



COMMISSION_{ON}
DIVERSITY_{AND}
INCLUSION

Graduate Report

Submitted to:
Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton
Provost Holden Thorp

May 15, 2017

Recommendations for Graduate Student Diversity

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INTRODUCTION

Last year the Chancellor and Provost charged Washington University's Commission on Diversity & Inclusion with making recommendations to implement a 12-point action plan designed to make Washington University a more diverse and inclusive community. The Commission requested a working group explore and consider how to best implement a plan to help diversify the graduate and professional student body.¹ Because their needs are acute and often overlooked, the working group focused its efforts on graduate students in doctoral programs. However we believe that many of our recommendations will similarly benefit professional students and other graduate students. In consultation with the working group, the Commission on Diversity and Inclusion makes several recommendations.

As a research institution, part of Washington University's mission is to produce the next generation of outstanding researchers and educators. Our doctoral programs are a key part of this mission. They are a crucial part of the pipeline for researchers in academia, industry, government, and professional and non-profit sectors. Indeed, one of the prongs in the Board of Trustee's Plan for Excellence is to "develop world leadership in graduate and professional education and research."

Diversity is as important in graduate education as in all other parts of the University. In fact, it should be ranked among our top diversity priorities, as our doctoral programs produce the next generation of researchers and scholars for academia, government, and industry. These researchers in turn will shape the future, tackling and resolving the issues of the next generations. In

graduate education, diversity and inclusion are important in all of their forms. This includes, of course, training current doctoral students in order to deepen and broaden the research led by and subject matter taught by future faculty members. Equally importantly, it includes actual engagement between people from different backgrounds within the context of academic rigor. This is critical to producing the next generation of scholars who are nimble, inclusive thinkers and able to tackle problems we currently cannot even imagine.

Yet, there are few challenges in higher education as complex as graduate student diversity. Nationwide, and at Washington University, progress in this area lags behind strides made within the ranks of the undergraduate population. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, from 1976-2008 only 11% of

Hispanic, black, and Native American undergraduates enrolled in graduate programs compared to 17% of white undergraduates. Additionally, nationwide, from 1990-2013, blacks, Hispanics, and American Indian/Native Alaskan undergraduates accounted for 33% of all undergraduate enrollees compared with 24% of enrollees from these backgrounds in graduate programs.² At Washington University, in 2016, U.S. undergraduates from underrepresented minority backgrounds accounted for 16% of the total pool of day-school, degree-seeking undergraduates compared to 11% of graduate, degree-seeking students who identify from those same backgrounds. Similarly, diversity in evening and part-time undergraduate enrollment eclipsed graduate enrollment: 28% compared to 16%.³

There are many reasons why graduate recruitment and retention

¹ In the Report of the Steering Committee for Diversity and Inclusion, the action item was formulated as: "The university will commit increased financial resources to ensure that we recruit, admit, and support a diverse population of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students."

² National Center for Education Statistics: Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Minorities, (2010) https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010015/indicator6_24.asp; Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2016: Undergraduate and Graduate Enrollment (2016) <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016007.pdf>

³ Washington University Student Diversity Data (March 2017) <https://provost.wustl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Student-Diversity-Detail-thru-2017-D-UG-Eve-DS.pdf>
<https://provost.wustl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Student-Diversity-Detail-thru-2017-E-Danf-GP-Eve-DS.pdf>

disparities exist and are acute. First, the isolation and anxiety that many graduate students experience can be exacerbated for groups that are historically underrepresented in the academy broadly and in discrete disciplines. Second, the paucity of historically represented groups on the faculty can seed doubt about the feasibility of professional success. When underrepresented students encounter an absence of faculty or color or see women faculty members struggling against bias and harassment, they may shy away from academic careers. Cross cultural mentoring can also pose barriers, as faculty members and graduate students struggle to find common experiences. In addition, personal

and institutional financial constraints may have a disproportionate effect on students from underrepresented groups, especially those from low-income families. Fourth, psychosocial deterrents such as stereotype threat and imposter syndrome are well-documented. Fifth, Washington University may not have the “name recognition” in some communities that it has achieved in families and communities familiar with higher education. Finally, cultural and family needs, measures, and anticipations of professional/career success may not support the time needed to earn a doctorate degree.

Taken together, all of these factors contribute to lower rates of

recruitment, higher rates of attrition, and lesser conversion into research and academic positions among graduate students from underrepresented backgrounds. Importantly, this includes both underrepresented minorities and women, who remain drastically underrepresented in several academic fields.

Washington University should aspire to become a national leader in graduate student diversity, as we have in undergraduate diversity. Consistent, sustained commitment in the design and implementation of effective mechanisms will yield a diverse academic pipeline, and ultimately an academy, that mirrors the U.S. population and serves its needs.

