

Subject Line: A call for efforts on BIPOC representation in the College of Science

To Dean Mary Galvin, Associate Provost Laura Carlson, and Provost Marie Lynn Miranda:

During this time of civil unrest around the nation, institutions of higher learning have a duty to confront the ways in which racism structures our own community. While we thank the University for statements against the overt violence against Black people and other persecuted groups, we implore our leadership to take action. **We, the undersigned graduate students and postdoctoral researchers from the College of Science, are writing to address past and current efforts towards the hiring, retention, and promotion of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) faculty.**

We are unsatisfied with the current representation of BIPOC scientists in our departments. Faculty representation is a direct signal of the attributes and traits of scientists valued by the University and, without it, both current and prospective trainees hear a message misaligned with an appreciation of diversity and inclusion. Thus, efforts to increase the representation of BIPOC faculty would have several beneficial effects on trainees and the broader student community. Diverse groups are more innovative and better at solving complex problems, thus, interacting with and being a part of diverse research units has direct benefits for the productivity and scientific development of trainees and students ([Phillips et al. 2014](#)). Further, as many students and postdoctoral researchers identify as BIPOC, our development as scientists improves when the group of faculty responsible for our training represents diverse backgrounds and is able to provide guidance regarding the challenges that BIPOC scholars face in academia ([Yehia et al. 2014](#)). Lastly, given that BIPOC faculty are disproportionately underrepresented across institutions, a University that actively fights against this [“leaky pipeline” phenomenon](#) could have positive, downstream effects on trainees pursuing academic careers.

Across all departments, the College of Science is composed of few BIPOC faculty with no departments meeting the representation of the general public population. **We note that statements of valuation of diverse faculty are incongruent with the reality of our departments, and that quantifiable action must be made in order to foster a College that truly champions diversity and retains BIPOC faculty.** For example, faced with a decline in Catholic representation across departments, the University implemented the [Mission Hiring Initiative](#), a program with defined goals and resources, to identify and recruit promising Catholic faculty members. The Mission Hiring Initiative demonstrates the ability of the University to take action when it sees value in doing so, and further highlights *a lack of effective action* on the part of representation for BIPOC and other minoritized groups.

In moving forward, we ask for a reassessment of the agnostic approach to race and identity when evaluating hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions. Previous research has highlighted that “typical measures of scientific achievement—NIH training, previous grants, publications, and citations—do not translate to the same level of application success across race and ethnic groups” ([Ginther et al. 2011](#), [Hoppe et al. 2019](#), [Hofstra et al. 2020](#)). Teaching evaluations are also shown to be systematically biased against women and faculty of color, an

effect that is especially compounded against women faculty of color ([Pittman 2010](#)). Lastly, BIPOC faculty are also more likely to engage in mentorship, departmental service, and community engagement activities focused on student development that are negatively weighted as “distractions” in terms of faculty productivity ([Griffin 2012](#)). Given this bias in grant funding and other traditional metrics of scientific success, systems which ignore race and identity *implicitly favor the majority*.

Finally, we acknowledge that the lack of representation of BIPOC faculty is a systemic problem, one that can only be addressed through evaluation of [the current hiring and tenure systems](#). Thus, we are calling for a **formal meeting with the Dean, Provosts, and graduate student and faculty representatives from all departments** to discuss the implementation of the following efforts to address representation of BIPOC faculty, to be held as soon as possible or at least by the end of September:

1. Development and implementation of additional funding initiatives and targeted hiring policies to increase representation of BIPOC faculty
2. Development and implementation of new policies for providing feedback and transparency in tenure and promotion decisions
3. A formal external evaluation of the tenure and promotion processes with a specific focus on the valuation of departmental service, mentoring, and teaching roles, and with a consideration of the ways membership in a minoritized group, especially for Black and Indigenous faculty, impacts service, mentoring, and teaching roles

Following the outcome of this meeting, we ask for a published action plan with stated quantifiable goals, policies, resources and a timeline for implementation that incorporates the next hiring cycles. We look forward to hearing from you and continuing this discussion.

Respectfully,

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