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Why Are There So Few Professors Of Color?

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Published Jul 23, 2019, 04:14am EDT, Updated Jul 23, 2019, 07:44am EDT

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A new study from the [Hispanic Journal of Law and Policy](#) found that there has been little growth in the number of college faculty members of color. The aforementioned study examined doctoral-status institutions between 2013 and 2017 and found that the number of Hispanic and Latino faculty members grew by less than 1% and the number of black faculty members grew by only one-tenth of a percent. The study reinforced the fact that there has been little change as far as ethno-racial diversity in higher education. One of the main problems with the lack of diversity among faculty is that students may not see themselves reflected in their professors, which can cause a number of issues and can impact student retention as well as enrollment rates. A lack of diversity among faculty as well as across the university could also lead to [incidents](#) like what happened at the University of Missouri in 2015. The events that occurred on the Columbia campus grabbed [headlines](#), with students creating a [list of demands](#), one of which being the need for more black faculty and staff on the campus. A group of tenure-track and tenured faculty of color at the University of Missouri at Columbia shared their experiences in a HuffPost [op-ed](#), where they highlighted some of the main barriers they faced while being at a predominantly white institution. One of the problems that was highlighted in the op-ed, was the lack of inclusion that racial and ethnic minorities feel. Many institutions focus

feel. [Tokenism](#) is something often experienced by faculty of color; it is not enough to have underrepresented groups in your workplace. If there is nothing being anything done to make these groups feel included and valued, they are not likely to stay at the institution.

[Dr. Eli Joseph](#) is a recent graduate and has served as a faculty member at several prominent universities in and around New York City. Joseph shared what needs to be done to create a sense of belonging for faculty members of color. “Provide certain coalitions for the underrepresented groups so that they may not feel alone, especially when it’s time for them to go up for tenure...having different organizations on campus, within different departments that caters towards the underrepresented groups...that can foster much more of an inclusive environment.”

[Some](#) may point to a pipeline problem as the reason there is not enough diverse faculty. There could be a lack of qualified racial and ethnic minorities who are applying to faculty roles, contributing to the lack of diversity. When addressing the pipeline issue, it’s necessary to consider the percentage of doctoral graduates of color. According to the [National Science Foundation](#), the total number of doctorate recipients from U.S. colleges and universities in 2015 was 55,006. Of those recipients, 3,423 were Hispanic or Latino, 13,846 were Asian, 2,781 were black or African American, and 140 were American Indian or Alaska Natives. While it is true that there is a higher number of white Americans who received their doctorate degrees, compared to racial and ethnic minorities, there was still a significant amount of doctorate graduates of color. Dr. Marybeth Gasman shared her thoughts on the lack of diversity in higher education in an [op-ed](#) in The Hechinger Report. Gasman indicated that “the reason we don’t have more faculty of color among college faculty is that we don’t want them.” She suggested that universities and colleges that claim they don’t have enough diverse candidates applying for faculty positions should create their own diverse pipeline. Providing additional encouragement, mentorship relationships and support for students of color can help entice them to pursue faculty careers in the field.

[Research](#) demonstrates that some doctoral students of color experience racism and racial trauma, and it can be theorized that a likely consequence of these experiences may be the desire to pursue a career outside of higher education. One way that many applicants of color get weeded out, Gasman asserts, is by using the word “quality” to dismiss qualified candidates from the talent pool. The pipeline myth may be used to conceal the real reasons behind the lack of diversity in higher education, [research](#) suggests. The criteria

committees tend to focus on those who attend a certain school or institution...you may not check all the boxes that the search committee is looking for based on certain criteria like

the school you attended, the person that you studied under, your doctoral pedigree, or who was your advisor, so those play a role.” Re-evaluating the criteria used to assess candidates is absolutely necessary to address this pipeline issue and foster more diversity in the field.

