

DIVERSITY IN THE GLOBAL ACADEMY

Review, Promotion, and Tenure



DIVERSITY IN THE GLOBAL ACADEMY: Review, Promotion, and Tenure

At the very base of achieving academic staff diversity in review, promotion, and tenure, there must be an institutional and departmental commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion that goes beyond lip service. This commitment begins with recruitment and hiring and rests within the administration's ability to formulate and carry out explicit plans and efforts to retain and promote academics who represent diverse backgrounds and communities across the spectrum.

For a long time, higher education institutions and departments have pointed to a “pipeline” problem to account for majority white and/or majority male makeup of the academy. Many higher education institutional diversity plans involve changes in academic staff search procedures to increase the hiring of individuals from underrepresented demographic groups.¹

While broadening and deepening the pipeline of Professors remains a key area of focus for those working to diversify academic staff, this paper will focus on the similarly vital efforts of retention and institutional support needed to accomplish higher educational institutional equity, diversity, and inclusion plans and goals. We outline recommended practices to diversify the pool of academic staff and demonstrate, both qualitatively and quantitatively, dedication to diversity and inclusion in review, promotion, and tenure. These are essential in all institutions—whether or not the US-centric concept of tenure applies.

“When we start to take in consideration tenure and promotion rates, retention rates, percentages of minoritized faculty in contingent positions compared to tenure-line positions and then factors such as invisible labour that affect women in particular and other minoritized groups, I think we’re still on the very steep end of changing these aspects of our profession.”

Dr. Christy Pichichero

Associate Professor and Director of Faculty Diversity
in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences
at George Mason University (GMU)

¹ For the sake of this paper, diversifying academic staff at a macro-level includes increasing academic staff members in an institution and/or particular department such that there is representation that includes more diversity from demographic groups such as race, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, religious, and other backgrounds.

Cultural Change to Boost Retention

Institutions worldwide have had difficulty both recruiting and retaining their minority academics and staff.² Broadly, such demographics underscore larger issues affecting retention and career progression development of underrepresented minorities in academia. For example, in the United Kingdom, where 17% of academic staff are Black and other Minority Ethnic (BME) just 11% of BME academics are full professors with of these just 160 of out of the 22,855 professors were black.³ In Saudia Arabia, Suzan Ab-Shakra from King Abdullah University of Science & Technology noted that of the institution's 194 faculty members, just 13% are female. "STEM is very hard to recruit female, so this remains one of our challenges."

The lack of academic diversity has gone hand-in-hand with lack of standing for academics belonging to underrepresented groups—they have had less institutional access to professional development, mentorship, and opportunities and are subject to racism, discrimination, and inequality that also negatively affect their career success.⁴

A shift in institutional or departmental academic culture—in the very thinking about review, promotion, and tenure—will be required to ensure academics who belong to under-represented minority groups do not feel alienated, undervalued, or treated unfairly along their career path. This is because the

Academic Staff Retention Best Practices

- Provide **collaborative work environment** that appeals to diverse candidates
- Provide **institutional support** and **access to supportive communities**
- Offer **professional development** opportunities, including **leadership training**
- Provide access to funding through **grants related to and supportive of diversity**
- Provide **mentoring and guidance** from senior faculty
- Implement **policies that support diverse faculty** (e.g., those that encourage dual-career couples; offer flexibility in faculty use of institutional family leave policies)
- Perform **exit interviews** to understand why faculty leave to drive changes to recruitment and retention efforts
- **Hold leadership accountable** for change
- **Fix salary inequities** related to gender, race, or other factors

² Moreno, J., Smith, D., Clayton-Pedersen, A., Parker, S., & Teraguchi, D. H. (2006). The Revolving Door for Underrepresented Minority Faculty in Higher Education: An Analysis from the Campus Diversity Initiative.

