UNIVERSITY goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are deeply connected to university policies around engagement [1]. Not only are diverse scholars more likely to incorporate underrepresented groups in their research and to use interdisciplinary methodologies, engaged scholars are more likely to come from groups underrepresented in academia [2–4]. This means institutions that recruit and retain diverse scholars are more likely to deliver impactful and innovative scholarship that is attentive to the needs of historically marginalized communities [5]. At the same time, these scholars are more likely to be negatively affected by entrenched institutional biases and discrimination inside and outside the academy [6, 7].

If diverse forms of expertise are needed to fulfill goals of public engagement, especially across the wide range of issues and constituencies affected by current societal challenges, university diversity, equity, and inclusivity initiatives are natural spaces in which to foster engagement. But how?

ENGAGEMENT & IDENTITY

Researchers are often motivated to participate in engaged research by their own identities, life experiences, and values. Women and faculty of color are more likely to have humanistic and service orientations that motivate greater commitments to teaching and outreach, including inclusive pedagogical practices and research agendas that center the needs of local communities [8]. Diverse identities also contribute to more diverse scientific knowledge. A recent, large-scale bibliometric analysis confirms a relationship between the characteristics of scientists and the science they produce, underscoring the need for institutions to hire diverse researchers in order to produce broad and diverse scholarship [9]. To acknowledge the synergies between diversity, engagement and the public service mission of institutions, Strum et al. 2011 recommend acknowledging and amplifying the connections between “(1) student success with faculty diversity, (2) faculty diversity with community engagement and inclusive pedagogical practices, (3) faculty diversity with engaged scholarship, and (4) engaged scholarship with institutional rewards and supportive institutional cultures.”
RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Departments and universities seeking to attract, hire, and retain engaged researchers and increase faculty diversity, must be willing to foster climates in which these researchers thrive. This requires assessing current hiring and retention practices and aligning strategies with the twin goals of engagement and inclusion. It also entails a close look at review and promotion policies, as noted in earlier chapters. This is because engaged scholars can be disadvantaged in academia, from the job market to retirement, due to the challenges associated with co-developed research, including the previously outlined disparities in funding opportunities, publication rates for engaged scholarship, and recognition for co-authored work [10–12]. Standards for recruitment, retention, and promotion can either perpetuate or minimize these biases.

Researchers involved in community engagement may approach their work from different epistemological perspectives than more traditional colleagues, and so institutional and disciplinary reward systems must be tailored to regard such perspectives with esteem, or inclusivity goes out the window [13]. University leaders can create more inclusive academic cultures by considering embedded norms of excellence and prestige and whether they might implicitly discourage innovation, collaboration, and engagement [1, 14–16, 17, 18].

For instance, institutional biases affecting retention include inequities in workloads among faculty, staff, and researchers that can impact salary decisions, work satisfaction, and promotion decisions. We know that women tend to spend more time on high-effort service activities and less time on research than their male peers [3, 6, 19], while faculty from historically underrepresented racial groups spend more time mentoring students and on diversity work than their majority colleagues [20–22]. These factors compound at the intersections of race, gender, and other identities [20, 23]. Valorization and recognition of engagement is important, but the retention of engaged scholars is dependent upon policies that support cultures of work equity, including modified service or teaching expectations.

“Minority faculty are... pulled between the commitments to communities of color almost all bring with them to the academy and a departmental culture which tells them either directly or mostly indirectly to abandon those ties or risk professional suicide.”

George J. Sanchez, 2004 [7]

In tandem with the recommendations regarding tenure and promotion (see Chapter 4: Tenure & Promotion), current literature on the recruitment and retention of diverse and engaged scholars offers fruitful suggestions for engagement-oriented institutional change.
Chapter Seven: Diversity, Equity, & Engagement

RECRUITMENT

- Center job descriptions around engaged work, interdisciplinarity, and diversity. Job descriptions with targeted statements about departmental culture and available supports for engaged scholarship [24], as well as departmental preferences for exemplary mentoring, teaching, outreach, and community engagement signal that the hiring committee is serious about university commitments to DEI and engaged research. When crafting job posts, cite institutional-level strategic plans for diversity and inclusion, policies promoting engaged scholarship, and/or initiatives that foster interdisciplinary collaborations.

- Use targeted recruitment strategies. When distributing job advertisements, be attentive about reaching out to organizations, networks, scholarship programs, and doctoral programs, even non-traditional ones, that prioritize community engagement [25] and have high participation by scholars from underrepresented groups [26, 27]. University diversity and inclusion offices may have lists to use as starting points for outreach [28].

- Consider cluster hiring, the practice of recruiting multiple faculty to join a cohort within or across programs, as a means to recruit a small community of engaged scholars across departments or research priorities [29, 30]. When hires are well supported and promotion policies align with hiring goals, cluster hiring often results in improved faculty diversity and rates of retention, increased collaboration and community engagement across campus, and expanded research and mentoring opportunities for students [29, 31].

RETENTION

- Encourage faculty in efforts to recruit and mentor diverse students and provide resources to improve inclusive pedagogy and integrate community engagement into coursework. Place greater value on these activities, use the guidelines in earlier chapters to innovate metrics to account for them, and promote shared responsibility for building a more engaged and inclusive program year by year [21].

