

QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY FACULTY AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Report #2

Mentoring and Voice in Decision-Making



Stanford University

Panel on Faculty Equity and Quality of Life

May 2014

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Mentoring and Voice in Decision-Making

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Panel on Faculty Equity and Quality of Life

Stanford University

May 2014

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Background and Overview of URM Faculty Interview Study

BACKGROUND

In 2001, following the MIT report on gender bias in science and engineering, Stanford University joined eight other leading universities in their initiatives on studying gender equity and sharing strategies for change. As part of that initiative, President John Hennessy and Provost John Etchemendy created the Provost's Advisory Committee on the Status of Women Faculty (PACSWF), which was renamed the Panel on Gender Equity and Quality of Life in 2004, and the Panel on Faculty Equity and Quality of Life in 2008. Over the past decade or so, the panel has conducted studies on faculty equity and satisfaction, recruitment, and retention, including the university's first Faculty Quality of Life Survey in 2003 and a focused analysis on race/ethnicity using data from that survey.¹

In 2007, President Hennessy and Provost Etchemendy reaffirmed the university's commitment to diversity, stating: "Stanford University seeks and promotes an academic environment for each faculty member that is collegial, intellectually stimulating and respectful of his or her contributions and accomplishments."²

In 2008, the Panel on Faculty Equity and Quality of Life (hereafter referred to as the panel) designed and administered Stanford's second Faculty Quality of Life Survey, to update its assessment of climate and equity issues. The survey found that the overall satisfaction with being a faculty member at Stanford was quite high, with 79% of the faculty reporting being satisfied with their jobs. The overall satisfaction levels of Stanford faculty were similar to, and in some cases higher than, our peers.³ In addition, the overall satisfaction levels

for Stanford faculty did not differ significantly by gender or race/ethnicity.

However, there were a number of ways in which faculty members experienced the Stanford academic environment differently. Specifically, the survey found that underrepresented minority (URM) faculty, compared to non-minority faculty, on average, perceived their colleagues and academic units to be significantly less supportive, reported a lower sense of social inclusion, and felt they had to work harder to be perceived as legitimate scholars. These differences were small, but they are important because perceived supportiveness of a faculty member's unit and colleagues were found, in the survey, to be a key predictor of satisfaction and intention to remain at Stanford.

The panel formed a Committee on Underrepresented Minority Faculty to design and conduct a follow-up interview study to further investigate URM faculty experiences at Stanford. The committee held two meetings with twenty faculty members at Stanford regarded as "thought leaders" within their respective URM communities to discuss ways to increase participation. These leaders concluded that to motivate participation, faculty would need to be convinced that university leaders would commit to effective follow-up.

In response to these leaders' suggestions, the Provost expressed his commitment to responding to the findings that would emerge from the interviews, and gladly agreed to invite faculty members to participate in the interview study. The panel obtained IRB approval in April 2010. Invitations to participate were sent by the Provost to the study population in various schools successively between August 2010 and March 2011. Interviews with a total of 52 URM faculty members (see section on sample characteristics) were conducted through April 2011.

¹ Available as PACSWF Report on <https://facultydevelopment.stanford.edu/data-reports/reports-publications>.

² Available at <https://facultydevelopment.stanford.edu/about-us/presidents-statement-diversity>.

³ *The Report on the Quality of Life of Stanford Faculty* was released in 2010, and is available at <https://facultydevelopment.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/documents/fqol-report-jan2010.pdf>.

The panel will release the findings in two reports in spring and fall quarters, 2013. In each report, the panel has taken steps to offer initial recommendations to the provost about how the university can improve the academic environment for URM faculty. Following each release, the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity and the panel will hold sessions with key stakeholders and decision-makers to discuss the findings and recommendations in each report. By releasing the reports sequentially, the panel hopes to stimulate ongoing institutional engagement leading to meaningful organizational change.

STUDY OVERVIEW

Research Questions

As a follow-up to the Quality of Life Survey in 2008, the goal of the interview study with URM faculty was to explore in greater depth individual experiences leading to the observed differences between URM and non-minority faculty, and thus shed light on the underlying issues that the statistical findings did not capture. Specifically, focusing on areas of the small, but significant, differences between URM and other faculty in the Quality of Life Survey findings, the interview study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Stanford URM faculty experience relationships with colleagues, collegiality, and/or isolation?
2. How do Stanford URM faculty experience university and unit practices, such as mentoring, voice in decision-making, and support from university and unit leadership, etc., that may contribute to a sense of recognition and collegiality, as well as general satisfaction?
3. How do racial/ethnic identities affect Stanford URM faculty experiences in the areas mentioned above? How do these experiences vary by gender and rank?

