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Cover Page Footnote
This article is from an earlier iteration of Diálogo which had the subtitle "A Bilingual Journal." The publication is now titled "Diálogo: An Interdisciplinary Studies Journal."

This article is available in Diálogo: https://via.library.depaul.edu/dialogo/vol9/iss1/6
LATINOS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education  
(ILACHE)

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INTRODUCTION

Research has shown the importance of Latino faculty in higher education and is considered the single most important key to any hope for increasing Latino access (Olivas, 1986). However Latino faculty are increasing very slowly in colleges and universities throughout the nation and state.

Lack of Latino faculty and staff in higher education is reflected in the numbers and under-representation of Latinos and people of color in faculty positions. In 1995-1996, the Higher Education Research Institute reported that faculty of color account for 10 percent of the professorate, up 1 percent from the 9 percent of 1989 (p.21). Minorities are also placed in non-tenure track positions. Latinos represent less than 3 percent of all full time faculty and it appears as though tenure rate among Latino faculty is on the decline, with HACU (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities) reporting a 4 percent decline in Latino faculty tenure from 1983 to 1993 (1996, p.46).

Statewide the figures are comparable to nationwide statistics. The following table illustrates this point and the under-representation of Latino faculty and staff in Illinois Colleges and Universities.

FACULTY AND EXECUTIVE/ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF REPRESENTATION IN ILLINOIS 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Full-Time Faculty</th>
<th>Executive/ Admin. Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Universities</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institutions</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Colleges</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“There is ample evidence of substantial under-representation of blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians along virtually every part of the pipeline toward faculty positions: under-representation among college graduates in science and engineering fields and in non-professional fields; under-representation in graduate school enrollment; and under-representation in Ph.D.'s received. There is no doubt that increasing supply of minority faculty will require increasing stocks and flows along the pipeline” (Turner & Myers, 2000 p.185).

These leaks and cracks in the pipeline have a cumulative effect and must be viewed from the very beginning of the process of formal education. Latino and minority students are already being marginalized in the public school systems. With over 50% of Latinos dropping out of High School, 10% never enrolling in High School, and only 4% receiving bachelors’ degrees, one can assume that the pipeline is in serious need of repair. The pool that successfully makes it to college and through graduate school is slim and minimal. This trend has serious implications for the hiring of Latino and minority faculty, as pools become smaller and competition for qualified minority faculty becomes greater.

SEARCH PROCEDURES

Increasing Latino faculty representation in higher education begins with the recruitment and hiring of Latino faculty. Recruitment in higher education is done the way it has historically been done with procedures and bias that perpetuates the status quo. “Hiring strategies may contribute more to the under-representation of faculty of color than the leaving of faculty of color” (Turner & Myers, 2000, p.28). Search committees do not go beyond traditional avenues of
recruitment. Consistent use of the same methods and the same advertisement mechanisms may lead to a pattern of discrimination in faculty hiring. The excuse that there are “no qualified Latino faculty”, is not a justification for not doing an extensive search. Advertising in venues that attract mainly white audiences, and networking with peers of the same makeup and background will not lead to a diverse search (Turner & Myers, 2000).

Hiring strategies may mirror the same type of behavior. Judgment by search committee members have a potential to be culturally biased and in many cases Latinos and people of color are not evaluated fairly or by the same standards as their white counterparts.

Also, every attempt should be made to diversify search committees. People are more prone to favor someone who looks and sounds like themselves. However university policies reinforces this very practice by their university governance and laws. Search committees are required to include faculty members from the academic department that is conducting the search. Lack of minority faculty in these departments almost insures that diverse search committees become an impossibility and this will continue as long as there is under-representation and exclusion of minorities in higher education (Turner & Myers, 2000). Hence, during the search process there is no alternative view, diverse perspective, and evaluation at the important time of the interview process. In many cases the applicant might even be discouraged or turned away during the interview, being subtly given the message that they do not fit in or meet the expectations of the position.

RETENTION OF LATINO FACULTY

Turnover of Latino and minority faculty continue to be a challenge for many universities. The “revolving door syndrome” is common and retention of Latino and minority faculty is of great concern. Many factors can contribute to this. The environment also plays a role and can be unwelcoming, creating a chilly climate for Latino and minority faculty. Latino faculty may move on because they do not make tenure or are passed over for promotion and become dissatisfied. It is possible that they never quite really fit in and eventually move on looking for a better fit and where they feel their scholarship and work is of value. And lastly, the market drives the turnover. Qualified Latino faculty are in such demand that they can move on to better higher paying jobs in higher education or in the private sector (Turner & Myers, 2000).

