://www.webebi.com/_AsmtServices/National/Climate.aspx

environment in which all employees will feel comfortable, including diverse employees.

The following universities have examples of campus climate assessments for current faculty and staff of color that include surveys, focus groups, and individual interviews:

- Virginia Tech
- Washington State University
- University of Colorado - Boulder
- California State University – Northridge
- Villanova University
- Furman University

7. Retention Studies – Data Collection

Exit Interviews with Faculty and Staff of Color

The question of *why* faculty and staff of color are leaving is as important as *if* they are leaving. A voluntary portion of an exit interview can include a survey for faculty and staff of color to explain why they are leaving, if it is diversity related and if they took advantage of the diversity retention services that exist at Western.¹² This information should be used to revisit and revamp the recruitment and retention effort.

The James Irvine Foundation Campus Diversity Initiative¹³ found that keeping good data on faculty of color leaving the university and why they left, were data that could inform how to build better retention programs. A number of universities hold exit interviews with faculty and staff of color. Among these are:

- University of California system
- California State University – Northridge
- Duke University

8. Leadership Opportunities for Faculty of Color

One way institutions have sought to retain faculty/staff of color is by offering them leadership opportunities. Sometimes this includes mentoring an

¹² <http://www.uri.edu/advance/files/pdf/New%20Paradigms%2011-2-07.pdf>

¹³ http://www.irvine.org/assets/pdf/pubs/education/insight_Revolving_Door.pdf

individual for an administrative position or other promotion; or, it can be providing an opportunity for an individual to assume a leadership role on an important university committee. Institutions to look at for this are:

- University of California system
- Virginia Tech
- Arizona State University

9. **Multicultural Resource Directory for Candidates and New Faculty and Staff of Color Hires**

As faculty and staff of color interview on campus and are hired, it is important for them to understand there are appropriate resources available to them both on campus and in the community. An institution that has compiled a directory for this is:

- University of Arkansas – Fayetteville
- Old Dominion (developed for students; can be a model for faculty/staff)

10. **Enhancements to Search Process**

A number of universities have enhanced their training by holding **Hiring Workshops for Departments with a Focus on Diversity**. Others have ensured the **establishments of search committees that represent a diverse cross section** of the campus. Some of the institutions that have undertaken these types of efforts are:

- University of California System
- California State University – Northridge

Existing Initiatives at Western

Western has undertaken a wide array of diversity initiatives, over the years, some of which could be expanded or enhanced that could enhance recruiting and retaining faculty/staff of color. A wide variety of initiatives are compiled in the University's **Diversity Handbook**¹⁴ Some of these are listed below:

1. Diversity Fellows Program

The Provost's Office has provided funding for two Diversity Fellow position for which Departments could apply. This program is aimed at identifying Ph.D. candidates of color who could join Western while completing their doctoral degree, and if successful, be considered for a faculty position.

2. Faculty Exchange Program

Has been used primarily for international exchanges, and could be examined for use with historically black colleges and universities and institutions with high numbers of Hispanic faculty.

3. Fairhaven Global Issues Forum

The World Issues Forums of Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies provides educational opportunities to the campus and Bellingham community on a variety of issues related to various aspects of diversity.

¹⁴ **Diversity Handbook**, compiled by Western Washington University Equal Opportunity Office, see <http://www.wvu.edu/eoo/publications>.

4. Diversity Achievement Award

Each year, nominations from faculty, staff, and students are reviewed to receive this award which recognizes significant contributions in the area of diversity. The award is presented by the President at Fall Convocation.

5. Visiting Scholar Program

Visiting Scholar is an honorary title awarded to persons who hold professorial (including research) positions at other institutions, or other professional positions, and who are invited by an academic department but are not employed by the University during their stay.

6. Seed Grants for International Curriculum Development

The Center for International Studies seed grants for international curriculum development assist Western faculty members in developing a new course or in revising an existing course offering that will feature international and/or comparative material and perspectives.

7. Minority Employee Council (MEC)

The MEC is an employee group that in the past, has come together for camaraderie and support for the minority faculty and staff across campus. Recently revamped, and in the process of rewriting its mission, the MEC will serve as both a strong recruitment and retention tool for Western's minority employees.

8. Inter-group Dialogue Program

The Inter-group Dialogue Program promotes the development of consciousness about social identity and differences by examining how personal and group-related attitudes, relationships with other people and groups, information about the social world. A group of faculty and staff have been trained in this Program and a "pilot" course for students was offered in 2008.

9. Women of Color Empowerment Dinner

The Women of Color Empowerment Dinner is an annual Western event, celebrating the professional accomplishments and personal successes of women of color throughout our community; it raises scholarship funds for women of color students at Western.