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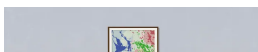


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College faculty have become more racially and ethnically diverse, but remain far less so than students

BY [LESLIE DAVIS](#) AND [RICHARD FRY](#)

Donte Small turns in his final exam to his professor, Jill Zimmerman, at Goucher College in Towson, Maryland. (Marvin Joseph/The Washington Post via Getty Images)

Racial and ethnic diversity has increased among college faculty in the United States over the past two decades, but faculty are still much more likely than students to be white.

In fall 2017, about three-quarters of postsecondary faculty members in the U.S. were white (76%), compared with 55% of undergraduates, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (NCES). In contrast, around a quarter of postsecondary faculty were *nonwhite* (24%), versus 45% of students. (Postsecondary faculty includes all faculty across institutions that grant associate degrees and higher.)

This imbalance extends to specific racial and ethnic groups. For example, in fall 2017, only 5% of faculty members were Hispanic, compared with 20% of undergraduates. Black faculty were also underrepresented compared with the black undergraduate population (6% vs. 14%). Conversely, Asian faculty made up a slightly higher portion of their peers compared with Asian students (11% vs. 7%).

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The share of nonwhite undergraduate students increased by 17 percentage points (from 28% to 45%) between fall 1997 and fall 2017, due partly to a rapidly rising share of Hispanic students. The Hispanic share of undergraduates more than doubled during this span, from 9% in 1997 to 20% in 2017.

By comparison, the share of full-time faculty members who were nonwhite grew by 10 percentage points over that period, from 14% vs. 24%.

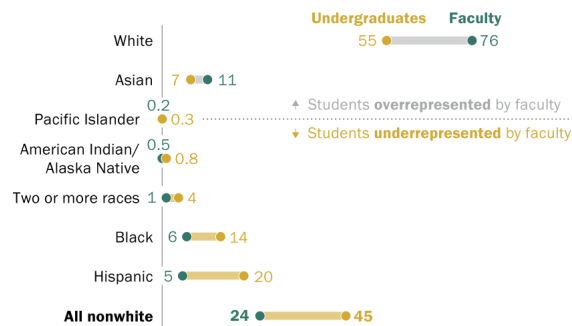
In sharp contrast with the growing share of Hispanic students, the share of *faculty* who were Hispanic remained fairly flat, increasing from 3% in fall 1997 to 5% in fall 2017. Similarly, black faculty made up only 5% of the total in 1997 and 6% in 2017.

Overall, a larger share of assistant professors (junior faculty without tenure) were nonwhite in fall 2017, compared with fully tenured professors (27% vs. 19%). But junior faculty haven't diversified much faster than their senior, fully tenured counterparts. Between fall 1997 and fall 2017, the share of nonwhite assistant professors grew by 10 percentage points, compared with 8 points for professors.

Researchers have found that [racial, ethnic and gender](#) gaps between college students and faculty exist across academic disciplines. (NCES last reported data on faculty race and ethnicity by academic discipline in 2003.) [A 2017 study](#), for instance, showed that minority faculty members are especially underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) disciplines in the nation's top 40 public universities.

U.S. college students are twice as likely as faculty to be black, four times as likely to be Hispanic

% of undergraduates and postsecondary faculty by race and ethnicity, fall 2017



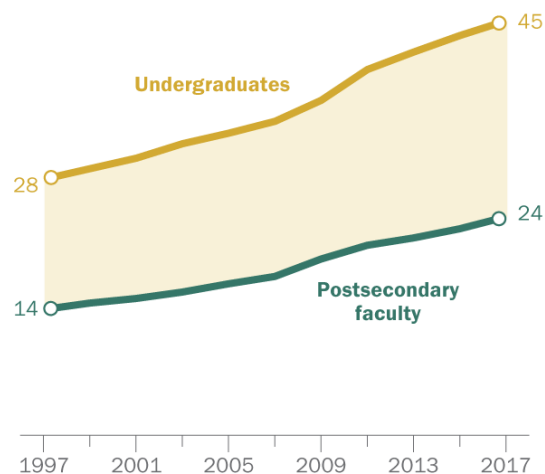
Note: "Nonwhite" includes blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians or Alaska Natives, and those of two or more races. Those categorized as "non-resident alien" and "race/ethnicity unknown" are not included in this analysis, so shares may not total to 100%.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

