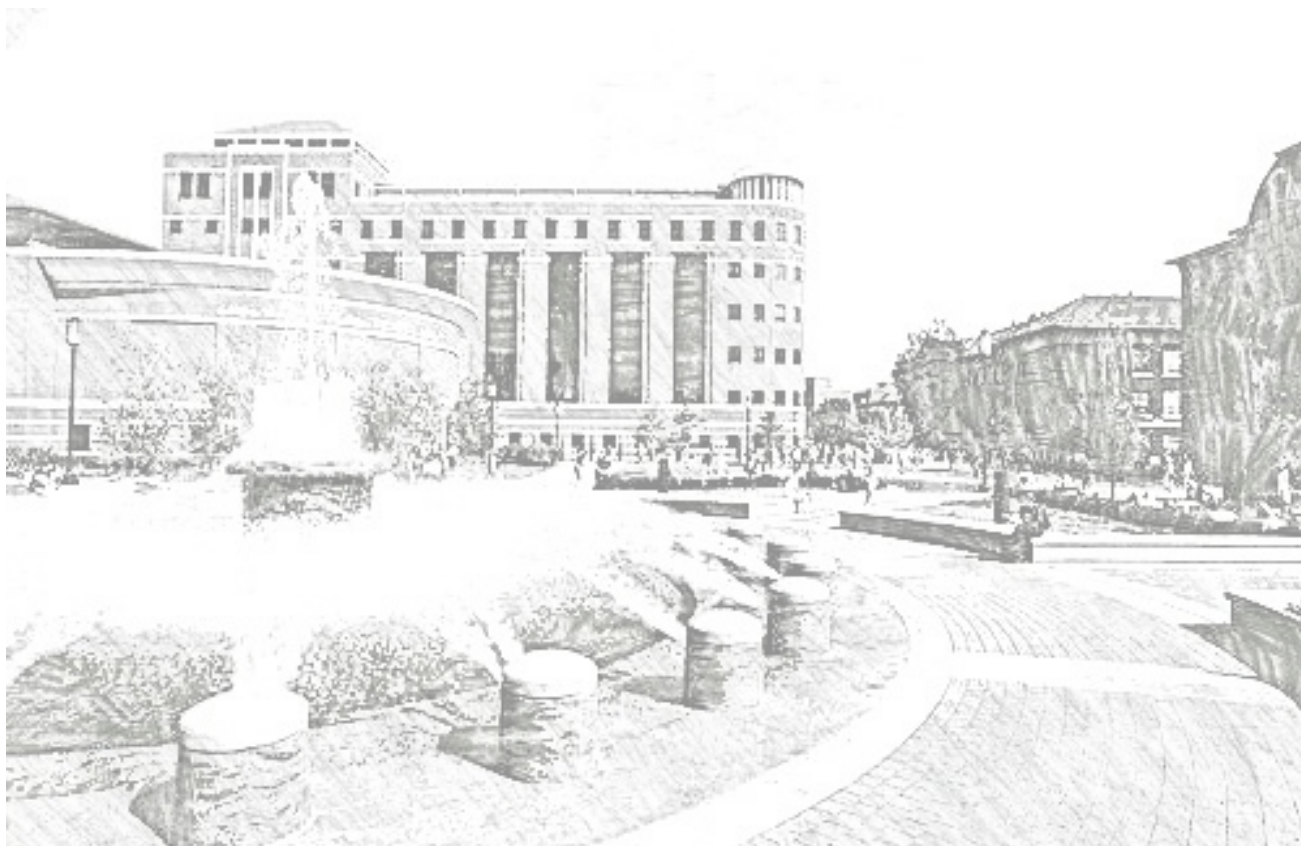


# WORKING PAPER SERIES



**2018**

**Volume 1 | Issue 1**

## **Navigating Careers in the Academy: Gender, Race, and Class**

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## EDITORS' NOTE

### Synergizing Voices: Enabling Inclusive Intellectual Spaces

Chris Sahley and Mangala Subramaniam\*  
Purdue University

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As women who have navigated careers in the academy, we are well aware of the challenges that women, and particularly women of color, face within universities. Women have earned half or more of all doctoral degrees for almost a decade but few hold tenured or leadership positions in academia. As per the latest numbers available, in fall 2013, women made up almost 49% of all full time instructional faculty in degree granting institutions in the U.S., but only 31% are full professors. In 2014, male faculty members held a higher percentage of tenured positions at every type of institution even though they did not hold the highest number of faculty positions at every rank (Johnson 2017). This is especially true for women of color in many of the STEM disciplines. Tenure track women in STEM disciplines has remained at a low of about 2.3% (Ginther and Kahn 2012).

Women of color often outnumber men of color in lower-ranking faculty positions but men of color hold professor positions more often than women of color (Johnson 2017). For instance, in fall 2015, the distribution of the number of full-time faculty by race in degree granting institutions is as follows: 99,759 white males, 47,205 white females versus 4,010 black males and 2,710 black females and 3,827 Hispanic males and 2,129 Hispanic females. The trends are somewhat similar for Asian/Pacific Islanders but very much lower (234) for American Indian/Alaska Native females (U.S. Department of Education 2016). At Purdue, as of 2017, less than 20% of full professors are women and less than 26% of tenured faculty are women; much lower than the national average.<sup>†</sup> Purdue has a total of 148 underrepresented tenure track faculty (out of a total of 1,901).<sup>‡</sup> These statistics clearly point to the gender and racial differences in the success of women in higher education as well as their recognition.

Gendered forms of recognition have implications for who is rewarded and how power is structured. Power can mean the ability to get things done; but what kinds of things – those that are less valued in academe such as teaching and service. Sharon Marcus, Professor of English and Comparative Literature who recently completed a term as dean of humanities at Columbia University, in a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* piece notes, “Power can also mean strength and capacity, which tend to grow when one’s achievements are recognized and value” (Marcus 2018). By her definition of power, women in the academy are doing less well – they typically receive lower pay (gender pay gap), fewer promotions, and fewer honors than men.