³ Higher Education Staff Statistics: UK, 2020/21, February 1 2022 <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/01-02-2022/sb261-higher-education-staff-statistics> "Just 1% of UK professors are Black, new figures reveal," Independent, February 1, 2022. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-professors-black-government-figures-b2004891.html>

⁴ "Precarious Work in HE: Insecure Contracts and How They Have Changed Over Time," University and College Union, October 2021; Arday, J. No one can see me cry: understanding mental health issues for Black and minority ethnic staff in higher education. High Educ 83, 79-102 (2022); Rollock, Nicola. "Staying Power: The career experiences and strategies of UK Black female professors," University and College Union, February 2019; Bhopal, K. (2016). The Experiences of black and minority ethnic academics: a comparative study of the unequal academy. (1st ed.) (Routledge research in higher education). Routledge.

experience of academics in their jobs and as they strive for career advancement will influence whether, or not, they stay at an institution or even within academia.

Since recruitment alone does not guarantee retention, efforts to diversify the academy must address improving institutional culture to combat a high rate of attrition that the American Federation of Teachers Higher Education referred to as a “culture that sometimes breeds a sense of isolation and exclusion, creates confusion about how to meet job responsibilities and advance professionally, and imposes unreasonable work burdens on academics from racially and ethnically underrepresented groups.”⁵

A similar institutional culture that biases minorities and women exists beyond the U.S., including in the European higher educational landscape, where “senior leaders within universities remain consciously or unconsciously complicit in maintaining exclusionary cultures which marginalise and victimise ethnic minorities within the sector. The prevailing discriminatory cultures result in the continuous questioning of professional capabilities” of underrepresented staff members.⁶

Discrimination, harassment, and lack of support for vulnerable groups throughout the globe have led to a long-standing problem of people exiting the profession altogether. In countries across Europe, high numbers of women in particular leave the profession due to institutional challenges with diversity, inclusion, and equity, as partly demonstrated by the gender pay gap. Whilst the majority of students are women, only 24% of full professors and 14% of university heads are women.⁷

Isolation of minority academics, both professional and social, can lead to their marginalisation from colleagues, decisions, and inclusion in the department/college.⁸ Underrepresented minority academics, particularly those at predominately white institutions, experience marginalisation and isolation that are reinforced through institutional structural issues. These include such patterns as white privilege, isolation, microaggressions committed toward minority academics, and a “diversity tax” levied on them to carry the burden of institutional diversity initiatives.⁹ The elements of a workplace culture marked by these negative features lead to high rates of stress that

⁵ “Promoting Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Faculty: What Higher Education Unions Can Do,” American Federation of Teachers, 2010, p. 6. https://www.colorado.edu/odece/sites/default/files/attached-files/rba09-sb4converted_2.pdf

⁶ Arday, J., & Mirza, H. (Eds.). (2018). *Dismantling Race in Higher Education: Racism, Whiteness and Decolonising the Academy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan; Arday, J. (2020) *Race, education and social mobility: We all need to dream the same dream and want the same thing*. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 10, 1-7.

⁷ Anna-Lena Clæys-Kulik, Thomas Ekman Jørgensen, Henriette Stöbe, “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions,” European University Association, November 2019.

⁸ gunjiri, F. W., & Hernandez, K.-A. C. (2017). *Problematizing Authentic Leadership: A Collaborative Autoethnography of Immigrant Women of Color Leaders in Higher Education*. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 19(4), 393- 406; Turner, C. (2003). *Incorporation and Marginalization in the Academy: From Border toward Center for Faculty of Color?* *Journal of Black Studies*, 34(1), 112-125.

⁹ Edwards, W. J., & Ross, H. H. (2018). *What are they saying? Black faculty at predominantly white institutions of higher education*. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 28(2), 142-161; Brayboy, B. M. J. (2003). *The Implementation of Diversity in Predominantly White Colleges and Universities*. *Journal of Black Studies*, 34(1), 72-86; Lechuga, V. M. (2012). *Emotional Management and Motivation: A Case Study of Underrepresented Faculty*. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2012(155), 85-98.

may drive members of the academy to leave. The key to retention of academics is to create an inclusive, equitable, and respectful culture for all.