CULTURAL BIAS

The curriculum within higher education is based on the Eurocentric view. Latino history, voice and heroes are absent in the curriculum. This negating of the culture continues on to Latino faculty scholarship within acedeme. In 1993 a survey was conducted of 238 Latino faculty, 40 percent of Latino faculty felt that their peers devalued their research, 44 percent felt that research by Latinos was seen as inferior. These same respondents cited denial of tenure for Latino faculty were departmental politics, racism and insensitivity to their research interests (Garza, 1993, p. 27).

Cultural stereotyping is manifested in the academy by having Latino and minority faculty serve and work on committees and projects that have a minority focus. This “organizational logic channels Latino faculty into limited roles and results in limited opportunities for networking and possible advancement.

“The institutional relationship between Chicano faculty and administrators in academia places them in a situation of relative isolation referred to as “barrioization”...Chicano faculty feel constrained by institutional demands that prevent them from participating in institutional sectors that are closer to mainstream decision making...As peripheral participants in academia, Chicano faculty are unable to develop networks that could alter the perceptions whites hold of them (Garza, 1993, p.49).

ILACHE HISTORY

On October 30, 1986 a meeting was held at Roberto Clemente Community Academy by University of Illinois administrators to explain and justify the new admission requirements for undergraduate admissions. Over 1000 concerned parents, students and community members confronted University of Illinois officials chanting “Open the Doors of U of I”.

The community was trying to drive home the message that their communities were systematically being denied access to higher education. Resultant of this meeting was a series of meetings held by UIC officials, parents and community members on the issues of Hispanic student access and retention at the university of Illinois at Chicago. This activity led to the creation of the report “Declining Minority Access to Higher Education”.

Spurned on by the recent community outcry and the findings of the report, on June 30, 1987 the Senate Joint Resolution 72 created a Joint Committee on Minority Access to Higher Education, Co-Chaired by Senator Miguel del Valle. One of the committee's main functions was to analyze the Chicago public schools' college preparation programs and course offerings and their relationship to the proposed undergraduate admissions changes that the IBHE sought to implement by 1993. A series of public hearings were held throughout Illinois beginning in November of 1987 through December 1988. A final report was generated and a series of recommendations were made.

A direct result of this activity was the creation of CACHE (Community Advisory Committee on Higher Education) which was the forerunner of what would become the groundwork for ILACHE. CACHE members were appointed by Senator Miguel del Valle and included concerned Latino Educators in Higher Education. CACHE held its first conference on April 30, 1988 and the theme was “Developing a Legislative Agenda for the 1990’s”. In 1993 the organization changed its name to ILACHE (Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education) to more closely reflect the collective concerns of Latinos in higher Education in the state of Illinois.

Today ILACHE continues this important work of addressing the needs of the Latino community and serves as an action oriented, independent advocacy group for Latinos in higher education in the areas of access and equity as it relates to employment, admissions, and legislation in the state of Illinois. Through their annual conference they provide public forums to provide networking opportunities to Latino higher education professionals, and to create advocacy agendas, share best practices, and to explore new ways of affecting legislative and university policies. Striving for inclusion and voice ILACHE continues to advocate for the needs of the Latino community and provides a statewide forum for dialogue on issues in higher education.
CHILLY CLIMATE

In Turner’s and Myers (2000) research several interviews were conducted with minority faculty. Minority faculty perceptions of common themes that led to a chilly environment were: denial of tenure and/or promotion due to race and ethnicity, being expected to work harder than white counterparts, having color/ethnicity given more attention than credentials, being treated as a token, lack of support or validation of research on minority issues being expected to handle minority affairs, and lastly, having too few minorities on campus (Turner & Myers, 2000, p49).

Latino and faculty of color cited by Turner and Meyers (2000) felt that their scholarship was not taken seriously, that they did not have the same opportunities to publish and even had their work devalued by their colleagues as “minority issues” and not genuine intellectual pursuit/research. They felt in many cases as if they were treated like the token of the department and were only hired because of their ethnic/race status. They also felt that their workload was greater than that of their colleagues. Not only did they have to go above and beyond and give stellar performances in their work, but they were also expected to serve on committees, represent the minority view, and mentor and counsel minority/Latino students. Burnout was common because new aspiring faculty did not feel they could say no and felt guilty if they did. This extra burden gave them little time for research and writing (Turner & Myers, 2000, pp.90-94).

