

From racial tensions to campus action items

Protests spur push for administration and faculty diversity

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The national PhD Project has encouraged about 1,000 professionals of color to leave the corporate world to become business school professors.

Lack of diversity among faculty and administrators compounded the racial tensions that drove a wave of student protests—and a handful of high-level resignations—on campuses across the U.S. in the fall of 2015.

Hiring more administrators of color, as many institutions have pledged to do, will require colleges and universities to cultivate minority leaders from their faculty. Administrators will also have to work collectively to [diversify](#) Ph.D. programs, says Jonathan Holloway, the dean of Yale College and a professor of African American studies.

“This is one of the major issues of our moment,” Holloway says. “It is about identifying talent early, dedicating resources and time to make sure that talent fully develops from a scholarly perspective, and then fostering deep relationships and loyalty so that the faculty feel invested in their home institution and don’t leave.”

Educators trained nationally in higher ed administration may represent a more robust pool of candidates than an institution’s own faculty, Holloway says. Colleges and universities looking to promote from within should ensure faculty members have ample time to develop [leadership skills](#), but aren’t overtaxed with other campus responsibilities, he adds.

“It’s the phenomenon we see when administrations work to make sure that there is a woman, or a person of color or a female person of color, to sit on a university committee,” Holloway says.

Producing more Ph.D.s of color—particularly in science, medicine and engineering—has been a career-long goal for Freeman Hrabowski, president of University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Underrepresented groups earn 13 percent of the doctorates at the university, compared to a national average of 5 to 6 percent, he explains.

“Institutions have not spent enough time or resources focused on this problem as a top priority,” he says. “The challenge is to use creative approaches in identifying some of the graduates even before they have completed Ph.D.s, to learn more about their strengths, and to give them a sense of the expectations as they prepare for the workplace.”

This includes giving financial support to aspiring students from low-income backgrounds, he adds.

At his university, post-doctoral fellowship programs pair new Ph.D.s with mentors and also provide teaching and research opportunities. Some of these students have obtained faculty positions at UMBC and other institutions.

The University of Texas System announced a new rule in January that requires at least one candidate from an underrepresented minority group be interviewed for senior administrative openings.

Two organizations working to diversify teaching in higher ed are the Consortium for Faculty Diversity in Liberal Arts Colleges and The PhD Project, which focuses on business schools.

The 48 member schools of the nearly 30-year-old [Consortium for Faculty Diversity](#) sponsor at least one pre- or post-doctoral fellow each year. The fellows—all of whom come from underrepresented backgrounds—teach courses and experience other aspects of a college professor's life.

When bringing these fellows to campus, member schools are encouraged to forecast when faculty positions will open up, either through retirement or expansion, says Jack Ryan, a coordinator of the consortium and vice provost at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania.

The consortium maintains a database of its fellows as a resource when its member institutions have job openings.

“If we're able to help these young scholars grasp what they have to do to land a job—even if they leave us and get a full-time tenure track job at another institution, then we believe we've been successful in nurturing their early academic careers,” Ryan says.

The [PhD Project](#)'s initial priority was to encourage more students of color to study business. One path to that goal was creating a more diverse faculty in business schools, says Bernard Milano, founder of The PhD Project and a former executive at the accounting giant KPMG.

The organization recruits business professionals of color to move from the corporate world to higher education. It also holds development sessions and serves as a support network—for instance, members may feel more comfortable talking about campus bias with other minorities, Milano says.

About 1,000 members of the project are now teaching in business schools. And that also seems to be leading to more diverse classes. Members report that while there may only be one minority student on the first day of a class, more people of color show up for the second session as word gets about a black or Hispanic professor, Milano says.

But wider action is needed across higher education to diversify faculty extensively and sustainably, he adds.

“The only way to become more diverse now is to hire faculty from other schools,” Milano says. “What’s lacking is the willingness to come together and create a national initiative that adds to the pool.”

Getting minorities in.

5 actions to consider:

1. Pair current Ph.D. students from underrepresented groups with mentors through post-doctoral fellowships.
2. Provide Ph.D. students with teaching and research opportunities.
3. Develop a policy where at least one minority candidate must be interviewed for particular positions.
4. Help young scholars to land their first full-time tenure track job.
5. Consider collaborating with other institutions to increase the pool of minority job candidates.