Institutional Support and Engagement

Institutions most successful in increasing diversity employ proactive programs that address campus climate and support diversity. A sense of belonging is critical for retaining academics. To nurture this, particularly with new and junior academics, specialists recommend setting up systems/activities to engage academics from underrepresented groups with the broader academic life across campus.¹⁰

Equity, diversity, and inclusion programs can target specific populations with low representation as well. Depending on the country, some programs may place a particular focus on inclusion of women, people from ethnic minorities, indigenous populations, specific migration or lower socio-economic backgrounds.¹¹

Fostering intentional engagement could be both formal and informal, such as creating minority associations for members of the academy, task forces to address specific issues or build community of specific demographic groups, peer networking groups, training on best practices, as well as regular meet-ups or meetings and events with mentors and informal chats that allow for authentic, less-guarded discussions around diversity and inclusion.¹²

Dr. Zulema Valdez, Associate Vice Provost for the Faculty and Professor of Sociology at University of California (UC) Merced, recommends getting creative to build community, either in-person or remotely. “We wanted to create more inclusivity and connections, especially with our first-year academics, since they can feel somewhat isolated,” she explained. So, the administration started to do a very informal weekday “coffee accountability check in” with women of color. Senior academics volunteered to participate to talk to new academics about how they’re doing. “We created a really nice community through friendly outreach,” she said.

Technology is another mechanism to support online disciplinary communities for academic growth and connection. Dr. Genyne Boston, Associate Provost at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, says that virtual communities housed on learning management systems can share research or scholarship and help to better prepare colleagues as they are getting ready for promotion or tenure. “We should brainstorm how we can support our faculty within their disciplines to give them a sense of possibility, place in field,” she said.

¹⁰ Cole, E. R., McGowan, B. L., & Zerquera, D. D. (2017). First-Year Faculty of Color: Narratives about Entering the Academy. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 50(1), 1-12; Ngunjiri, F. W., & Hernandez, K.-A. C.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Cole et al; Kelly, B. T., & Winkle-Wagner, R. (2017). Finding a Voice in Predominantly White Institutions: A Longitudinal Study of Black Women Faculty Members’ Journeys Toward Tenure. *Teachers College Record*, 119(6).

Leadership by and for a Diverse Academy

Leadership, as in who is in charge and the actions they take, has a significant impact on both recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority academics. Holding all leaders accountable for their practical work in diversity will illustrate to academics and students that the higher education institution is putting the words of its equity, diversity, and inclusion plan into action. All leaders in the academy should be evaluated on their experience and impact with regards to diversity.¹³ To further demonstrate commitment to diversity, institutions should involve diversity committees and underrepresented minority academics/staff in policy-making and grant them access to top administrators/leadership.¹⁴

Moreover, providing leadership opportunities to minority academics serves to strengthen inclusivity and improve the culture, and consequently increase retention of minority academics. Leadership opportunities may include mentorship by a senior academic mentor, or an important role on a university committee. However, because underrepresented academics are often overburdened with service obligations, it is important that leadership opportunities come with a reduction in, or enhanced support for, their other duties so as not to derail their professional career progress.

Implicit and Explicit Bias

Eliminating bias can go a long way in increasing representation of underrepresented minorities among academics. Because of this, implicit bias training is an established recommended practice to promote diversity in recruitment of academics, since research demonstrates the negative ways implicit bias affects minorities and women in hiring.¹⁵ Training search committee members about implicit bias both in search and review, promotion, and tenure processes helps make evaluation circumstances more fair by reducing or removing bias that may inadvertently result in rejection of qualified candidates and a less diverse applicant pool during different hiring stages.

However, implicit bias training is not enough to address current issues of bias in higher education that keep underrepresented minorities from advancing in the academe, according to Dr. Christy Pichichero, Associate Professor and Director of Faculty Diversity in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at George Mason University.

Dr. Pichichero says that implicit bias training is important, but that it is also becoming “passé in many ways because people’s biases are explicit. I think we need to be willing

¹³ Morimoto, S. A., Zajicek, A. M., Hunt, V. H., & Lisnic, R. (2013). Beyond Binders Full of Women: NSF ADVANCE and Initiatives for Institutional Transformation. *Sociological Spectrum*, 33(5), 397-415.

¹⁴ Han, K. T., & Leonard, J. (2017). Why Diversity Matters in Rural America: Women Faculty of Color Challenging Whiteness. *The Urban Review*, 49(1), 112-139.