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<sup>†</sup> Obtained from data available in Purdue Data Digest (accessed through www.purdue.edu)

<sup>‡</sup> ditto

And then all women do not wield power on campus equally. For women of color in academe, power is elusive. The dynamics of power in academe reflect the society in which we live — one that is shaped by hierarchies of the intersections of gender, race, class and other forms of difference.

Understanding experiences of women, and particularly women of color including variations across class and sexual orientation, in the academy is important for creating an inclusive intellectual space that represents a synergy of voices. This point was central to many of our conversations we had since we began to talk about such concerns in the fall of 2016. There was a need for beginning to bring together experiences, discussions, and research occurring on Purdue's campus. And so, we decided to collaboratively embark on this endeavor. Our efforts towards this end have been deliberate, particularly as we shaped the goals of the series and the structure and composition of the editorial board.

Our vision is to create a space that allows for sharing diverse experiences and transforming suggestions into action that will enable us to create a campus built around respect. The Working Papers series will serve as a catalyst to broaden the discussion of experiences shaped by the intersections of gender, race, and class, as well as other differences such as nationality and sexual orientation, and contribute to the knowledge base in the academy. We expect this series to fill a gap on campus – the gap in sharing best practices and lessons learned based on research and experiences. Feelings of invisibility and isolation in their home departments, challenges to their authority, negative immediate environments (department), teaching competency, and scholarly expertise in the classroom and the emotional toll of negotiating all the challenges and obstacles for those who are 'different' including minority women must be addressed to make for a more inclusive university. In addition, enabling women and particularly women of color to be successful and move into leadership positions is key to inclusionary practices. It is such topics that we hope faculty, staff, and students will engage with in the working paper series.

Creating an editorial board that is diverse by gender, race/ethnicity, and discipline, in the first step, is intended to bring diverse lenses for discussing ways of fostering inclusion and excellence and enabling the success of faculty, staff, and students from different backgrounds. The idea is to bring together ideas and individuals who might typically never get together. This is the intentional first step in creating synergy which we expect will flow through the articles accepted through a peer review process for issues of the Working Paper series over the next few years. To meet these goals, we need the engagement of all constituencies – faculty, staff, students – on campus.