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U.S. college students still more likely than faculty to be racial or ethnic minorities

% of undergraduates and postsecondary faculty who are nonwhite



Note: "Nonwhite" includes blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians or Alaska Natives, and those of two or more races. Those categorized as "non-resident alien" and "race/ethnicity unknown" are not included in this analysis.

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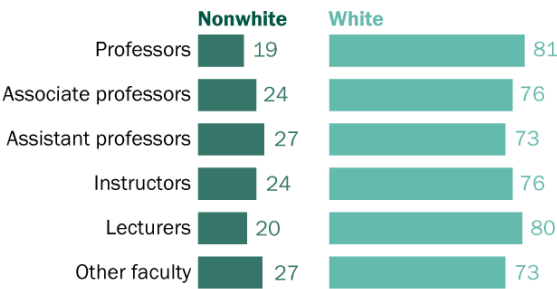
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Other research has found that minority students who have educators of the same race or ethnicity are more likely to look to those teachers as [role models](#) and to report greater effort in school and higher college goals. A study looking at community college classrooms found that performance gaps of minority students can close [by 20% to 50%](#) if faculty more closely resemble students.

The racial and ethnic imbalance in higher education is similar to the trend in K-12 public schools in the U.S., where teachers are [far less racially and ethnically diverse](#) than their students. In elementary and secondary schools, one-in-five teachers are nonwhite, compared with around half (51%) of public school students.

Nonwhites make up a comparatively small share of U.S. college faculty

% of postsecondary faculty who are ___, by academic rank, fall 2017



Note: "Nonwhite" includes blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians or Alaska Natives, and those of two or more races. Those categorized as "non-resident alien" and "race/ethnicity unknown" are not included in this analysis. Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

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Gender Disparity in Authorship Existent in Academia

Author

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In academic journals, there have been several ethical issues with respect to authorship. This is notably the case with articles having multiple authors. For example, a study done by the *International Journal of Nanomedicine* showed that 33% of authors admitted including scholars in their study who [did not deserve authorship credit](#).

Inequality seen in female authorship is another issue affecting academia. This is connected to [underrepresentation of women](#) in the scientific and academic communities. This gender disparity in authorship can have negative consequences, including a lack of recognition for the work done by female scientists. In fact, it might have led to the decrease in female students entering the scientific community.

Gender Inequality in the Academic Community

Notable women are now heads of organizations that include the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). However, despite these signs of progress, [gender disparity still exists](#). In fact, a report done by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, shows that no real progress was made since 2012. Computer-related studies highlighted similar example. The percentage of women studying this subject has fallen from 32 percent in 2012 to 18 percent in 2018. This is despite the fact that [women are performing at a higher level](#) than men in these subjects.

Several studies on gender inequality have revealed that disparities exist in gender contributions in scientific publications. A study has also been done regarding [gender disparity in peer review](#). These studies have also shown significantly higher publication rates for males in the sciences compared to women in the same field. So, this gender inequality has spread all across the academic community, beyond authorship and publishing.

What the Studies on Gender Inequality Reveal

The studies present an in-depth look at authorship and gender inequality. The studies analyze gender representation for articles with two or more authors and revealed three important points:

- Significantly, the most common gender combination are male-male author combinations or combinations where only males are included.
- *Male authors disproportionately listed in the first author position.* The study shows that 56.38% of published articles have the male author listed first and 43.62% had the female author listed first.
- Inequality in credit sharing [might be a contributing factor](#) to gender disparities in recognition, funding, career advancement, and academic positions.

The results suggest a need for more clarity and transparency in stating authorship when more than one author shares equal credit.