¹⁵ State of the Science Implicit Bias Review 2015, <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias>.

now to lean into discomfort, to gain a vocabulary about the many types of bias that exist—ones that have to do with race and gender, sexuality, or social class, but also institutional bias, disciplinary bias, or methodological bias,” she says. “These are also ways in which people of different backgrounds or who have had different career trajectories are weeded out of search processes or promotions.”

Unravelling these types of biases will require major cultural change within institutions and departments, since traditionally review, promotion, and tenure processes have influenced academic life by pointing to where academics should focus their attention, which activities they should pursue, and where to publish their work or direct their research program, especially during the pre-tenure or promotion period.¹⁶

(Re)assessing the Review, Promotion, and Tenure Processes

A wholesale re-assessment of existing review, promotion, and tenure process will enable analysis of the implicit and explicit biases within. Evaluating—or re-evaluating—the weight and merit given to research, service, and teaching will proactively work against common biases that minority academics encounter.

Underrepresented minority members of the academy encounter challenges that may set the stage for them—both in not meeting the established “ideal” candidate and in the standards that have conventionally been used by academic institutions and departments to evaluate promotion and tenure.

Until leadership and decision-makers truly understand these challenges and change the process to account for the experiences of diverse academics, the process may exclude them from promotion and tenure. Research has shown that in their promotion and tenure reviews, minority academics are commonly negatively impacted by such biases as:

- Biased student interactions and evaluations/complaints
- Biases against service within institutional definitions of merit, when academics are often relied upon to participate in diversity-related service
- Biases related to merit for those academic staff members who perform diversity research, because it is often not as valued as other research endeavours
- Biases related to journal publications that may publish the work of minority scholars¹⁷

¹⁶ D. Harley, S.K. Acord, S. Earl-Novell, S. Lawrence, C.J. King, “Assessing the Future Landscape of Scholarly Communication: An Exploration of Faculty Values and Needs in Seven Disciplines,” Center for Studies in Higher Education, 2020

¹⁷ Han & Leonard; Fries-Britt, S. L., Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., Perna, L. W., Milem, J. F., & Howard, D. G. (2011). Underrepresentation in the Academy and the Institutional Climate for Faculty Diversity. *Journal of the Professoriate*, 5(1), 1-34; Jayakumar, U. M., Howard, T. C., Allen, W. R., & Han, J. C. (2009). Racial Privilege in the Professoriate: An Exploration of Campus Climate, Retention, and Satisfaction. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 80(5), 538-563.

Since underrepresented minority academics are often asked to serve on diversity committees, advise minority students, and generally carry the emotional and actual workload of campus (and off-campus) diversity work, it is recommended that leadership also monitor individual service load and work expectations to protect these academics from being overloaded. It is also recommended that minority academics be allowed to say no to service requirements without repercussions to their quest for tenure or promotion.¹⁸

Other parts of the process, including who is allowed to vote during personnel deliberations, should be analysed, since there tend to be lower numbers of higher-ranking underrepresented minority members of the academy and thus potentially not a diverse set of perspectives with decision-making input in the review, tenure, and promotion process.

Promotion/Tenure Best Practices

- Establish more **inclusive standards** for evaluating academics' performance in promotion/tenure reviews
- Define and provide **formal promotion support path** for new academics, including goals, mentoring, individual professional development plans and grants
- Include underrepresented minority academics in **policy-/decision-making**
- Develop institutional/departmental/l/ campus-wide **culture and policies that value different personal and research cultures equally**
- Provide **training** on underrepresented minority academics' issues and bias
- **Share responsibility for diversity and diversity teaching** equally with White academics
- **Critically scrutinize** academics' evaluations for veiled biases

Using Data and Documentation to Drive Success

Data is critical in fostering institutional change because it creates accountability and transparency. Careful documentation of academics' work towards and within the promotion and tenure process also enables more fair and equitable treatment—and thus improves the chances of retaining diverse members of the academy.

Measuring Success

Ongoing data collection, beginning at the academic staff vacancy search stage, can ensure higher education institutions are meeting stated diversity and inclusion initiatives. For example, by monitoring demographic data of the applicant pool, search chairs and committees can proactively work to ensure that there is a diverse applicant pool, and if not, use other strategies to widen the search and attract candidates of different backgrounds. (We further discussed such strategies in Interfolio's **Modern Faculty Recruitment Playbook**.)