The Interview Method

Quantitative findings from the Quality of Life Survey provided general information about attitudes and perceptions. For the follow-up study of URM faculty, the panel chose to use in-depth interviews to present a richer portrait of URM faculty experiences in their own voices, and to reflect the nuances and complexities of faculty members' work-lives and relationships. The interview protocol was semi-structured, with the interview items focused on the research questions presented above.

In-depth interviews provide richer information about individual-level experiences not easily captured by aggregate numbers, however, there are also a few limitations of this method that guide our interpretation of the findings:

- Even though the study sought to recruit participants from each URM category and from each rank and gender, representativeness was not a goal — that is, we do not make generalizations about how widely some of the particular individual experiences described by participants are shared by faculty beyond the study sample. We do, however, ground our interpretations of the general patterns that emerged from the interview data in the larger context of prior survey findings as well as existing social science research on racial/ethnic identity processes in the workplace.
- As a follow-up to the prior Quality of Life survey findings, this qualitative study was designed to focus on URM faculty only, and the goal was neither to establish causal relationships between racial/ethnic background and quality of life, nor to produce comparative data between URM and non-minority faculty. However, since all faculty are members of the same campus community and the larger academic profession, we recognize that many of the issues revealed in this report are not unique to URM faculty; indeed, we expect that many Asian and white faculty will find much that is familiar in the accounts that follow.

- The present study is grounded in the previous Quality of Life survey findings that revealed systematic and significant differences in perceived levels of colleague and unit support between URM faculty and their non-minority peers at Stanford. Further, this report presents descriptions of the ways in which general difficulties, such as the isolation experienced by all new faculty members, can be magnified when a faculty member is part of an underrepresented group. Thus, while many of the phenomena this report describes may also affect majority faculty members, the findings suggest that the intersection of underrepresented identity status with other factors can render commonly experienced problems particularly acute for URM faculty.
- We are not aware of similar qualitative studies on URM faculty experiences at peer institutions. While the study cannot speak to the experiences of URM faculty at other institutions, the general patterns described in this report may be shared by URM faculty at other elite research universities. Even though the design of this study did not allow us to say what phenomena, if any, are unique to Stanford, existing social science research on race/ethnicity and gender do point to general mechanisms similar to those described in this report.

Sample Characteristics

For purposes of this study, “underrepresented minority” (URM) designation was considered in the context of U.S. academia as a whole, covering faculty from three major racial/ethnic minority groups identified in university records as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino/a, or Native American/Alaskan Native.⁴ This categorization did not include faculty whose race/ethnicity was not specified in university records,

⁴ In this report, we use the terms for race and ethnicity categories as they appear in the University’s faculty database. We use inclusive, broad categories (e.g., “Hispanic/Latino/a” instead of “Hispanic” or “Latino/a”) for two reasons. First, we do not know how each participant would prefer to be identified. Second, the broader categories assist in protecting participants’ confidentiality.

nor did it include faculty from racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Asians/Asian Americans) underrepresented in certain academic disciplines (for example, the humanities and social sciences), but not in others. While imperfect, the URM categorization was the best method available for identifying faculty of color from groups underrepresented in academia.

The population for the study included all URM Assistant, Associate and Full Professors at Stanford, in all categories — Tenure Line, Non-Tenure Line Research and Teaching, Medical Center Line, and Clinician Educator⁵ Line. The population was restricted to 119 URM faculty members who had been at Stanford for at least one academic year (appointment date of 9/1/2009 or before). In total, 52 interviews were conducted.⁶ Interview participants have the following demographic characteristics, and are representative of the URM population of the Stanford professoriate with respect to school, rank, and race/ethnicity:

- The participants included about equal numbers of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino/a faculty members, in addition to a small number of Native Americans/Alaskan Natives.⁷
- 32 participants are male (62%); 20 participants are female (38%).
- 15 participants are assistant professors at the time of interview (29%); 15 participants are associate professors (29%); and 22 participants are full professors (42%).
- All seven of Stanford’s schools were represented in the sample.