10. Minority Faculty Welcoming Reception

Historically, a reception has been held in the Fall quarter for Western's new faculty of color to help make them feel welcome and to introduce them to other new and current faculty of color on campus.

11. Center for Educational Equity and Diversity (CEED), Woodring College

This Center utilizes students and involves faculty in a variety of educational experiences, including guest lectures, research, workshops on an array of diversity issues. CEED could be used as a model for Western's other campuses, in our efforts to broaden understanding of and sensitivity to diversity. Having such a center in each College could also be attractive to diverse candidates applying for positions at Western.

Enhancing Search Committee Affirmative Action Processes

The Equal Opportunity Office visits with each faculty and staff search committee to brief them on ensuring sound equal employment opportunity practices throughout the search and in reviewing the level of underrepresented by minorities or women in the job group to which the searched position falls. If there are affirmative action goals, the EO Office works with the search committee to assist them in proactive outreach for applicants from underrepresented groups. These practices can be explored and enhancements made to more effectively recruit faculty and staff of color.

1. More Visible Support From Leadership

It is important to have concrete goals and milestones to reach while trying to attain diversity goals. In Western's Strategic Plan,¹⁵ we state that we are committed to diversity. President Shepard reiterates this at a multitude of venues when he addresses the university public. Many other departments and colleges across campus echo these same sentiments. This is significant, but it is not sufficient.

The university's Affirmative Action Plan,¹⁶ communicates goals for each college or administrative department, as described by federal regulation. These should serve as the minimum, and should inform all searches on campus. While the EO Office currently communicates these goals to all colleges and administrative units through its search committee briefing, additional augmentation from Department Chairs and Deans would be valuable in providing a consistent and strong message.

2. Individuals Must be Targeted

While Western has always taken steps to make sure minority candidates are informed of job openings, it is important to remember that steps have focused on targeting "groups" of individuals (from underrepresented populations). While certainly some successes have been achieved, we must acknowledge that our efforts have not been as effective as desired, and that our levels of minority representation across faculty and staff jobs still exists.

¹⁵ <http://www.wvu.edu/president/mission.shtml>

¹⁶ <http://www.wvu.edu/eoo/affirmativeaction.shtml>

Our targeting can be focused to minority candidates, themselves, making them aware of job openings, a practice which has had success at other comparable institutions¹⁷. Individuals could be informed of specific positions that will be available, with as much advance notice as possible, and be invited to apply.

3. “Bridge Funding” and Appointments of Opportunity

To create a welcoming transition, some institutions have funded the hiring of an individual before the position is actually vacated.¹⁸ The “bridge money” allocated for this type of early employment allows the maximum time for recruitment and flexibility in the desired candidate to transition the new position. If a college identifies a particularly strong candidate, hiring authorities may also choose to appoint an individual, utilizing Western’s Appointments of Opportunity Policy.¹⁹

4. Job Announcements Shaped to Attract Diversity

In order for a diverse set of applicants to become interested in Western’s open positions, they must find something in them that sets them apart from other institutions they may be interested in. It is therefore critical that we make our position attractive to diverse candidates. This starts with the job announcement.

The job announcement is our single most effective tool in recruiting anyone, including the quality diverse applicants for whom we are searching. If candidates feel that they cannot perform the essential functions of the position or that they do not meet the required qualifications, they are not likely to give the position consideration. On the other hand, when candidates read that working with multicultural or otherwise diverse groups of people is a required qualification, the diverse candidate then is more likely to be interested and confident in researching the position and our institution.²⁰ As an example, suppose that a faculty position in the History Department wrote within the qualifications that they value an emphasis in American Latino history. It is not hard to imagine that this position would attract more diverse applicants than it would without that emphasis. Or, imagine that all our job announcements required that applicants have demonstrated experience working on issues of diversity and/or working with diverse populations.

¹⁷ <http://fp.arizona.edu/affirm/Tipsrdw.htm>

¹⁸ <http://www.asianam.org/asian-american%20faculty.htm>

¹⁹ http://www.wvu.edu/policies/u_admin.shtml

²⁰ <http://fp.arizona.edu/affirm/Tipsrdw.htm>

5. Highlight/Publicize Diversity Growth

It is important that Western needs to take every opportunity to talk about its successes with diversity. Though our progress in increasing faculty and staff of color has not been as great as we desire, there has been an upward trend that continues, and this story, along with Western's renewed commitment through its Recruitment and Retention Initiative, needs to be marketed. While Western is not satisfied with the growth we have seen in diversity, making it clear to candidates that diversity is valued and that we have made strides, particularly with students, is important.