Overcoming Gender Disparity

Has academia made any progress? That is debatable. The move towards gender equality has been slow or has even stalled. Fortunately, however, the increasing number of studies done on this topic have resulted in an increase in awareness and proposed solutions.

Here are some important measures:

- University officials [can focus on recruiting women](#) in the sciences, creating mentoring programs for career advancement, and simultaneously promoting research done by women.

- Female scholars can form academic groups for women studying in the sciences. Examples include the Women in Science at Yale and the Boston University Women in Economics.
- Academic journals can increase monitoring of ethical and gender issues in authorship.
- Campuses [can increase awareness and promotion](#) of campaigns like the Women in Science and Engineering campaign (WISE). WISE promotes gender equality in the STEM fields.

What are your experiences with gender disparity in academia? If you have faced these issues, how have you overcome them? How has your university supported gender equality? Please share your thoughts with us in the comments section below.

Cite this article

Enago Academy, Gender Disparity in Authorship Existent in Academia. Enago Academy. 2019/02/08. <https://www.enago.com/academy/gender-disparity-in-authorship-existent-in-academia/>



Diversity And Inclusion

What It Will Take to Improve Diversity at Conferences

by Ruchika T. Malhotra

September 24, 2019



Walker and Walker/Getty Images

Summary. Too many speakers at events and conferences are white men. And while many organizers have done a good job bringing in more women experts, there's still a ways to go in terms of racial diversity. If you organize, sponsor, speak at, or even just attend... [more](#)

I was recently invited to attend a panel about serving on corporate boards. The four panelists — all white women — were to advise the audience on the necessary steps and strategies to gain a coveted board seat. While some may have applauded the all-female panel in a field that is largely dominated by men, I was disappointed to see a lack of racial diversity and declined my free

invitation. The rub? The event was hosted by a powerful, national minority entrepreneurs' network.

There has been lots of talk in the past few years about all-male panels, fondly dubbed “manels,” and why they are problematic. One study found 69% of professional speakers globally are male. However, less attention has been paid to how too many events also lack racial diversity. We know diversity in teams unlocks innovation and makes us smarter. So I'm routinely surprised at the reluctance of conference organizers to prioritize this.

Of course, there are some long-held beliefs that we need to challenge if we are going to truly diversify conferences. First, we must undo the fallacy that the most confident or engaging speakers are the most competent in imparting knowledge and learning to your community. They're often not. Instead, we need to fundamentally understand and accept how different perspectives and life experiences among speakers will bring a richer conversation to any conference, and as a result, encourage greater attendee participation from diverse and underestimated communities.

We must also recognize and acknowledge the systematic barriers holding back people of color (especially) from being recognized as experts. A conference organizer has the power to lift up speakers of color and present them a platform to showcase their expertise. As a professional speaker myself, I can confirm that my skill has been directly impacted by the number of opportunities I've received to speak in public; the more I get asked, the better I become through practice.

There are also very practical things you can do to change the tide, whether you are organizing a conference, or attending, speaking at, or sponsoring one.

Don't only look for experts by title. When we default to the “best” in a category, we usually default to white men, a reality reinforced by long-held power dynamics in society. I've found this to be true even outside of the U.S. and western Europe, including in countries I've lived in like Singapore and India. Sourcing speakers outside your traditional networks means looking for differences in experiences and points of view; for example, if you already have eight speakers with PhD's, it could be valuable to bring in someone within a community organization working on the issue with a different approach.

Set an (audacious) goal. Quantify the goals you're hoping to achieve. One large technology conference organized by Lesbians Who Tech, states that their speakers are 80% queer women, 50% women of color, 25% black & Latinx and 15% transgender and gender non-conforming. Go beyond a cursory research on speakers and seek to engage speakers with great experience and stories, not just someone with a fancy title. Dig deeper than their corporate bio to find out what unique perspectives they would bring to your event. Most importantly, don't settle for “one and done.” Just one token speaker from an underrepresented background is not going to create the benefits you desire; in fact, long-standing research shows they feel compelled to assimilate to the majority surroundings.

