

## [Stemming the Tide: Underrepresented Faculty Turnover](#)

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For roughly the past two decades, the percentage of African American faculty holding full-time faculty positions has hovered persistently between 5 and 6 percent. Taking into account the number of these faculty that teach at historically black colleges and universities, this percentage falls to just four percent, according to a 2008-2009 report in the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (JBHE). And a 2007 JBHE survey of 26 high-ranking institutions finds that the representation of black faculty at our most prestigious universities ranged from only 1.4 percent to 6.8 percent with Emory University, Columbia University, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill leading the way.

Comment [RF1]: [http://www.ibhe.com/features/55\\_blackfaculty.html](http://www.ibhe.com/features/55_blackfaculty.html)

What are the factors that have caused this flatline? We know with certainty that the most significant barriers are the hiring process, the tenure process, and attrition through the revolving door. None of these barriers are inconsequential. First, the hiring process. In the current polarized climate within the United States, we have seen considerable backlash against affirmative action and the rise of claims of reverse discrimination. In an allegedly post-racial society, recognition of the existence of discrimination has eroded. In fact, as Girardeau Spann points out, “the Obama presidency has served to embolden those who wish to deny claims of current racial injustice.” Hiring committees still ask about quotas, interpret affirmative action to mean hiring “less qualified” minorities, and refer to the lack of diversity in candidate pools as the reason for not selecting minority candidates. Minority candidates face additional hurdles in conforming to the dominant culture and norms of the hiring department and in overcoming the similarity-attraction paradigm that can persist in the hiring process.

Comment [RF2]: <http://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/facpub/824/>

Once hired, the perils of the tenure journey are comparable to the twists and turns of whitewater rafting, since structural, behavioral, and cultural factors that affect the decision-making process coalesce in a single administrative action that impacts a faculty member’s career trajectory. As Alvin Evans and I note in our book, *Are the Walls Really Down? Behavioral and Organizational Barriers to Faculty and Staff Diversity* (2007), the cultural environment of the academic department determines how underrepresented faculty are welcomed and supported, how power is shared, and how conflicts are resolved. Department chairs play a key role in influencing organizational outcomes and tenure committees may often be made up of predominantly male, majority group members. Lack of sponsorship, differential standards, and stereotypes can influence the faculty evaluation process.

Comment [RF3]: <http://www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0470176849.html>

And the third barrier—the revolving door—has been well documented, as in the landmark study of 28 colleges in California conducted by Moreno, Smith, Clayton-Pedersen, and Teraguchi (2004) which found that 58 percent of all new underrepresented minority hires were replacing similar faculty who had left the institution. Stereotyping, isolation, and marginalization still can pervade the day-to-day experiences of diverse faculty on our campuses. Pearl Stewart’s article in the July

Comment [RF4]: <http://www.aacu.org/irvin/div eval/documents/RevolvingDoorCDInsight.pdf>

issue of **Diverse Magazine** highlights a number of incidents of blatant racial intolerance affecting minority faculty members that have poisoned the collegial atmosphere of higher education.

**Comment [RF5]:** <http://diverseeducation.com/article/17227/>

What then can institutions of higher education do to promote a more welcoming and inclusive climate for minority faculty and create a sustainable talent proposition for higher education? In our recent book, *Diverse Administrators in Peril: The New Indentured Class in Higher Education* (2012) **Alvin Evans and I highlight key components** of building an architecture of inclusion that apply to both faculty and staff. These components include the design of formal processes to ensure equity and fairness, the creation of integrated conflict management systems, the preservation of due process and procedural rights, opportunities for coaching and mentoring, creation of institutional safety nets, support for professional development, and organization of support and affinity groups. We also emphasize the need for broader minority representation in leadership positions, since, for example, over 93 percent of Provost positions are held by majority group members.

**Comment [RF6]:** <http://www.amazon.com/Diverse-Administrators-Peril-Indentured-Viewpoints/dp/1594519641>

The Initiative for **Faculty Race and Diversity** undertaken at MIT in 2010 under the leadership of then-president Susan Hockfield represents one of the most definitive efforts to address and ameliorate the experiences of minority faculty. The Initiative provides structural, mentoring, and climate recommendations as well a concrete plan for institutional implementation and assessment. As Susan Hockfield explains:

**Comment [RF7]:** <http://web.mit.edu/provost/raceinitiative/report.pdf>

Creating a culture of inclusion is not an optional exercise; it is the indispensable precondition that enables us to capitalize on our diverse skills, perspectives and experiences, so that we can better advance the fundamental research and education mission.... A productively diverse community... will make us better at what we do: broader and deeper as thinkers; more effective as collaborators; more creative as teachers; and more understanding as colleagues and friends.

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