Postdoc Diversity: A Solution for Faculty Diversity

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Session Goals

• Provide a model for building community, particularly for minorities in the sciences
• Share journey and lessons learned in establishing the Minority Postdoc Alliance
• Discuss other innovative frameworks for building community among minority postdocs
• Discuss how postdocs are underutilized solutions to diversify faculty pools
Overview

• Introductions
• Why should we be concerned about diversity in Academia?
• Present community based model for building community at the graduate student level
• Introduce the Johns Hopkins Minority Postdoc Alliance
• Activity: Develop community programing at your institution
• Considering postdocs as a solution for diversity
• Q&A
Introductions

• Please introduce yourself and share
  • Institution/ Organization affiliation
  • Position/ Role

• What is one thing you hope to take away from this session?
Scientists and engineers working in Science and Engineering occupations, 2010

White men 51%
White women 18%
Asian men 13%
Asian women 5%
Black men 3%
Black women 2%
Hispanic men 4%
Hispanic women 2%
Other men 1%
Other women 1%

NOTE: Hispanic may be any race. Other includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and multiple race.
State of Diversity in Academia

Science and Engineering degrees earned by underrepresented minorities, 1991-2010

Percent

Bachelor's

Master's

Doctorate


NOTE: Data not available for 1999.

Women, Minorities, and persons with disabilities in Science and Engineering, 2013, NSF
www.nsf.gov/ statistics/wmpd
State of Diversity in Academia

Postdocs Diversity in Science and Engineering, 2008

- White (58%)
- Asian (34%)
- Hispanic (4%)
- African American (3%)
- Other (1%)

NSF, Characteristics of Doctoral Scientists and Engineers in the US, 2008
State of Diversity in Academia

URMs in Physics are representative of the Academic situation

Proportion of URM participation at each academic level decreases at each step
The Biomedical Scholars Association

-Founded by Jennifer R. Cohen, Ph.D.

-Student organization that provides social, academic and professional support to graduate students who identify as minorities within the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutes
Social Support: Building a Village

- Build Momentum
- Foster relationships & sense of belonging
- Groom Leadership
- Counterbalance isolation and self-doubt
- Hold each other accountable
Academic Support

Filling in a Gap

• Provides opportunities to practice/prepare in a supportive environment
• Builds confidence in research skills without the negative connotations
• Reframes challenges as environmental not lack of talent

Architecture of Participation

• How To Choose a Thesis Lab/Mentor
• How To Choose a Thesis Committee
• Pre-/Post-Oral preparation
• *Mock qualification exam
• Practice science talks
• *Milestone Celebration

*Signature program
Professional Support

**Filling a Gap**
- Provide alternative career pathways
- Network with potential employers
- Foster leadership in all sectors related to science

**Architecture of Participation**
- Diverse Careers In Science seminar series
- *James EK Hildreth Annual Lecture*
Leaving a Footprint: Milestone Celebration

- Formal recognition ceremony for student accomplishments
- Builds confidence and inspires continued success
Lessons Learned

• Institutional commitment needs to move beyond rhetoric into action
• Quality over quantity
  • engage a few and support well rather than dilute resources in order to accommodate the masses
• Timing and a team effort
• Initial appeal for free resources but people will stay for friendships
• Leadership must be flexible, reflect membership
• Consider gender bias and program diversity (e.g. Medicine, Public Health, Nursing) when planning events
Bottling Success

• Reflectively/retroactively developed a model for BSA
• Translating success into to a Model that will help build community in any context
The Minority Postdoc Alliance

• Inspiration to start a minority postdoc organization came from the NPA annual meeting in March 2012

• The Johns Hopkins Minority Postdoc Alliance was launched July 2012

• Provides professional development and social networking for minority postdoctoral fellows within the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutes
Model for Creating Postdoctoral Community

October 2011: Initial conversation with JHPDA

May 2012: discussed lack of minority community with Johns Hopkins Administration

July 2012: Kick-off BBQ to bring minority postdocs from across campus together to discuss what a minority postdoc alliance would look like.
  - Participants were asked to write out what they felt they were missing in postdoctoral training
  - Common gaps identified were: Community and Professional Development
Model for Creating Postdoctoral Community

**Defining/Discovering Purpose**

*July 2012:* Kickoff Barbeque helped identify our purpose for Community and Professional Development.

We then contacted all URM postdocs and sent a survey to get a better gauge of what people were interested in and what events members would participate in.

Professional Development and Networking were the highlighted in this survey.
Model for Creating Postdoctoral Community

Generating Momentum

August 2012: First MPA meeting, 7 postdocs

September 2012: Second MPA meeting, 13 postdocs

-Began to establish our core group of postdocs.

-Hosted a mixer with BSA to connect minorities at different stages of the academic pipeline. Goals: facilitate mentorship relationships, provide role models, encourage and support

-Beware of burnout!
Model for Creating Postdoctoral Community

Architecture of Participation

How can we create multiple ways for people to get involved with & support the community?
- Horizontal and vertical participation

- Identify university champions. Titles are important. Dr. Danny Teraguchi, Dr. Levi Watkins, Dr. Chiquita Collins

Family Mentoring Network
- Innovative approach to creating community using a family unit comprised of minorities who are in three stages of the academic pipeline.
Model for Creating Postdoctoral Community

What are ways for members to take ownership of their community organization?

What is the institutional value of this community?
- Recruiting tool for more minority postdocs

Signature programming
- Helps to develop your organization’s reputation
- Provides opportunities to advertise to a broader population and grow

MPA signature programming:
- BSA/MPA meet & gr(EAT)
- Family Mentoring Network
- Mock Interviews
- Off-campus Happy Hours
Small Group Activity

• Form small groups, complete the handout on building community

• 20 minute discussion

• 10 minute sharing responses/challenges to using the Model in your context
Context is Important When Creating Community

Grad Student
- Cohort-based pressures
- Full time student
- Success: completing classes, submitting papers, writing grants, graduating
- Clearer milestones to reach
- Feeling of no end in sight, indefinite timeline

Postdoc
- Inconsistent/unknown demographics
- More isolated
- Different stage in life, different focus
- Different expectations of success
- Shorter completion timeline
Other innovative frameworks for building community among minority postdocs

- List universities and their programs
- Example:
  - Minority Integration to Engineering and Sciences (MITES) at MIT [http://web.mit.edu/mites/](http://web.mit.edu/mites/)
  - Meyerhoff scholars program at UMBC [http://umbc.edu/meyerhoff/](http://umbc.edu/meyerhoff/)
Postdocs Are Underutilized Solutions to Diversify Faculty

• Unclear definition of what a Postdoctoral Fellow is

• Lack of commitment:
  • Institution
  • PI
  • Postdoc
Session Assessment

Index cards

• Please list 2-3 good points and 2-3 areas for improvement
• Share ideas on discussion papers in rear
Q&A

• Thank you for your participation, we welcome your feedback

Follow the MPA on Twitter: @Hopkins_Postdoc
Like us on Facebook at “The Johns Hopkins Minority Postdoc Alliance”