10 STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING FACULTY OF COLOR

Although U-M has made progress in hiring faculty who are Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), in recent years these faculty, especially those from underrepresented, racially minoritized backgrounds, have chosen to leave the university at a greater rate than white faculty. Here we offer 10 strategies for retaining BIPOC faculty.

1 Understand the nature of challenges that may lead to BIPOC faculty leaving

From focus groups, interviews, and climate studies, ADVANCE has identified five primary challenges and concerns for BIPOC faculty: invisible and overwhelming levels of service; lack of leadership opportunities that resonate with career goals; structural inequalities; family needs (e.g., for partners and children); and poor departmental climates. Addressing these may help retain faculty.

2 Work to create pre-emptive "conditions" that support retention

Both national data and U-M data suggest that once faculty members have an outside offer, it's often too late to retain them. They have lessened their commitment to the institution during the process of interviewing and imagining themselves elsewhere. Instead, consider pre-emptive retention—efforts that begin at the start of the faculty member's employment and continue during their tenure—as the optimal approach to retaining BIPOC faculty members.

3 Get to know each faculty member as an individual

To help faculty thrive here, it's important to promote their work and create opportunities for them. Recognize that there is no single path traveled, and no common background, among faculty. Motivations, interests, career plans, and career needs differ, and can evolve over the course of time at U-M.

4 Appreciate the full range of scholarly work

BIPOC faculty may work in areas outside the traditional center of a given discipline and may be devalued for doing so. Leaders should educate themselves and their colleagues about new areas of scholarly and creative work. Recognize that gatekeeping occurs when devalued types of scholarly work are largely being done by faculty from marginalized groups. Broaden the ways to identify merit to include, for example, impact on policy, practice, and communities.

5 Broaden assessments of teaching quality

Be aware of potential bias in student evaluations of teaching, especially when topics are related to race or diversity, equity, and inclusion. BIPOC faculty often experience challenges to their authority and expertise in the classroom, and they must employ additional strategies to mitigate them. Expand the evaluative lens to consider peer evaluations, pedagogical approaches, and course development, design, and innovation.

6 Increase service equity

BIPOC faculty often engage in so-called "invisible service," including meeting special requests (tasks outside of official responsibilities), care work (emotional support to students and colleagues), and cultural taxation (identity-based service expectations). Promote equity by increasing transparency with the service being done, providing clarity around what is expected, and committing to a fair distribution of service.

7 Create an inclusive climate

BIPOC faculty may have negative experiences related to unwritten rules and exclusionary practices that result from inequity in structures and routines, tokenism and heightened scrutiny that result from low compositional diversity, and negative interpersonal behaviors. Recognize and address the distinct climate experiences of BIPOC faculty that are a barrier to equity. Join efforts to support families at U-M, e.g., with partner hires and affordable daycare.
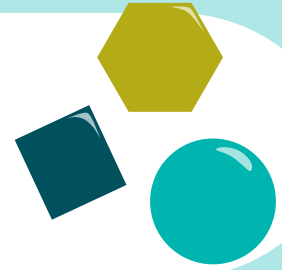
8 Change the narrative around excellence and diversity as being in conflict

Work to change the narrative that excellence can only be produced by scholars who hold certain identities, or that considering diversity undermines our capacity for excellence. Ensure that your unit's reward structure is consistent with the belief that diversity is important to achieving excellence. Make sure that the ways that you operationalize excellence are not in and of themselves structurally biased against certain groups, e.g. via an overreliance on metrics that inherently favor some areas of scholarship.

9 Be an ambassador for the research of BIPOC faculty in your department

Actively promote the faculty in your unit, e.g., by increasing awareness and recognition of their work, connecting them to resources, and creating networking or collaboration opportunities. Don't push BIPOC faculty to change their scholarship but rather make space for them to do the work they were hired to do. Promote equity in whose scholarship is routinely spotlighted (in newsletters, on department walls, and in development efforts).

10 Meet an outside offer with curiosity

Don't denigrate an outside offer; instead, use it to illuminate possibilities at U-M. From the outside offer you might learn about something important to the faculty member that you weren't aware of (leadership opportunities, entrée into critical networks, access to communities, resources for research, etc.). Work to provide these at U-M.

References and Suggested resources for more reading

ADVANCE Reports

- U-M ADVANCE Program. (2018, October). Assessing the academic work environment for tenured/tenure-track faculty at the University of Michigan in 2012 and 2017: Gender, race, & discipline in department- and university-related climate. https://advance.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/ADVANCE-2017-CW-Survey-Report1-FULL.pdf

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Suggested readings

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- For additional resources see the STRIDE recommended readings webpage