In consultation with the working group, the Commission on Diversity and Inclusion makes the following recommendations:

- Create a standing committee for graduate student diversity;
- Share best practices across departments, divisions, and schools, including waiving application fees;
- Increase and set aside funding for diversity initiatives, including for graduate student affinity groups;
- Expand and strengthen Washington University's programs specifically aimed at recruiting and retaining graduate students;
- Collect and analyze data to support quantitative and qualitative assessment;
- Recruit graduate and professional students from Washington University's undergraduate diversity pipeline programs—e.g., Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, Rodriguez Scholars, Ervin Scholars;
- Recruit from minority-serving institutions and other institutions' Honors Colleges;
- Build departments and schools' capacity to recruit and retain diverse graduate and professional students;
- Host or join national events and efforts designed to promote diversity in the academy and research;
- Generate best practices for mentoring and supporting underrepresented minority and women graduate students;
- Consolidate diversity recruitment weekends across graduate departments and schools, when possible;
- Create new position of Graduate Diversity Recruiter.

These recommendations are intentionally unranked in an attempt to highlight the importance of adopting the entire slate, in order for change to be effected. Further clarification of each recommendation follows.

ELABORATION

Create a standing committee for graduate student diversity

This report is ambitious for graduate education at Washington University. Without sustained and continuing oversight on the issues raised above, there may not be the

institutional focus and follow-through necessary to achieve the University's stated goals for graduate education. We recommend the University create a standing committee to oversee implementation and also facilitate sharing best practices across departments, divisions, and schools; this is

elaborated in the following recommendation. The standing committee can also collaborate with the University's new Graduate Student Recruitment Group, which has been focusing on increasing diversity in graduate programs.

[Share best practices across departments, divisions and schools](#)

- By virtue of their disparate disciplines, different units often do things differently. By learning how recruitment, retention, and professional development proceed across departments and schools, successful methods can be shared and implemented; less effective ones can be strengthened or eliminated.
- Hurdles and barriers to entry should be reviewed and eliminated wherever possible. One innovation now used by a number of departments and schools is to waive the graduate application fee; others no longer require the GRE. Another example is Biomedical Engineering, which awards Chair's Doctoral Fellowships to "top up" regular stipends for doctoral students who "contribute to the diversity of BME doctoral education."

[Increase and allocate funding for diversity initiatives](#)

Without continuing, consistent funding from the University, most diversity and inclusion objectives cannot be achieved. The University must appropriate/fund-raise monies specifically for these objectives, which could include training for faculty; encouraging more schools and departments to create pre-doctoral/post-baccalaureate and 3-2 programs; and expanding the Chancellor's Fellowship Programs.

- Departments that demonstrate movement in the areas of recruitment and retention should be acknowledged and rewarded, e.g., with additional funding for programs as well as monies to support increased numbers of graduate students. Accountability can be tracked through data collection of applications, enrollment, retention, time to degree, and other metrics that the standing committee and others can recommend.
- We recommend "matching" faculty members' investment in designing and building pipeline programs with institutional resources. Our faculty's most precious resource is their time. When faculty members are willing to devote significant effort to pipeline design and implementation, the University should view that time as the scholar's most valuable investment and "match" it

with seed or other support funds.

- We also recommend that funds be earmarked to ensure adequate support for graduate student affinity groups. These groups are crucial in facilitating community building and support networks. Graduate students can suffer from social isolation, which can take a psychological toll; this is often exacerbated for students from underrepresented groups. Affinity groups build the personal and professional cohorts that can help students succeed. We also recommend empowering someone in either the Graduate School or Student Affairs with "deep advising" of graduate affinity groups. While graduate students have different needs from our undergraduate and professional school students, they have a strong need for "bridge" advising and mentorship that can ensure the ongoing viability and continuity of key affinity groups.

[Expand and strengthen Washington University's specific programs aimed at recruiting and retaining students](#)

- Washington University should systematically invest in high performing programs with demonstrated impact. At the same time, funds should be allocated for new programs that show innovation and promise.
- The most under-utilized route to increasing diversity at the graduate and professional student level is the Chancellor's Graduate Fellowship Program. This year (2017) the Chancellor's Graduate Fellowship program's admissions cycle yielded a dozen students in multiple academic units. Yet this is only a small fraction of the graduate program. With increased funding and a streamlined process⁴, the program could support many more graduate and professional students across a wide variety of schools and disciplines.
- Washington University recently created a Joint Post-baccalaureate Program (JPP) in Mathematics, Physics, and Earth & Planetary Sciences. The University should explore whether similar, parallel programs could be developed by other units.
- The University should explore partnering with national diversity pipeline programs. Examples include revitalizing and reviving STEM specific programs such as GEM and MARC, as well as potentially partnering with the McNair Scholars program and others that support the

⁴ To explore streamlining the application process, we recommend consulting with department chairs, Directors of Graduate Studies, current students, and regular participants in the program.

academic pipeline into social sciences, humanities, and professional schools.

