
Survey of Diversity and Minority Faculty Perceptions of Institutional Climate of Planning Schools (*Climate Survey*)

Planners of Color Interest Group (POCIG) Recommendations

Prepared by the POCIG Policy and Advocacy Committee

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Overview

In 2008 the Planners of Color Interest Group (POCIG), an advocacy group that strives to promote the interests of racial and ethnic minorities among the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) member institutions, conducted a study of minority faculty in planning schools. With support from the ACSP Governing Board, the POCIG carried out a *Climate Survey* that, first and foremost, sought to broaden knowledge and understanding of the experiences and perceptions of racial and ethnic minority faculty in the planning academy, and to revisit perennial questions of ethno-racial diversity. The survey explicitly focused on critical factors known to affect faculty progression throughout the academic trajectory – namely, recruitment, retention and advancement or promotion. It is the belief of POCIG that the perceptions and experiences of racial and ethnic minority faculty not only warranted the *Climate Survey* but also warranted more explicit attention to remedies deemed feasible for our Association and member institutions.

The *Climate Survey* was not designed to test the factual basis of racial and ethnic disparities within the planning academy; instead it rests on conventional wisdom that ethno-racial disparities within the academy persist and are pervasive across academic rank. It primarily serves as an instrument for data-gathering from minority faculty in planning schools who, generally speaking, are best positioned to articulate factors correlated with low recruitment, poor retention, and advancement of minority scholars. Accordingly, survey responses provide an empirical basis for recommendations proposed within and for POCIG's proposed courses of action summarized in this memo.

Studies show that academic institutions, for instance, have long sought to improve conventional notions of proportional representation through ethno-racial minority recruitment, or “pipeline” programs. Sustained attention to minority recruitment remains both critical and necessary to redress enduring issues of disparate proportionality. However, ethno-racial minority *recruitment* strategies fail to sufficiently address an array of fundamental concerns pertaining to minority faculty *retention* and *advancement*, which are more closely aligned with the professional and intellectual integration of minority faculty within departments, schools, associations, editorial boards, and other critical decision-making bodies. In other words, there is a dearth of formal

mechanisms for integrating faculty into the institutional and cultural infrastructure of the academy in ways that support faculty development. By this we are referring to structured and informal relationships among senior and junior faculty, inclusive organizational cultures, and transparent policies and practices that explicitly and inadvertently impact upward mobility. Negotiating the academy proves challenging for most junior faculty. However, for ethno-racial minority faculty, or faculty who feel like they have few institutional champions, that work in environments described in the *Climate Survey* as unreceptive and antagonistic toward them personally and toward their teaching, scholarship, and service, scholarly productivity often becomes untenable.

More broadly, the information gathered from the *Climate Survey* both substantiates and mitigates common concerns about ethno-racial diversity within the planning academy. For instance, the Survey draws on the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) data on proportional representation of minority faculty, which shows that in 2008 approximately 21 percent of faculty in four-year accredited planning schools were classified as minority (African-American, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American, see *Climate Survey* Table 1). It is noted that this represents a slight decline from the proportion of minority faculty in 2007. However, according to previous studies (Goldsmith, 1991; Grigsby, 1988; Ross, 1990), the current representation of minorities is a notable improvement compared to a decade or more ago. This is to say that concerted attention to improving proportional representation of minority faculty ~ by ACSP, PAB and member institution ~ have yielded favorable results. POCIG recommends continued attention to improving proportionality and staving off further erosion of decade-long gains (specific recommendations are outlined below).

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, qualitative and quantitative findings from the *Climate Survey* substantiate widely held presumptions about the retention and advancement of racial and ethnic minority faculty that are less widely researched and easily obfuscated by focusing on proportionality, yet these concerns directly affect progress throughout the tenure-track and promotion trajectory. For example, the study shows that one in five faculty feel that their colleagues and one in three feel that their departments do not value their work; and an astonishing 50 percent of minority faculty believe that their work is not welcomed/valued by planning journals, with about 50-63 percent expressing “no opinion.” These results underscore perceptions about publishing, funding and dissemination of work, all critical dimensions of academia, which ultimately affect faculty retention and promotion.

To broaden our scope of understanding and basis for recommendations, the POCIG also culled various documents, reports and websites of numerous academic associations, including the Association of Public Policy and Management, American Economics Association, the American Association of Geographers, the American Political Science Association, the Modern Languages Association, and the American Sociological Association to learn about successful diversity initiatives. We found that, on average, many academic associations have had more than three decades of experience developing programs intended to help support the representation of people of color and women in academia, across academic rank, although the majority of strategies pertained to attracting and advancing assistant professors through promotion and tenure. Diversity strategies were wide-ranging but can be loosely organized into three primary practices:

- *Data collection*: Support rigorous longitudinal data collection throughout the academic trajectory by race, ethnicity, gender, institutional form, etc.
- *Pipeline projects*: Support faculty mentoring and facilitate research collaboration.
- *Intersectionality*: Encourage coordination among racialized groups and women's groups to address multiple dimensions of diversity.