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U.S. Department of Education. 2016. Digest of Education Statistics 2016, Table 315.20. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

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# We Are All Boilermakers: Attaining a Climate of Respect and Inclusion

Jay Akridge\*  
Purdue University

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The 2017-18 academic year has seen increasing unrest around issues of race, ethnicity and nationality in our country, and our campus has not been spared from incidents of racism and anti-Semitism. Against this backdrop, we have reaffirmed and reminded our students, faculty and staff that respect, acceptance, and inclusion are — and will remain — core values of Purdue University. We want all members of our Purdue community to feel welcome on our campus, to have a positive experience, and most importantly, to be able to achieve their highest aspirations. And we expect everyone to treat others at all times with respect and with dignity.

These are more than words at Purdue and there is much work being done to support a more diverse and inclusive campus. The number of underrepresented minorities in our undergraduate population increased 9.6 percent to 2,968 in 2017 and our underrepresented graduate and professional school population increased 5.1 percent to 881 over 2016 (Purdue Data Digest). First-year international students for fall of 2017 hailed from 71 countries (vs. 65 last year) and more than 30 percent of these international freshmen were women, which is one of the highest percentages, if not the highest ever, for Purdue. Overall, a total of 16 percent of our undergraduates are international students and 9.6 percent are underrepresented minorities.

Our underrepresented tenure-track faculty total 148, up from 107 in 2007 (38 percent increase) and the number of women tenure-track faculty now total 579, up from 477 in 2007 (21 percent increase). While we have seen progress in both areas, there is more work to be done and we will continue to actively explore new approaches to recruiting women and underrepresented faculty, staff, and students to Purdue, and just as importantly, do all we can to provide an environment that supports their success.

Our goal is to position Purdue as the world's leading example of the 21st century land-grant university — a global model of excellence in the land-grant missions of learning, discovery and engagement. To that end, I have identified four themes that I believe undergird the successful 21st century land-grant institution: 1) excellence and innovation, 2) access and success, 3) affordability, and 4) a climate of respect and inclusion. The level of our success in the first three areas will be heavily dependent on our commitment to and progress with the fourth.

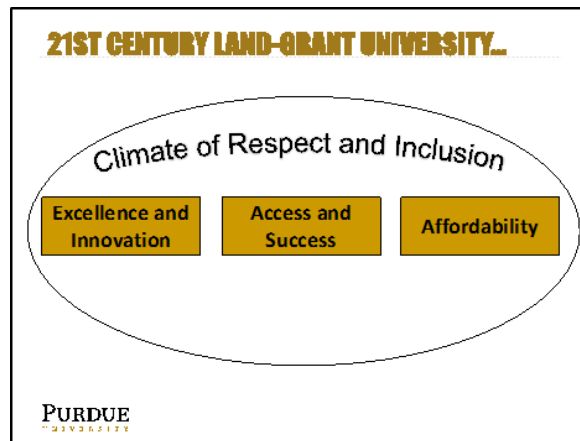
There are many excellent programs and initiatives currently aimed at supporting a climate of respect and inclusion at Purdue. That said, we have not done an especially good job of sharing best practices and lessons learned, coordinating efforts, and communicating results across the campus. One of my goals as chief diversity officer is to help create a stronger network among the

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individuals and groups directly responsible for diversity and inclusion programs — and all others who wish to contribute — so that we can achieve the greatest possible impact. As avid listeners, we are working to identify where Purdue can take proactive measures to connect efforts, to identify important gaps in activity, to better assess impact, and to ultimately enhance a climate of respect and inclusion that supports success for students, faculty and staff. Against the backdrop of the national challenges to our ambitions here, and with the understanding that it is impossible to prevent random acts of racism and discrimination, we can all work to mitigate the impacts of these acts on our Purdue community.



