

Weissman School of Arts and Sciences - Baruch College Diversity Strategic Plan

The Weissman Diversity Strategic Planning Committee was convened in February of 2016 and charged with producing an actionable and measurable plan for improving recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty within WSAS. Using the existing Faculty Strategic Plan (AY 2014-15) and School of Public Affairs Diversity Strategic Plan as starting points, the committee met several times, both on its own and in conversation with faculty from numerous departments within WSAS. The committee's suggestions, which are drawn from these discussions, follow, but we also felt it crucial to say something at the outset about just how urgently such changes are needed. The faculty who attended our open forums spoke passionately, and very movingly, about how underserved—openly disrespected—they have felt at times by the administration and by fellow members of the faculty. There is a strong sense that while strategic plans like this one are often drafted with the best of intentions, they are very rarely implemented in any meaningful way, and the committee wants to highlight the frustration that this has caused within the Weissman community.

Baruch College's Weissman School of Arts and Sciences (WSAS), located at the heart of one of the greatest global cities on earth, is a place where students, staff, and faculty have the opportunity to work and to learn shoulder-to-shoulder with people from dramatically different racial, national and cultural backgrounds. We fall short on capitalizing on this unique mix of people to develop habits of inclusion, learning, and empathizing with diverse others. We must commit to recruiting, hiring, and retaining faculty and staff from underrepresented minority groups, especially African-Americans and Hispanics, to ensure that the faculty and staff represent the diversity of the city we serve. And we must ensure the integration of underrepresented minorities at all levels of WSAS, especially in visible leadership roles. By pursuing these goals we can create an environment where people from all backgrounds and outlooks can freely and frankly share ideas and knowledge, and voice diverging and conflicting perspectives as we all work together to create a better college.

We propose a number of strategies to foster these goals in three broad areas: recruitment, retention, and climate.

Strategies to Improve Recruitment of Diverse Faculty

- Increasing diversity in higher administration should be a priority. While the administration has been hiring from underrepresented groups, more needs to be done—especially with regards to gender diversity.
- When there are two equally qualified candidates and one of the candidates is from an URM group, and when the hiring of both candidates is not possible, the search committee should be urged to give priority to the URM candidate. This can be monitored through coordination with the college's Chief Diversity Officer, who has been and will keep urging this strategy at faculty meetings.
- There should be a diversity advocate in every departmental search committee in addition to the Equity Advocate already assigned to all faculty searches. This diversity advocate should preferably be a tenured professor.

- Creating postdoc positions for underrepresented minority candidates is a relatively easy-to-implement strategy that constitutes a speedier route to diversifying the faculty. However, it cannot be a part of the long-term approach to diversifying the faculty unless there is a commitment from the administration to eventually create permanent positions for outstanding candidates recruited in this fashion.
- Hiring more URM adjuncts is desirable, and this, too, constitutes a fast-track route to increasing diversity, especially for departments that currently lack representation from URM faculty. However, the limitations here are similar to those of hiring URM postdocs; the problem of full-time under-representation will persist unless there is a commitment from the administration to create permanent positions for outstanding adjuncts. There exist several adjunct URM faculty that have served WSAS departments with great distinction. Efforts should be made to provide such faculty with permanent positions.
- Members of the higher administration have to support the aforementioned concrete measures.

Strategies to Improve Retention of Diverse Faculty

- WSAS should introduce mentoring programs whereby a tenure-track faculty member may approach recently tenured faculty for advice and support. Such mentoring and support should be formally acknowledged.
- Networking is crucial for facilitating research. WSAS should create programs to foster publication, research, and grant application (possibly on the model of the Faculty Fellowships Publication Program).
- WSAS should entice faculty for positions of leadership regardless of gender, identity, sexual orientation, race, or ethnicity.
- URM faculty often find themselves shouldering a disproportionately heavy service burden owing to the desire to diversify committees. We must find ways to acknowledge the additional service burden placed on these faculty members. The combination of high course loads and high service burdens affects URM faculty negatively, adversely impacting their abilities to carry out their own research. Suggestions include course release as well as increasing the value of the service component when an associate professor is pursuing promotion to full professor.
- WSAS should work to ensure equality in salaries for faculty regardless of gender, identity, sexual orientation, race, or ethnicity when successfully approved for tenure or promotion.
- WSAS should coordinate periodic meetings between members of the higher administration and faculty of underrepresented minority groups, providing URM faculty with an opportunity to share their concerns directly with the administration. Doing so would not only facilitate communication between the two groups but also ameliorate the feelings of disregard reported by many of the minority faculty members who have spoken with this committee.
- When faculty leave the college, WSAS should conduct an exit interview to complement the one performed at the college level, in order to better assess retention and any particular issues related to URM faculty.

Strategies to Promote a Climate Welcoming of Diversity for Faculty

- Regular formal and informal meetings should be conducted with URM faculty to gather information about climate. Regular meetings with faculty that recently went through tenure, promotion, and/or successful grant awards might be especially beneficial for URM faculty.
- LGBT faculty needs should be included in the URM conversations.
- URM faculty should be informed that the Office of Diversity, Compliance and Equity Initiatives already has full time staff responsible for all discrimination complaints as well as monitoring the recruitment process for all faculty. WSAS should urge URM faculty to document and report to this office the evident obstacles and subtle micro-aggressions they may be experiencing.
- The Office of Diversity, Compliance and Equity Initiatives should get more involved in organizing workshops and facilitating discussions with URM faculty.
- WSAS should create more internal funding opportunities for scholarly research on issues affecting URM groups, such as gender, race and ethnicity.