- Provide new faculty and researchers with mentorship opportunities that align with their professional goals for engagement. Students and incoming faculty will need multiple mentors to gain diverse perspectives as they navigate professional development at each stage of their education and career [31, 32].

- Foster a culture of transparent communication and honest, constructive feedback. This dovetails with the call for promotion criteria and timelines. Encourage researchers to develop individual professional development plans and use their plans as the basis for their annual evaluations. Annual reviews and promotion guidelines that value multiple forms of scholarship produce more balanced reward systems and improve faculty satisfaction [33] (see Chapter 4: Tenure & Promotion).

- Increase transparency around faculty and staff workload. A randomized control study of 30 academic departments across the U.S. finds, for instance, that developing a data dashboard showing faculty workload distributions across a range of activities results in a greater sense of fairness, action
readiness, and self-advocacy in participating compared to control departments [34] (see Spotlight on page 89).

- Rather than relying on market competition to determine salary increases—that is, requiring competitive outside offers before considering salary raises [35]—consider programs aimed at the preemptive retention of faculty and staff, mechanisms to address salary equity and salary compression, and clearly defined alternative advancement pathways for faculty and staff who leverage unique skills and professional goals [36, 37].

- Set clear departmental/institutional goals for growth and progress in the areas of DEI-minded hiring and retention, and decide how to measure success. Climate surveys and exit interviews may need to be amended in order to better predict or explain retention success; intentions around leaving or staying are best captured at granular levels through qualitative or mixed methods [38, 32, 37].

- Keep in mind that base salary is not the only way to reward and promote engaged work. Provide supplemental funding and support for such scholars in the form of course releases, fellowships, dedicated community-engagement funds, and professional training in community-engaged scholarship [39].
SPOTLIGHT

FACULTY RECRUITMENT

The University of Michigan’s Advance Program provides research-driven best practices to recruit for diversity and excellence. A component of this program is STRIDE (Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence). STRIDE is designed to help faculty produce diverse candidate pools and run effective searches through strategic recruitment, inclusive position descriptions, search committee training, and best practices in managing visits and negotiation with candidates [40, 41]. Institutions like Rutgers have adopted approaches developed in STRIDE, especially the invitation “to break exclusionary habits when topics, methods, or epistemologies differ from those in the center of their disciplines” [42]. The Advance Program’s detailed 2018 handbook on faculty searches and hiring practices is available online at https://advance.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Handbook-for-Faculty-Searches-and-Hiring.pdf.

In addition, the University of Michigan has created research collaboratives designed to create communities of practice and to “serve as an intellectual hub and social reference group that will strengthen the collective work of new and existing faculty who are dedicated to anti-racism” [43]. These incubators provide funding to interdisciplinary teams and opportunities for students and postdocs to work with faculty on engaged scholarship and social action.

WORKLOAD EQUITY

Inequities in the distribution of academic service can lower productivity, increase burnout, and decrease retention, especially for women and underrepresented minority faculty [44]. Even small differences in service loads accrue over time and can contribute to disproportionate rates of faculty promotion and a less diverse professoriate. Department conditions that support equity (e.g., transparency, clarity, and flexibility) are significant, positive predictors of faculty satisfaction and retention [15, 45, 46].

The Faculty Workloads and Rewards Project at the University of Maryland aims to improve organizational policies and practices that shape equity in workload for all faculty. The multi-year project worked with over 50 academic departments in the U.S. to evaluate how organizational policies and practices contribute to the distribution of faculty workloads, and to measure the success of interventions designed to promote more equitable department workload. Participating departments developed simple, easy-to-read displays of different faculty work activities (e.g., service, teaching, and research) as a means to increase transparency across faculty and identify potential equity issues in their units. Additional interventions included allocating differential credit for work of higher or lower effort, teaching credit swap systems that define the teaching workload expectations for all faculty, rotations of time intensive roles, and differential pathways for faculty to meet their instructional workloads.

The researchers observed that these interventions enhanced transparency, promoted greater clarity, and increased accountability. Faculty in participating departments were more likely to report feeling satisfied with their teaching and service loads and agree that their workload was fair [47, 48]. When faculty members feel their work, and the context around it, is recognized by colleagues, they are more likely to be retained, productive, and satisfied [47]. A report outlining the project methodology, results, and examples of workload equity interventions is available at https://advance.umd.edu/fwrp/home.

Example of the committee service matrix as adapted from Equity-Minded Faculty Workloads: Worksheet Booklet [46]. Faculty would collectively agree on service activities and expected time commitment and track participation over time. Expectations for individual faculty service could be tailored to rank, teaching load, and research expectations.
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Universities committed to engaged scholarship must also be committed to fostering a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace for underrepresented scholars. But these scholars face institutional biases and discrimination that disadvantage them and prevent them from being on the same playing field as traditional scholars, from hiring to promotion and retention. Universities eager to tackle current societal challenges will need diverse forms of expertise, and changing practices to address biases and barriers is a necessary first step. Institutionalizing engagement can be an effective way to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, suggesting there may be benefits associated with intentionally linking strategies for promoting DEI and engagement.

REFERENCES