“I am expected to teach and do research as well as represent a whole ethnic group, something that is not expected of white faculty members” Latina Tenured Social Sciences (p.102)

“There is a lot of service, committees where I’m representing the whole institution at various things… not just my department… This year’s service is eating away at my time. At every level, they don’t realize that each is asking a lot…. It is hard to say no, especially on minority issues, when there are so few people to address these issues…I sit on 53 doctoral committees. Doctoral students take a lot of time… I turned down being a chair of one doctoral student’s committee and she nearly cried. She was a good student….. but I can’t chair these committees. I’ll wind up spending all my time correcting dissertations and not doing my own research.” Latina untenured instructor. (p.103)

“You’re going to have to be better than everybody else and, whatever you, do, you have to take great care, you’re going to have to be sure that you’re very meticulous, that you do your best, that there are no questions about anything that you do… Latino tenure Professor (p.103)

A special consideration for Latino faculty is language and cultural isolation Latino faculty are given the subtle message that they are inferior, that their ideas are not valid, and their scholarship is confined to the “barrio”. Feelings of isolation and being different, alone, and isolated are common for Latino faculty. Being in a new environment without a sense of community and the comfort of familiar cultural references and images, can be a very intimidating experience.

“One situation that is a challenge for me is the language. You are hesitant to participate. Some colleagues become impatient with you. Sometimes I just keep quiet…. Lack of a perfect command of English can be seen as if you were not good enough for your field… They don’t have any Latinos here. You feel isolated in terms of your culture. You don’t have other people that listen to your music, eat your food…” Female untenured instructor (Turner & Myers, 2000, p.102)
Communicate Broadly and utilize new Technologies – Explore and utilize national and regional organizations, Internet, professional Journals, conferences, newsletters. Make a list of all minority organizations, newsletters, publications, and e-mail list serves. Send job announcements to personal contacts for circulation. Establish contacts and networks within these organizations.

Importance of Networking - Make everyone in the organization responsible for recruiting. Utilize word of mouth, networking, and reaching out to colleagues in the field. Get involvement, brainstorm and get others involved on ideas on how to recruit. Ask existing minority faculty and women for help and ideas.

Look Within – Build internal capacity utilizing diverse workforce within your own organization. Look at internal people for promotions. Begin to cultivate future leaders, chairs, Deans, administrators, etc. Conduct workshops on leadership training, research opportunities and portfolio development. Grow your own approach: begin cultivating your own internal talent and Ph.D. pool.

Change Paradigms – Look at diversity from a new perspective. Send Deans/Chairs on minority recruitment missions and job fairs. Have them personally review resumes and interview qualified candidates to dispel myth of there are no “qualified minority candidates”. Revise and reevaluate policies that include recruitment, hiring, promotion and tenure. Change language to reflect an inclusive environment. Actively look for bias and procedures that perpetuate status quo. Look for ways to change the institution not to force new faculty to assimilate and change.

Search Procedures Recommendations

Have EEO representative oversee process to ensure recruitment is diverse and monitor search throughout process.

Make sure Search committees are diverse. Key to effectively recruiting diverse candidates.

Educate search committee to the search process and non-traditional methods of recruitment. Assist in giving charge to the search committee, emphasizing importance of diverse pool, and help design appropriate interview questions following nondiscrimination guidelines.

Retention Strategies- Stop the revolving door syndrome.

Support Latino professional growth and development with an emphasis on scholarship and research.

Develop mentoring programs and opportunities.

Maintain a strong Affirmative Action/Compliance office. There must be an institutional commitment to Affirmative Action. Diversity initiatives are to improve not weaken or substitute existing programs and initiatives.

Develop and implement diversity workshops to be conducted at all levels of the institution.

Formal new employee orientation program, to include special emphasis for new minority and women faculty.

Develop a multicultural perspective throughout the curriculum. Find ways to include contributions of diverse scholars, in academic forums, classroom readings and assignments, research, etc.

Begin to explore ways to create a welcoming environment in which diversity is embraced and celebrated as a value to the organization.

Develop best practices to be consistently modeled throughout the institution and consistent throughout the state.

CONCLUSION

The increase of Latino Faculty who are culturally and linguistically sensitive to Latino students should be a priority for Illinois institutions of higher education. In creating access and opportunity Latino faculty are key in helping Latino students transition into higher education. The barriers of access however extend outside the classroom and into higher education’s workforce, recruitment and hiring strategies, and the retention of Latino faculty. Corrective steps must be taken to resolve this underrepresentation of Latino teachers and faculty in the state of Illinois.

This article completed in 2002.

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