We believe that ACSP values, policies and practices can help shape the culture of the planning academy across disparate schools, departments and programs. Therefore, drawing from the *Climate Survey* and reconnaissance of other associations, POCIG proposes the following.

Recommendations

Data Collection

Currently the only ethno-racial longitudinal data is collected by ACSP (as opposed to PAB) through the ACSP Promotion and Tenure (P & T) Survey. This data regarding minority presence and experiences is a critical benchmark for measuring progress. However, the format in which that data is collected needs to be refined to make it user-friendlier and more applicable to current issues.

- POCIG recommends that ACSP support rigorous data collection on change among planning faculty and planning schools that disaggregates critical variables, such as: race; ethnicity; gender; institutional form (e.g., public, private, etc); pre- or post-tenure departure; faculty mobility across institutions and reasons for the departure.
- POCIG recommends that ACSP continue to collect data by race, ethnicity, and gender that is methodologically reliable, and captures both experiences and outcomes of minority faculty. Specifically, we suggest paying particular attention to:
 - A consistent definition of racial and ethnic categories being reported.
 - An effective measure and evaluation of racial and ethnic diversity throughout the tenure-track trajectory: recruitment, retention, promotion, and/or exiting the planning academy.

Further Research and Support

The *Climate Survey* was a much-needed pilot study to call attention to the issues that racial and ethnic minority faculty face in the planning academy. However, it was only a starting point.

- POCIG recommends that ACSP support a more comprehensive study that takes an in-depth look at the root causes of racially and ethnically disparate outcomes and that undertakes best practices for redressing disparities.
- POCIG recommends that ACSP support a POCIG strategic planning retreat open to all POCIG members as well as faculty from ACSP member schools. POCIG members

recognize the need to set aside adequate and quality time to discuss vision and to develop a plan of action for making progress on addressing issues of diversity within the profession.

Faculty Recruitment

Planning schools should prepare students to practice values of inclusivity and respect as professionals working in the public interest, in an increasingly diverse world. In order to accomplish this effectively planners need to teach and learn in an environment of diversity, and to build knowledge about underrepresented/underserved communities. The perspectives and knowledge of faculty of color are essential to these goals.

- *POCIG recommends* that ACSP increase the ranks of planners of color in the profession by creating pipeline initiatives, based on best practices of these programs, to produce more planning academics of color.

Faculty Retention, Advancement, or Promotion

While the proportional representation of faculty of color has improved, the distribution of assistant compared to associate and full professors has not improved significantly enough. In addition, there is an alarming trend of planning professors of color not making it to the tenure review year, because they have not been reappointed. The qualitative (positive or negative) experience of professors of color as faculty in planning programs is a primary factor influencing their retention and advancement in the academy and in the field.

- *POCIG recommends* that ACSP develop policies with guidelines for the promotion of equity that address systemic flaws that have created immediate problems and created barriers for minority faculty of color.
- *POCIG recommends* that ACSP develop guidelines for the use of ACSP member schools regarding retention, promotion, and tenure which specifically take into account the known issues and barriers that planning academics of color face.
- *POCIG recommends* that ACSP propose to the PAB development and implementation of guidelines to ensure that planning teaching and service as well as research and scholarship relevant to communities of color and social equity are encouraged, respected, and valued.

Policy, Practice, and Governance

The culture of planning schools is a major factor contributing to difference in both quantitative outcomes and qualitative experiences between minority and non-minority faculty. ACSP values and guidance, as expressed both in policy and practice, help to shape that culture.

- *POCIG recommends* that ACSP develop policy and a value statement regarding ethno-racial equity and diversity. Member and non-member schools look to ACSP for guidance on the values and practices that are required, acceptable, and valued. Taking an affirmative stance

on the value and desirability of both ethno-racial equity and diversity would go a long way toward setting the spirit of an intellectual environment that values racial and ethnic minority faculty and values race and ethnicity-related teaching, scholarship, and service.

- Other academic associations utilize committees, rather than interest groups, as part of their governing structure. *POCIG recommends* that ACSP consider retaining support for a self-defined “interest group” model yet create a complementary structure where committees devoted to these topics have an institutionalized role.
- *POCIG recommends* that ACSP initiate representation of minority faculty of color in all ACSP governing boards, decision-making bodies, committees, and conference tracks in order to work towards diversity and inclusion within ACSP.
- *POCIG recommends* that ACSP support democratic decision-making by modifying ACSP election procedures to expand the opportunities for representation of racial and ethnic minority faculty.
- *POCIG recommends* that these policy recommendations be available: 1) on the ACSP and PLANET websites and 2) for effective discussion at ACSP Chairs and Administrative meetings where POCIG representatives would be invited.