Ask for speaker recommendations from a diverse slate of people. We are naturally drawn to people like us, so it's not a surprise when all-white conference organizing committees draw from largely white speaker networks. If I am asked for recommendations for speakers, I always prioritize recommending

women of color. As a rule of thumb, ask for recommendations from a diverse group; whether it's for a job interview, to staff a project, or especially, to speak at your event. Explicitly state that you're focused on cultivating speaker diversity and would value recommendations of non-traditional speakers.

Pay your speakers. Few topics incite more ire among the professional speaking communities I'm part of than unpaid speaking opportunities. Preparing a solid presentation for a public audience takes hours of research, preparation, and rehearsal (not to mention the content we're presenting often represents a career's worth of work). You wouldn't expect the caterer to provide refreshments for free or the sound and lighting engineers to do their work uncompensated. So why do so many conferences refuse to pay speakers? Some of the biggest inequities are created when speakers are expected to speak for free exposure, learn to refine their skills on their own dime, and keep doing that until they hit big-time conferences where they can finally begin to charge hefty speaker fees. Speaking for free isn't a realistic option for many people, especially people of color who are most disadvantaged by a large racial wealth gap. At the very least, offer to compensate for travel and lodging, and especially, ensure that not only some speakers get compensated while others don't.

Do not always enlist people of color to speak about diversity issues. People who are perfectly qualified to talk on any subject (blockchain, machine learning, astrophysics, management theory...take your pick) too often get enlisted into the obligatory "diversity" panel or are asked to address what it's like to be a woman/person of color/disabled person/LGBTQ person in [insert field here] because of their presenting identity. Do your research on whether the speaker's expertise is on the topic of diversity and identity — like mine — or whether they don't typically address it in their work. The ideal would be a professional conference that

doesn't need a diversity and inclusion track; speaker diversity is carefully curated in all the topic tracks and the conference can model what it looks like to create an inclusive environment.

Pass the baton. If you frequently get asked to speak and you identify as white and male, pay it forward by recommending a speaker from an underrepresented community. I've had the privilege of being able to speak for free earlier in my career, especially as I have a full-time employed spouse. I recognize how putting in years as an unpaid speaker has now meant that I often get offered large sums to speak at conferences. Where possible, I now try to recommend another speaker in my place — with a specific goal to pass the baton to black and Latinx women to speak instead of me. I am also working on offering low-cost or free public speaking workshops geared towards women of color. Understand that when people of color don't see role models who look like us on stage, we're less likely to nominate ourselves for those opportunities because they feel inaccessible. It's important for people of color in the audience to see speakers who mirror their lives and experiences. When I get invited to speak at high-profile conferences, I negotiate my speaker fees to include a handful of complimentary conference tickets to be awarded to women of color I nominate to attend.

Use your sponsorship privilege. If you're in the position of being able to sponsor an event, refuse to do so if there isn't a diverse lineup of speakers. Specifically state that you're looking to use your sponsorship budget to create a diverse and inclusive environment. When you vote with your dollars, conference organizers are more likely to take action.

Refuse to speak at or attend an event with a homogenous lineup. Once again, vote with your dollars if you can. The more high-profile you are, the more impact you're likely to make when

you take this action. Where possible, amplify and attend conferences that do prioritize speaker diversity, and specifically state why you value this. As someone who cares deeply about managing her time, I explain that I find it a waste of time to attend a conference where I won't learn from a wide variety of expertise, views, and experiences.

It will take all of us acting intentionally — speakers, organizers, sponsors, and attendees alike — to drive the speaker diversity that we want to see.



Ruchika T. Malhotra is the author of the book *Inclusion on Purpose: An Intersectional Approach to Creating a Culture of Belonging at Work*. She is the founder of Candour, an inclusion strategy firm.