⁵ Clinician Educators (CE’s) are not part of the Professoriate as defined in the Faculty Handbook. However, as of October 15, 2010, CE’s comprise about 42% of what the School of Medicine characterizes as its faculty. Our participants included a handful of CE’s. In this report, we do not discuss issues particular to CE’s; however, we do include them in analyses where their experiences are illustrative of more general processes of recognition and collegiality.

⁶ The overall participation rate was 44%. The participation rate within each rank (assistant, associate, and full professors) and within each URM category was over 40%, respectively. Female faculty had a higher participation rate than male faculty (54% of women who were invited participated in an interview compared to 39% of the men who were invited). Participants’ times at Stanford range from one year to over 30 years.

⁷ The exact proportion of participants in each URM category is not listed to protect confidentiality of the small number of Native American/Alaskan Native participants.

- School of Medicine (SoM) faculty were 44% of the interview participants.⁸ Among SoM participants, over 60% were Medical Center Line (MCL) faculty, and a small number were Clinician Educators. Because a primary role of MCL faculty and CE's is clinical practice, their experiences with regard to recognition and collegiality are not necessarily comparable to University Tenure Line (UTL) faculty. In this report, we identify the responses of MCL and CE faculty when doing so would not compromise participants' confidentiality.

Study Procedures

Interviews

To ensure confidentiality, consultants hired specifically for this project conducted the interviews. Consultants were chosen who had extensive professional experience conducting personal interviews with URM populations. They were diverse in race/ethnicity and gender. None of the consultant interviewers were Stanford faculty members, but most had significant experience with the Stanford community. Recognizing the sensitivity of discussing race and ethnicity in a campus environment, participants were provided biographies and pictures of the interviewers, and offered the option of selecting their interviewer from among the consultants.

Informed consent was obtained before each interview. The interviews lasted from half an hour to an hour and half, with an average of about 45 minutes, and they were recorded and transcribed. The interview protocol (see Appendix A) was semi-structured, allowing interviewers to phrase questions in their own words, proceed through the questions in an order that fit the flow of the conversation, ask follow-up questions, and spend time on those topics most relevant to each interviewee.

⁸ This percentage was similar to that for the Stanford faculty overall: 44% of all professorial faculty on campus are in the School of Medicine.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using an inductive approach. A small sample of transcripts was read to generate a list of thematic codes. The coding scheme was applied to a second sample of transcripts, and then revised in an iterative process to include further refinement of codes and themes. Members of the panel read sub-samples of the transcripts, and provided feedback on the coding scheme.

Confidentiality

The following measures were taken to protect the confidentiality of the participants and the interview data:

- Prior to participation, participants were given a list of names of people who would have access to the transcripts. Only members of the Panel on Faculty Equity and Quality of Life, personnel in the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity, and research assistants had access to the transcripts.
- Interview recordings were transcribed and recordings erased. Paper copies of the interview transcripts were stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked office on campus, accessible only to panel members and approved research analysts while in the office.
- Participants were given an opportunity to review the draft report incorporating proposed quotes from their interviews before its release.

In presenting data and findings in the reports, we took the following steps to ensure that no identifying information about participants in the project would be released:

- No accounts, even if they speak directly to the research questions, were included in this report when the identity of the participant could not be sufficiently obscured given the details of the anecdotes.
- When quoting or citing examples from the interviews, we identify a participant's race/ethnicity, gender, rank, and/or school where it is both relevant and possible to do so without violating

confidentiality. Because there are very few URM faculty in the School of Education, School of Law, and the Graduate School of Business, references to faculty members in these schools are grouped under the term “Professional School.” Similarly, references to faculty in the School of Engineering, School of Earth Sciences, and faculty in the natural sciences division of the School of Humanities & Sciences are grouped under the term “Sciences and Engineering.” Because the School of Medicine has many more URM faculty than other schools, it is possible to identify a quote as coming from the School of Medicine more frequently than in the case of other schools (including those in the MCL).

- The term “academic unit” refers to a faculty member’s academic location. It is often an academic department, but it can also be a division in a large clinical department, or school. This report uses the term “unit” to protect confidentiality when using another term would risk identifying the participant.

- While there were Native American participants in the project, no quotes are attributed to Native American faculty members because the project team felt they would be identifiable by context, given the small number of Native American faculty members at Stanford (fewer than five at the time this study was conducted). Because of confidentiality commitments, some issues of particular concern to Native American faculty are not fully addressed in this report.

Overview of Report

The report that follows starts with an Executive Summary in which we present the key findings on two main themes: mentoring and voice in decision-making. Following the Executive Summary is a list of recommendations proposed by the panel based on these findings. A longer report in which we present detailed analyses on the two themes is available upon request.