We have an excellent starting point: the Provost’s Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion, formed under Provost Deba Dutta, developed a [road map](#) of specific actions to help us recruit, retain, and build a more positive climate for undergraduate students, graduate students, post docs, staff, and faculty. This road map is ambitious, it encompasses our entire campus and lays down a specific agenda to pursue.

To help us move our efforts here to a higher plane, we have initiated a national search for a vice provost of diversity and inclusion. As announced in the Conversations about Inclusion panel on February 23, 2018, I expect to appoint an experienced professional with demonstrated leadership and deep insight into issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity, and someone who will be a bridge-builder on our campus.

It is easy to talk about the importance of the ideas of diversity and inclusion. It is more difficult to define and deliver on a set of initiatives that help us build a better Purdue. Actions we recommend, pursue, foster, and adopt will be key to an even more diverse Purdue. The many benefits of a diverse workforce are well documented — and employers who come to our campus want to recruit from a diverse pool of students. These same employers also want students who are prepared to work in a multicultural world. The Office of the Provost will continue to support initiatives to help us promote success for every member of the Purdue community and I encourage everyone to find their place in our work. In the end, beyond the programs and initiatives we will launch and support as a University, our Purdue culture is ultimately determined by the way each of us interacts with every individual we come in contact with every day.



In that spirit, my request is that all of us treat every member of the Purdue family with the dignity and respect they deserve. In the end, no matter our race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, status as a veteran, political affiliation, or any of the myriad of ways we can think about our differences, we are all Boilermakers.

## Gendering and Racializing of Intellectual Spaces

Rachel Scarlett\*  
Purdue University

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*These remarks were originally prepared for the Conversations about Inclusion series of the Butler Center for the session titled, Everyday Practices that can Foster Inclusion on 04/20/2018.*

Do you recall the recent national news story involving Starbucks? In short, two men entered Starbucks and grabbed a table. Within two minutes of their arrival, a Starbucks employee called the police on the two men for loitering. This situation is not surprising or uncommon to me—these two men are Black. The Starbucks incident escalated to national news, but these occurrences are quite common for Black people. One Saturday morning in 2017, as I was driving to Purdue’s campus, I received a call from a friend. I spoke on the phone with her for about 20 minutes while I was parked in front of my department building. As I sat in the car, I saw a woman taking pictures of my license plate and video recording my actions on her phone. I rolled down my window and asked the woman if there was a problem, and she proceeded to ask me, “Why are you here? Why are you here?” These are the common, and for some, daily incidents of surveillance that students of color deal with as we enter academic spaces. Our existence in these spaces is constantly interrogated. Such experiences are the reason that everyday practices that foster inclusion are critical to the retention and success of marginalized students, staff, and faculty in academia.

I shared my experience with you because it is important to understand that marginalization of students, staff and faculty does not disappear in academic institutions. More importantly, we as members of academic institutions are responsible for the inclusivity of our spaces. Such responsibility is outlined in this excerpt from Margrit Shildrick, “... all of us— regardless of our own individual morphology— are participants in the socio-cultural imaginary that pervasively shapes the disposition of everyday attitudes and values— and we all therefore have a responsibility to interrogate it.” Shildrick highlights our responsibility to create and maintain the culture of intellectual spaces that we all share. Prior to accepting responsibility, we all must recognize that intellectual spaces are constructed by and for the privileged. Just as Starbucks is racialized, intellectual spaces are racialized, gendered, sexualized, colonized, and able-ized.

I distinctly remember the moment that I was made aware of my role in shaping the culture of intellectual spaces. I was in my third year of undergrad and speaking with my colleague about his relationship. Whenever he spoke of his significant other, he used the term *partner*. One day I

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asked him, “Why do you always refer to your *girlfriend* as your *partner*?” He explained that he chose to use partner because of its neutrality; it allows other colleagues to feel comfortable to converse about their relationships without being stigmatized for their sexuality. I know that many of you can recall a moment when your colleagues have inquired about your relationship status and they implicitly assumed that you are heterosexual. For those who are heterosexual, these moments may be insignificant; such is the epitome of a heterosexualized intellectual space. Our conversations and practices in work spaces accentuate the sexuality of the majority and implicitly privileges heterosexuality over homosexuality. We must continuously interrogate how simplicities in our everyday routine, such as the language we choose, construct our intellectual spaces.