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Examining faculty diversity at America's top public universities

Cory Koedel

October 5, 2017

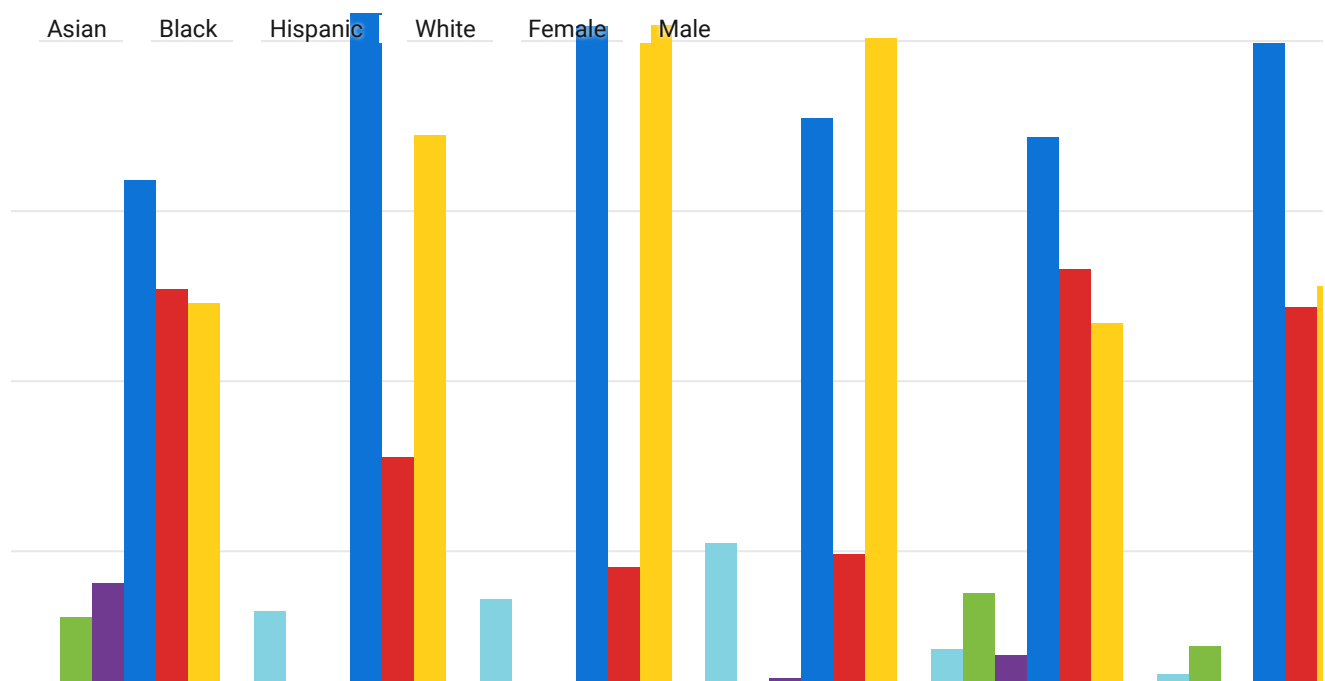
Following protests at colleges across the United States during the 2015-16 academic year, many student organizations have issued demands of administrators to increase the representation of minorities and women among faculty and staff. For example, at my institution, the University of Missouri-Columbia, The Legion of Black Collegians has demanded an increase in the percentage of black faculty and staff to 10 percent by 2017-18. Similarly-spirited demands have been made by groups at many universities, including "Who's Teaching Us?" at Stanford University, "Liberate MSU" at Michigan State University, and "The Irate 8" at the University of Cincinnati, among others.

In an effort to improve the informational foundation for contemporary policy discussions about faculty diversity, Diyi Li and I collected and analyzed data on over 4,000 tenure-track faculty from 40 selective public institutions during the 2015-16 academic year. Our sample of universities was selected based on U.S. News & World Report rankings. We collected data from faculty rosters posted online with a focus on six academic departments: biology, chemistry, economics, educational leadership/policy, English, and sociology. We group the first three departments as STEM fields and the latter three as non-STEM fields. The information we collected about individual faculty includes basic demographics, qualifications and rank, research productivity, and salaries (see our [academic article](#) for details about the data).

