MU News Bureau

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MU must do better at hiring and retaining black faculty

The Editorial Board

The University of Missouri-Columbia for decades has felt pressure from student groups to increase the number of African American faculty members. The demand mostly stayed in-state and unmet — until last year.

The Concerned Student 1950 group made international headlines over the university’s low minority faculty numbers with a hunger strike topped with the football team’s threat to boycott playing.

The students, like their predecessors on campus, were right to focus on the need to hire more minority faculty members.

Going that route always adds to the quality of higher education instruction and better prepares young people to function in the increasingly multicultural, multinational workplace.

But MU, like many colleges and businesses, has done a poor job of keeping up with the country’s increasing racial and ethnic diversity. The Kansas City Star recently reported that in the last two years, the Columbia campus has hired 451 faculty members, but only 19 were African American.

The campus has 1,973 ranked faculty members, but only 55, or about 2.8 percent, are black. MU has 1,476 white faculty members, 64 Hispanic and 259 Asian.

The Columbia campus has an enrollment of close to 35,000 students. About 7 percent are African American, 3 percent Latino, 2 percent Asian and 77 percent white.

Clearly the university hasn’t kept pace with the diversity in its enrollment.
MU has made strides to improve the situation since the resignations of the university president and Columbia chancellor over student protests last fall. It hired a vice chancellor for diversity, equity and inclusion; began requiring diversity training for students, staff and faculty; and hired an outside firm to conduct an audit of diversity and inclusion.

But the university is in stiff competition with Ivy League schools and businesses for talented faculty members of color.

The university must do a better job of offering research opportunities and other incentives to make hiring and retaining faculty more attractive. That includes improving the social climate for African American staff, which will benefit all faculty and students on campus.

The pipeline of African Americans earning doctorates in the U.S. also is pathetic. Blacks received just 6.4 percent of the 52,700 doctorates awarded by American universities in 2013. MU can entice more black students to earn advanced degrees, and then make the campus so welcoming that they will stay.

It will take money and will to make positive changes happen and to reject the way things have been in the past.
Missouri engineering school retreat focuses on faculty trust

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — Senior administrators at the University of Missouri College of Engineering have gathered to discuss how to combat a perceived lack of transparency and collaboration within the administration.

More than 24 administrators from the school and campus spent four days at a retreat in St. Louis last week, the Columbia Daily Tribune reported. The group included Dean Elizabeth Loboa and the engineering college's 11 chairs. The deans of engineering at the University of Michigan and Texas A&M University were also invited to the retreat.

Loboa said that she previously met with faculty members individually and held group sessions for the college's staff. Loboa said those meetings along with internal audits revealed that many faculty members believe the college's biggest challenge is linked to college culture and morale.
According to Loboa, faculty members have identified that a lack of a strategic plan and ineffective leadership are some of the biggest problems at the college of engineering.

"The perception I got from a lot of faculty was there was not as much openness, transparency and collaboration as there could be in this college," Hilton said.

Sudarshan Loyalka, professor of nuclear engineering, said that it will be difficult to take the retreat seriously because no rank-and-file faculty members participated.

"No faculty-at-large were invited to this planning, and no documents that might have been distributed have been shared with them," Loyalka wrote in an email. "Eventually, there will be more of an appearance of shared governance than a reality."

According to Loboa, the omission of regular faculty did not mean there was no faculty input. Loboa said that she provided specific data at the retreat about faculty opinions gathered from her meetings and discussions.

"The challenge I have is going beyond that," Loboa said. "Who do you include without making others feel they are being excluded and isolated in some way?"
New Study Links Stress in Pregnant Women to Autism

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=6c1dc93c-d8c8-4d4c-9c14-97383b5c2913