- Existing Washington University summer research and pipeline programs should be reviewed for potential

enhancement and expansion. An ongoing challenge is funding for summer undergraduate research, especially in STEM fields (see Report #3, on Undergraduate Diversity).

COLLECT AND ANALYZE DATA

Washington University currently has many existing programs designed to recruit and retain graduate students. Our academic departments have been ambitious and innovative in designing new pipeline efforts, applying for support grants, and developing retention and development strategies. As recommended in Report #17, Washington University should systematically collect data on our diversity and inclusion efforts. We anticipate multiple uses for the data, including tracking participants in pipeline programs and also other rigorous programs and initiatives.

- Under the direction of Assistant Provost Rochelle Smith, the University is building a robust tool: STEM-TRACK, which will follow and analyze multiple STEM cohorts (from K-12 through the graduate level). Similar efforts in non-STEM disciplines should be developed. In addition, the Data Repository Report (see Report #17) includes recommendations for enhancing data collection for graduate students.
- To better understand effective recruitment, gather qualitative and quantitative data on which students choose to pursue graduate education at Washington University, and, equally importantly, why others do not. We note that our own undergraduates may provide a helpful, specific population. Although data collection may take some time to yield meaningful insights, eventually it will pay dividends. The Graduate School already performs various data analytics that can serve as a model.
- Survey departments and individual faculty members to understand level of faculty commitment to graduate diversity initiatives and how to motivate and enhance it. The success of graduate education rests in the hands of our faculty, and hence faculty buy-in to diversity in graduate education is crucial.

Recruit graduate and professional students from Washington University's undergraduate diversity pipeline program

Washington University has developed stellar undergraduate diversity programs, including the Ervin Scholars, Rodriguez

Scholars, Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship, and others. These programs recruit and support some of the best undergraduate students in the country and have become models for peer institutions. These programs could also serve as crucial components of the graduate pipeline.

- In some disciplines and fields, retaining the University's own undergraduates may be a best practice towards our diversity goals. We recommend identifying areas where this is the case, and ensuring that robust diversity pipeline efforts are in place, while also ensuring that our undergraduates are coached towards their own best options.
- Consider creating new and strengthening existing 3-2 programs for graduate masters programs and/or post-baccalaureate programs as routes to increase diversity.

Recruit from minority-serving institutions and other institutions' Honors Colleges

- HBCU's and other minority-serving institutions are natural places to recruit diverse graduate students, especially in STEM departments. We note that there is immense national competition for their top students, and accordingly Washington University will need to develop meaningful relationships with the parallel academic units and advisors at those institutions. The Meharry Summer Research Program in the Medical School serves as a model for developing a reciprocally beneficial academic partnership that can evolve into a recruitment pipeline.
- Identify and develop relationships with other universities' Honors Colleges that graduate diverse students who matriculate into competitive graduate programs. This could include hosting Honors College advisors, and undergraduate advisors at other key universities, on our campus. Again, the goal would be to cultivate relationships and encourage applications to Washington University graduate programs.

Build departments and schools' capacity to recruit and retain diverse graduate and professional students

Diversity and inclusion efforts in graduate education

begin with faculty members' commitment to the mission. Washington University should be systematically expanding our academic units' bandwidth and capacity to make our graduate programs more diverse. This includes creating opportunities for faculty members and admissions and student affairs staff to learn about recruitment, retention, and professional development of diverse graduate students

- Faculty Directors of Graduate Studies may be the logical point people for recruitment and retention efforts, but our faculty as a whole should be encouraged to join in this mission-critical work. Deans and department chairs should encourage their faculty to regularly reflect on recruitment efforts and strategies. Division level deans committed to these goals can assist the recruitment process as well, as has long been the case in Division of Biology & Biomedical Sciences.
- Establish regular seminars and workshops at which the Graduate School and other academic units strategize about diverse and inclusive recruitment and retention of graduate and professional students with their faculty members and other admissions and student affairs staff. A discussion of best practices in diverse and inclusive recruitment and retention is a critical component of such meetings.
- Invite faculty, staff, current students, and alumni to panel discussions featuring diverse current graduate and professional students and alumni. Focus on successful faculty mentoring and other pro-active practices within departments and schools that made a positive difference in the graduate/professional student trajectory. Include testimonials from alumni in a variety of careers to articulate how the graduate program prepared them for their careers.
- Offer graduate and professional student diversity recruitment and retention grants to departments and schools.