Executive Summary

As a follow up to the 2008 Quality of Life Survey, the Panel on Faculty Equity and Quality of Life and the Office of Faculty Development and Diversity conducted the Interview Study of Underrepresented Minority (URM) Faculty at Stanford in 2010 to 2011. A summary of the key findings on two topics — recognition and collegiality — was released in Report #1.⁹ In this second report, we focus on two additional aspects of the URM faculty experience at Stanford: mentoring and having a voice in decision-making.

The results from the 2008 Quality of Life Survey show that compared to their white and Asian and Pacific Islander (API) peer groups, URM assistant professors reported lower satisfaction with mentoring, and felt that they received less adequate information about what it takes to succeed at Stanford. URM faculty members of all ranks also reported having less voice and influence than their white and API colleagues.¹⁰

In the follow-up interview study conducted in 2010-2011, we further explored the issues of mentoring and having a voice in the context of unit culture and practices. Our findings reveal both general processes that may apply to faculty of all racial/ethnic backgrounds, and specific challenges that URM faculty members face.

Key Findings on Mentoring

While some participants describe positive experiences with receiving mentoring, many more state that the mentoring they received in their unit has been

insufficient, too general, or not particularly useful. While many assistant professors express greater need for mentoring, there are also associate professors who express need for mentoring in specific areas such as general research and career development as they focus on the promotion to full professor. The following key findings, however, apply primarily to assistant professors:

1. Positive experiences with mentoring usually include two elements: emotional support (e.g., encouragement and validation) and instrumental support (e.g., specific advice about career development, feedback and sponsorship of research).
2. Inadequate mentoring is characterized as follows:
 - Formal mentoring, where a mentor is designated by the unit, is ineffective when meetings are sparse and advice and validation are given perfunctorily; it is effective when meetings are frequent and discussions are specific. Assistant professors especially appreciate and need clear goalposts with regard to tenure.
 - Mentoring can be insufficient for the same reason that faculty experience research isolation (as described in Report #1): Because faculty members in the unit often have different area specializations, they cannot give each other (especially junior faculty) specific substantive advice on research-related questions.
 - As a solution to inadequate mentoring within the home unit, faculty members sometimes find external mentors; these include informal mentors in other units or centers on campus and graduate school advisors.

⁹ *Quality of Life Survey Follow-Up Study of Underrepresented Minority Faculty Report #1: Recognition and Collegiality* was released in May 2013, and is available at https://facultydevelopment.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/documents/URM-Report1-exe-sum_0.pdf.

¹⁰ These results are based on respondents' answers to the following three statements in the survey, respectively: "I feel I have received adequate mentoring (informal and formal)"; "I feel I have received adequate information and feedback about what it takes to succeed as a faculty member"; and "I have a voice in the decision-making that affects the direction of my department/unit." Respondents were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed to those statements.

3. The particular challenges to mentoring that underrepresented minority faculty experience are three-fold:

- Study participants express the need for role models — someone from a similar background to look up to (but not necessarily someone to give advice and support). Many participants do not have URM or female role models in or outside their units due to the small size of the URM faculty at Stanford overall.
- Some URM participants feel frustrated by the lack of mentoring from non-minority colleagues, who appear to prefer or feel more comfortable mentoring those who are like themselves (in terms of gender and/or race and ethnicity).
- URM faculty members from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds express the importance of having mentors who can relate to their experiences. They also express a heightened need for clear goalposts for success at Stanford.

Key Findings on Voice in Decision-Making

The interview study results corroborate the finding from the previous study that having a voice in decision-making is highly correlated with rank. Most assistant professors who were interviewed feel they do not have much voice in decision-making due to their rank, with some exceptions discussed below; a majority of URM faculty at the associate and full professor ranks report positive experiences of having a voice in decision-making either because tenure provided security or because they hold leadership positions which provide greater opportunities for influence.