Our study, which was recently published in [Educational Researcher](#), has two broad objectives. The first is to provide updated evidence on faculty diversity at selective public universities. We document diversity differences between STEM and non-STEM fields and between junior and senior faculty. Surprisingly, the most recent previous [study](#) that we could find documenting faculty diversity in both STEM and non-STEM fields uses data from before the turn of the century. The second objective of our research is to document and decompose faculty wage gaps by race/ethnicity and gender.

I direct interested readers to our [full paper](#) for information on all of our findings, though I write this post to bring attention to one finding of particular policy importance. Namely, in the fields we study, the underrepresentation of disadvantaged minority and female professors among faculty overall is driven predominantly by a lack of diversity in STEM fields. Non-STEM fields are much more diverse. For example, black faculty account for just 0.7-2.9 percent of faculty in biology, chemistry, and economics; but 8.8-15.1 percent of faculty in educational leadership/policy, English, and sociology. Similarly, women account for just 18.1-31.1 percent of faculty in STEM fields, but 47.1-53.2 percent of faculty in non-STEM fields. Diversity conditions by field are illustrated in Figure 1.

Faculty representation at selective US universities by race and gender



These numbers highlight a severe imbalance in faculty diversity across fields. Why does this matter? To answer this question, it is useful to specify the purposes of diversifying the faculty, and the mechanisms by which improved diversity will achieve these purposes. Although there are many motivations to diversify the faculty workforce, one that seems of first-order importance given the educational mission of universities is to improve outcomes for disadvantaged-minority and female students. A likely mechanism is role model effects. Large gaps in college outcomes between students who differ by race/ethnicity have been documented in research along many dimensions, including STEM attainment; and although women outperform men in college in many respects, they remain substantially underrepresented in STEM fields.

Taking this purpose and primary mechanism as a point of departure, the concern raised by the disparate diversity conditions between STEM and non-STEM fields is that they may serve to perpetuate an already-existing field imbalance in the workforce, both in academia (per [our paper ↗](#)) and the [broader labor market ↗](#). That is, if disadvantaged-minority and female students [are drawn to fields with more professors who share their characteristics ↗](#), and such professors are disproportionately in non-STEM fields, the current diversity structure in higher education may serve to reinforce STEM/non-STEM diversity gaps.

Moreover, broad-brush efforts to improve faculty diversity overall may worsen the field imbalance. For example, university administrators could respond to pressure to increase the overall percentage of disadvantaged-minority and female faculty by adding diverse faculty to non-STEM fields, which are already more diverse. Reasons to worry that administrators might follow this hiring strategy include: (a) there are more candidates from traditionally underrepresented groups with Ph.D.s in these fields, and (b) additional faculty hiring lines are often less expensive in these fields owing to lower salaries and overhead costs.

More than anything else, the aim of this post is to call attention to the stark diversity imbalance in higher education between faculty in STEM and non-STEM fields, which we show using very recent data. STEM graduates have higher earnings, and to the extent that the faculty-diversity imbalance nudges students from diverse backgrounds away from STEM fields, it has the potential to exacerbate earnings inequality. Despite recognition of this issue by many in the research community (e.g., see the [California Alliance ↗](#)), we are not aware of evidence that faculty diversity in STEM fields is being

given explicit attention in administrative efforts to improve diversity on campuses across the U.S. Moreover, our review of demands from student groups at numerous universities, posted online [here](#), provides little indication that STEM-specific issues are being given independent consideration by these groups either.

Earnings differences between individuals with STEM and non-STEM degrees, combined with the disparate diversity conditions between STEM and non-STEM fields among faculty, point toward policies that specifically promote faculty diversity in STEM fields as worthy of attention if the end goal is to improve outcomes for disadvantaged-minority and female students.

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