[Host or join national events and efforts designed to promote diversity in the academy and research](#)

Many professional societies now host regular national and/or regional events and conferences that either focus on or include as an important element diversifying the academic pipeline. In addition, there are many stand-alone organizations and associations that have had a significant impact on academic diversity, e.g., SACNAS (Society for the Advancement of Chicano and Native American Scientists).

Potential graduate students, and/or their advisors, often attend these events. Participating in such meetings boosts the University's visibility, establishes important connections with both students and advisors, and subsequently augments our recruitment efforts.

Hosting national events should also be explored. Name recognition and location can pose challenges in recruiting diverse graduate students to Washington University. And yet, as is the case with faculty members and undergraduates, potential graduate students who visit our campus respond well to our academic excellence and also our campus and location. An example of a recent effort is the Math Department's hosting The Math Alliance's annual conference for diverse graduate students in the Mathematical Sciences, Field of Dreams. We note that hosting this single conference yielded significant interest in our graduate programs and some successful applications and matriculations. Another successful effort was the department of Psychological and Brain Sciences co-sponsoring the Diversity in Science Symposium this spring.

- Washington University should regularly survey these opportunities and intentionally participate in conferences and meetings aligned with our diversity and inclusion goals for graduate education. In practice, this will mean ensuring funding is available for Directors of Graduate Studies and other faculty members to attend these events.
- In addition, we should consider earmarking funds for "exploratory" participation, to determine if a specific meeting or conference is a potential good fit for an academic program.
- Identify and fund appropriate opportunities to host key national or regional conferences or events.

[Generate best practices for mentoring and supporting students](#)

Mentoring is a proven factor in graduate student success. Yet graduate student mentoring often proceeds in an "organic" way, that leaves any individual student's chances of success uncertain. This "risk" can be exacerbated for graduate students from underrepresented backgrounds, who may not enter graduate programs through paths and routes that are unfamiliar to faculty members. Many faculty members view mentoring as crucial, and yet they are not given consistent tools for successful mentoring, especially cross-culturally. Given the importance of mentoring, and our faculty

members' desire to see their students succeed academically and personally, we recommend the University explore how to design and implement mentoring best practices across disciplines and departments. Doing so will benefit all of our graduate students.

- Explore how to “embed” mentoring and support programs into the graduate student experience. This can include toolkits for faculty members; peer-to-peer mentoring; mentoring from those outside of the student’s department.
- Explore how the University’s administration and staff can provide mentoring and professional development support, as well. Health services (physical and mental) and the disability office should engage and support graduate students, as well as undergraduates.
- Administer surveys, including entrance and exit surveys and interviews, to assist in assessing the climate and needs for graduate students.

Consolidate diversity recruitment weekends, wherever possible

Some of the University’s schools earmark specific weekends to recruit underrepresented candidates; coordinating such weekends would enable applicants to meet others and envision a personal and professional community, if that is important to them. The Chancellor’s Graduate Fellowship program provides a model, as applicants from a range of schools and departments meet each other during the finalist weekend.

Create new position of Graduate Diversity Recruiter

Washington University should be as ambitious in its goals for graduate student diversity as it is for undergraduate diversity. A key challenge for graduate student diversity and inclusion is that, because graduate student recruitment largely proceeds through the individual academic departments, it can be difficult to identify and leverage best practices for recruitment or to create a sense of community outside of the Chancellor’s and Olin Fellows programs. Accordingly, we recommend creating a new position of Graduate Diversity Recruiter (GDR).

The GDR would recruit diverse prospective graduate and professional students from partner universities, targeted conferences, and internal and external pipeline programs. The GDR would:

- work closely with faculty Directors of Graduate Studies and the new graduate diversity recruitment committee;
- provide academic departments with graduate recruitment kits designed to facilitate recruitment at conferences, etc.;
- create prospective graduate student recruitment videos, brochures, and a website featuring current diverse graduate student spotlights and successful alumni careers;
- create and supervise a graduate and professional student ambassador program comprised of current, successful, diverse graduate students interested in traveling to recruit prospective graduate and professional students.

CONCLUSION

We believe that by strategically expanding the University’s diversity initiatives and mentoring infrastructure; earmarking funding; strengthening

our data collection; hosting signature national events; instituting best practices; and designating a standing committee, Washington University will continue to achieve our vision for

a diverse and inclusive program of educating the best and most capable graduate students in the world.

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To view the full report click [here](#);
to view the Executive Summary of the report, click [here](#).