¹⁸ Baez (2000) Race-related service and faculty of color: Conceptualizing critical agency in academe. *Higher Education* 39 363-391.

What data related to equity, diversity, and inclusion an institution can collect and thus use may depend on national cultural, political, and legal contexts. Most systems across Europe only collect very partial data at national level on a limited number of relevant characteristics.¹⁹ Generally, lack of data collection further challenges improvement, achievement, and measurement of diversity efforts. Effectively furthering diverse academic bodies will benefit greatly from the collection of demographic data. The lack of demographic information may explain why many institutions are not confident enough to act based on the data they have.²⁰

Data provides useful information about the demographic breakdown of levels and roles of academics as well as rates of career progression. With information comes the power to analyse trends, successes, and failures related to diversity aims. Data on academics can also include the demographic information of those who are transitioning into leadership roles.

Analysing data related to members of the academy will provide extremely valuable insight into equity in promotion, tenure, and income by demographic groups. Dr. Boston says the data that outlines inequities will help administrators and others to extrapolate important information about the campus climate and how people may be feeling about disparities; their feelings about the work environment and campus climate often account for their reasons for leaving.

“Don’t insult the talent. . . . We need to feel valued. It seems like it’s heavy on one side, why are there more men, white folks in these roles? Why is there only one endowed chair that has ever had a person of colour in it? It tells us how we are valued, integrated, celebrated in our campuses,” she said.

Harnessing Information to Improve Diversity Goal Results in Review and Promotion

- Collect data related to **tracking underrepresented minority hiring and retention**
- Collect **qualitative data** from academics who leave (through exit interviews) and those who stay (through annual reviews)
- Provide an **electronic repository to store all RPT activity data** and tag it for diversity-related goals and activities
- **Compare diversity** of academics against diversity of student body and also against local and national diversity statistics to enable advocacy for more diversity
- Conduct **cultural audits** to examine campus climate and develop more inclusive campus environments

¹⁹ Anna-Lena Claeys-Kulik, Thomas Ekman Jørgensen, Henriette Stöbe. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions. Results from the INVITED project. European University Association, November 2019 https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/web_diversity%20equity%20and%20inclusion%20in%20european%20higher%20education%20institutions.pdf.

²⁰ “The state of equity, diversity and inclusion in Europe: From good intentions to lasting change,” Workday, 2021.

“ When you think about how faculty are feeling, why there are certain disparities among faculty who may have come in around the same time, it’s important to look at who has been chairing the department for the last five years, who has been the director of a centre, who are the individuals in leadership roles making decisions. There needs to be a certain level of diversity and inclusion in the area of leadership because that will inform what a search committee will look like, what will happen with an endowed chair. ”

Genyne H. Boston

Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs and Academic Initiatives, Florida A&M

When members of the academy observe equitable reward structures and a positive work environment, they convey higher levels of organisational commitment, which in turn fortifies their intent to stay.²¹

Creating a Record

To make sure the full set of information on each candidate for review and promotion is available to evaluators, a dossier of both the work the candidate has done leading up to the review and all actions taken as part of the review is critical.

As discussed above, underrepresented academics often shoulder a heavy load of service work, based on expectations and interest in their helping with institutional or other diversity initiatives and student advising. A transparent, accurate, and current source of information housed within a common information system that details all of academics’ activities at any given time provides an easy way for leadership to more fairly evaluate an academic’s workload.

The Faculty Information System also can be used as a repository of artifacts that can tag equity, diversity, and inclusion activities as part of the review, promotion, and tenure processes (as applicable) to include criteria based on institutional and departmental diversity plan goals.

²¹ Daly, C., & Dee, J. (2006). Greener pastures: Faculty turnover intent in urban public universities. *Journal of Higher Education*, 77(5), 776-803; Lindholm, J. (2003). Perceived organizational fit: Nurturing the minds, hearts, and personal ambitions of university faculty. *Review of Higher Education*, 27(1), 125-149.