Our interviews reveal the following key mechanisms of enabling or limiting voice and influence:

1. The best unit practices that enable faculty across all ranks to have a voice in decision-making include: 1) an effective and democratic unit leader; 2) open, inclusive faculty meetings; and 3) serving on committees. Assistant professors benefit especially from explicit encouragement and inclusive acts from the leadership and senior faculty in their units.
2. Informal decision-making that happens outside of faculty or committee meetings is a common practice and benefits those who are connected to decision-makers, but this practice also disadvantages those who do not have such connections. Research isolation and geographic isolation contribute to the lack of connection from the relevant decision-making networks.
3. Underrepresented minority faculty members feel empowered by serving on faculty search committees, but they can also feel frustrated for a number of reasons:
 - Often they are the solo champions of minority candidates.
 - They have to be strategic and cautious when voicing their opinions about minority candidates to avoid appearing “self-serving”.
 - They may feel that they are being called out or scrutinized because of their racial and ethnic identity when other faculty members make insensitive comments during discussions about minority candidates and diversity.

Recommendations from the Panel on Faculty Equity and Quality of Life

Based on these findings on mentoring and voice in decision-making, the Panel on Faculty Equity and Quality of Life offers additional recommendations to the provost about how the university can improve the academic environment for URM faculty.

Goal #1: Increase the Number of URM Faculty.

We reiterate this goal stated in Report #1 because of its importance to the university. In addition to reducing isolation, a larger URM faculty can broaden the pool of role models and mentors who can better relate to the backgrounds of the URM faculty. It can also provide a larger pool of URM faculty members to serve on search committees, which may alleviate the burden they sometimes feel as the solo champions of minority candidates.

For recommended actions, we refer to those stated in Report #1, pp. 10-11.¹¹

Goal #2: Improve Mentoring Programs.

Many of the issues concerning mentoring raised by our URM faculty participants speak to the need to: 1) facilitate better matching between mentors and mentees in terms of areas of expertise and/or background; 2) make mentoring an important service task such that mentors will engage substantively with mentees rather than performing routine check-ins without concrete instrumental support; and 3) facilitate peer and informal mentoring.

Recommended Actions:

- 1) Formal mentoring should be regarded as more important service than it currently is. Mentoring activities should be formally evaluated and

rewarded. Schools and departments should develop and implement guidelines for mentoring that are appropriate for their units.

- 2) In units where formal mentoring is available, encourage the mentor to be the point person for assessing the mentee's needs and referring him/her to the appropriate resources available on campus. Mentors should be compensated in some way to signal the importance of this role.
- 3) Make available a list of resources for faculty development, such that assistant professors do not expect their single designated formal mentors to meet all of their mentoring needs.
- 4) Create or facilitate interdisciplinary platforms for URM faculty members of all ranks to connect over career development and to find role models outside of their own units.
- 5) Facilitate peer mentoring and informal cross-disciplinary mentoring by building a "mentor database" where recently tenured faculty members and senior faculty members could sign up to be available for mentoring.

Goal #3: Increase Faculty Participation in Unit Decision-Making.

Our findings from the interview study highlight the importance of unit leadership and practices in fostering equal participation by all faculty, especially junior faculty and underrepresented faculty. In addition, there needs to be a balance between formal and informal channels of decision-making within the unit. Thoughtful remedies are especially needed with regard to URM faculty's dilemma of feeling empowered on search committees but also feeling restrained when discussing diversity issues.

¹¹ *Quality of Life Survey Follow-Up Study of Underrepresented Minority Faculty Report #1: Recognition and Collegiality* was released in May 2013, and is available at https://facultydevelopment.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/documents/URM-Report1-exe-sum_0.pdf.

Recommended Actions:

- 1) Identify and appoint unit leaders who are democratic and attentive to faculty opinions; provide leadership training on how to run inclusive faculty meetings.
- 2) Promote open and inclusive faculty meetings. This may be an especially important platform for including junior and minority faculty in unit decision-making.
- 3) While shielding new assistant professors from heavy service work to protect their time for research and teaching, it is also important to involve them in unit decision-making early on so they do not feel excluded.

Goal #4: Sustain Dialogue and Self-Education on Diversity.

Our findings on mentoring and decision-making reveal and reiterate the challenges URM faculty face in an elite academic institution that strives for excellence through diversity, but has had a long history of underrepresentation of minority and women faculty. Many of the issues raised by URM participants in the interview study speak to the needs for the continuation and renewal of our understanding of diversity. What we learned from our participants' detailed accounts is that a large part of understanding diversity is to first recognize the various consequences of the lack of diversity on our faculty.

Recommended Actions:

- 1) Hold seminars for faculty and staff on diversity, inclusion and its benefits.
- 2) Include special topics on diversity in leadership development events for chairs and other campus leaders.
- 3) Include implicit bias training for faculty at the unit level with a focus on faculty and student evaluation.