6. Diverse Candidates and our Community

Every candidate should be thoroughly briefed on what our community offers. We should inform our candidates about what it is like to live in Bellingham, giving them information that deals with issues related to: local schools, churches, hospitals, restaurants, and recreation, quality of education their children can have, or the level of health care available in this community. A Multicultural Resource Directory (see above) could be developed for this use.

Search committees need to find out what is important to candidates through the telephone screening or interview process and highlight it. Candidates are not only making a decision to work at Western, but to live and make a life for themselves and possibly their families here. Again, the focus should be on the individual, rather than on any particular group. Candidates should also be made aware of what their salary can purchase here in Bellingham and in neighboring counties. Money can go a lot further in Whatcom County than it does in some of the major metropolitan areas with which we compete for talent.

In addition, candidates/finalists of color can meet with the Minority Employee Council and other groups on campus that could be helpful. The Special Assistant to the President for Diversity and the Vice Provost for Equal Opportunity and Employment Diversity can assist in ensuring that the materials are specifically tailored to meet candidates' needs.

7. Diverse Candidates and Their Families

Ensuring that diverse candidates can work and live in a community that is not yet highly diverse can be challenging. During a search, it may be useful to offer to bring in the spouse/partner of a candidate, should they become a serious contender for a position. This can be offered on either the first or follow-up interview. Diverse candidates may need a little more time in the community, with their spouse/partner, to fully appreciate the many resources that are available to them for a high quality of life. A person relocating who has the full support of their family is more likely to have a full and healthy tenure at Western.

In addition, diverse candidates could benefit by being introduced to the MEC. A member from the MEC could be included in interview dinners or have a separate meeting with diverse candidates to help them with any questions they may have to discuss important issues of inclusiveness with them.

8. Recognition and Rewards Critical to Successes

Colleges and Administrative Units that achieve goals or milestones should be recognized and rewarded. Those who value diversity will achieve these quickly and will gain early recognition. Those who need to be motivated to value diversity will seek to be recognized just as their colleagues have been. Success stories can be shared and relevant recruiting techniques that may be of assistance to other colleges or units can prove helpful.

Western has an annual Diversity Achievement Award, which has recognized an individual who has contributed significantly, and these recipients, over the years, have served as role models for others. Yet, Western could benefit from additional ways of recognizing individuals and departments.

There are a variety of ways to recognize and reward success in recruiting for diversity, ranging from highlighting stories in the FAST or various departmental or College Newsletters, to featuring a story about a unit's commitment to diversity and their successes in the Western Front, to cash awards, or special public presentations.

9. Search Committees Need Diversity

A search committee needs diversity within it. It may be important to consider the power differentials when selecting members so that people will feel free to share opinions. All members should be specifically chosen for their strengths and talents so the best choice is made at the end of the process²¹. In an institution that is not yet highly diverse, one must be sensitive to not asking the same faculty and staff repeatedly to sit on an unreasonable number of search committees. This would unfairly impose on the time needed to advance their own careers.

We need to broaden our current paradigm and consider minority individuals outside the specific department or unit of the position being searched. The perspective the diverse search member can bring can be as valuable as those within the department/unit who are the “subject matter experts”.

10. Equal Opportunity Office and Classified Employee Hiring

The EO Office has not been directly involved in the Classified employee hiring process, and increased monitoring and oversight in this area are critical to ensure that the search process complies with federal and state regulations such as The Civil Rights Act of 1964.

At a minimum, the EO Office should review all classified job announcements to ensure that they are inclusive and do not present, albeit unintentionally, artificial barriers to candidates of color. In addition, closer scrutiny needs to be paid to the search process and to sensitizing search committees on the value of a diverse work force.

11. Enhanced Retention Data Collection

The James Irvine Foundation, in its 2006 AACU-sponsored recruitment and retention study²², indicated that collecting retention data is critical to monitoring the recruitment practices implemented that aim towards diversifying faculty. A consistent and on-going effort that identifies which faculty are retained, as well as reasons for why some leave, can produce longitudinal quantitative and qualitative data that can be invaluable.

²¹ http://www.villanova.edu/studentlife/assets/documents/multicultural/diversity_report.pdf

²² http://www.irvine.org/assets/pdf/pubs/education/insight_Revolving_Door.pdf

While there have been many discussions about retention of minority employees at Western, few are informed as well as they should be. Tracking retention, by seeing how long minority employees stay at Western as opposed to their majority counterparts, and identifying those job groups which experience the most difficult ability to retain minorities, will allow us to focus our effort to these job groups in particular. Accurate and timely retention data will enable us to better assess how well we are doing in meeting our Affirmative Action goals.