Individualised Promotion Support for New Faculty

To increase the promotion success of new minority academics, experts recommend providing a formalised promotion support path that defines individualised pathways that establish goals, mentoring, clear guidance, and evaluations. The idea is to make the process clear so that academics can plan their goals and requirements within an approved framework so that the future evaluation of their performance is more just.²²

It is easier to meet objective, well-defined goals than subjective ones, obviously, and the more straightforward the process, the more likely it will be equitable and support the goal of retention of academics. Setting up an unambiguous pathway towards tenure or promotion also allows documentation of performance for the individualised plans, which creates a paper trail that can also be used to ensure more fair-mindedness in the review process.

“ We realise that our academic staff are our most important resource. As such, we have been proactively assessing how we can support all academics to develop and progress at our institution. Our partnership with Interfolio allows us to evidence the important contributions of our academics over the entire staff lifecycle, allowing a more accessible, customised and equitable promotion process for all our staff, irrespective of academic discipline, job role, or professional focus. ”

Marilyn Capper

Director, Academic Development and Workforce Transformation, RMIT University

If individualised plans are created for academics on their track to promotion or tenure, the full set of information—the plan itself, the academic committee sign off at milestones, and the work supporting the plan—should also be housed in a candidate-specific record. This will bring more transparency and accuracy to the process, while by design encouraging evaluators to consciously work against biases when it comes time for review.

During the review, full documentation of each action by review committee members taken is imperative to maintain and promote a fair and equitable assessment of each candidate. With full documentation, reviewers can better objectively assess a candidate for promotion or tenure, and non-reviewers can use the information to audit decisions should they be deemed unfair or biased in any way. Documenting all review actions also enables a consistent process (based on consistent actions) taken for each candidate.

²² Kelly & Winkle-Wagner.

Tracking Retention

Tracking retention data allows institutions to compare how long minority employees stay at their university as opposed to their majority counterparts. Collecting accurate and timely retention data enables identification of weaknesses in retaining certain demographic groups and assess how well institutions are meeting established diversity goals. The collected data will highlight the job groups or departments that experience the most difficult ability to retain certain minority groups. Institutions can harness this information to focus their efforts on addressing these weaknesses to decrease attrition.

To promote and retain a broader, more diverse set of academics and leaders, Dr. Pichichero recommends listening to people more, building coalitions across administration and academics, and being “very creative in new training, new teachings, new approaches together” to work against the history of white supremacy and exploitation of minoritised groups in higher education.

Additionally, documenting the reasons people leave through structured and thorough exit interviews will provide useful information that can be used to revisit and/or revise retention efforts. When institutions of higher education see high turnover in certain departments, of certain demographic groups, or other trends, there are typically underlying reasons and trends that exit interviews can uncover. Subsequently understanding why academics stay in their positions through annual reviews will contribute to a clearer picture of the institutional or departmental climate and how it affects underrepresented minority and other academics, as well as overall diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

Data that shows the breakdown of members of the academy as well as promotion and hiring records creates accountability. “With Interfolio, we created a digital form that collects diversity data, which then allows us to easily pull a diversity report,” said Siân Smith, Assistant Director Research and Faculty Office of the London Business School. Smith says what once was a major effort of reviewing CVs or bios one by one is now a simple “click of a button,” making many activities much easier.

The power of data at one’s fingertips enables the dismantling of institutional and academic norms to remove bias in the review, promotion, and tenure process by infusing rigor, structure, and efficiency to necessary tasks at the institutional, departmental, committee, and academic levels. To show dedication to diversity and inclusivity, institutions should vigorously implement the practices recommended here to drive culture and policy changes that mandate fair and equitable treatment of academics by requiring inclusivity and reducing bias.

About Interfolio

Trusted by more than 500 universities across 20 countries, Interfolio's innovative Faculty Information System enables academic leaders to achieve strategic success and drive institutional impact.

The most comprehensive platform of its kind, the Interfolio Faculty Information System streamlines processes for faculty hiring and recruitment, academic appointments and timelines, activity data reporting, and reviews and promotions.

For more information about Interfolio's Faculty Information System, contact us at elsevier.com/products/interfolio/contact-us.