Everyday practices that foster inclusion are not always implicit. At times, explicit validation of my value as an intellectual can counteract my feelings of “otherness”. As previously stated, marginalized students, staff and faculty are continuously made to feel like the “other” in intellectual spaces. Before we enter our first meeting of the day, our status as an intellectual could be interrogated. Explicit gestures can be as simple as informally recognizing your colleagues for the value that their unique experiences and intellect offer to enhance intellectual spaces. In our academic culture, it is critical that we give credit where credit is due and encourage our colleagues, especially underrepresented minorities, to continue to thrive in academia. We are responsible for creating spaces where recognition of contributions, respect, and reciprocity are the norm.

In closing, I encourage the Purdue academic community to analyze the construction of intellectual spaces that we are a part of and work towards facilitating more inclusive spaces. Challenge yourself and your colleagues to question the implicit biases in your everyday routines and practices. Remember, all of us are responsible for creating, reproducing, and changing the culture of Purdue’s intellectual spaces.

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# Pathways to Transformation: Institutional Innovation for Promoting Progressive Mentoring and Advancement in Higher Education

**Beronda L. Montgomery\***  
Michigan State University

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Colleges and universities are facing a number of challenges based on changes in our society (e.g. Zusman, 2005). These challenges include the financial pressures of meeting increasing demands for technology-driven education in an environment where public funding is steadily decreasing, changing public expectations, appreciation and resources for supporting higher education, and a major shifting of the demographics of the U.S. towards racial and ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education ecosystems.

The composition of individuals, including students, staff, faculty and administrators, in academic institutions largely does not reflect the demographics of the national population. There is significant underrepresentation of individuals from a number of ethnic and racial minority groups, in particular (Moreno et al., 2006). Long-standing underrepresentation represents the outcomes of specific barriers and histories of inclusion and exclusion in academic environments (Girves et al., 2005; Harper, 2012; Hurtado et al., 1998; Moss-Rascusin et al., 2012; Sethna, 2011; Zambrana et al., 2015). Additionally, contributing to this underrepresentation is the common practice of academic institutions promoting a focus on access with a noted tendency to pay less attention to innovation in the realms of promotion, retention and advancement of these individuals (Whittaker and Montgomery, 2014).

The underrepresentation of individuals from specific groups in the academy represents opportunities for innovation at multiple points that impact institutional representation and diversity, including access, retention or persistence, and promotion of success and advancement. While specific groups are underrepresented in academia, there are specific disciplines that have disproportionate rates of underrepresentation – e.g., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The low current rates of recruiting and training individuals in STEM requires significant and quick interventions to avoid major shortages of STEM workers (President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, 2012; U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, 2012). Making progress in these areas, the target of multiple interventions and financial inputs for decades with limited rates of success, will require significant innovation and creativity.

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Despite substantial investments in efforts to increase access to or support increased representation of diverse individuals, widespread successes in increasing diversity at the student and faculty levels in higher education have not been realized. A focus on promoting diversity among students (Whittaker and Montgomery, 2012) and in the faculty and administrative ranks (Whittaker and Montgomery, 2014; Whittaker et al., 2015) has led to limited, and frequently short-term or transient, increases in diversity, rather than sustained change or transformation of higher education environments into ones that reflect the demographics and diversity of larger society. The issues related to success in recruiting and retaining students and faculty are intimately linked, and the persistent underrepresentation of individuals in the graduate student ranks from which future faculty members will be drawn delays breakthroughs in increasing diversity of the faculty ranks (Whittaker et al., 2015). However, even compared to the rate of individuals from underrepresented groups who comprise those earning doctorates (~13% of earned doctorates relative to 30% of the national population [Humes et al., 2011; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012]), individuals from underrepresented groups are drastically underrepresented in faculty and administrative ranks (Whittaker et al., 2015). This suggests that access alone cannot solve the problem; significant attention must also be placed on retention and advancement of these individuals. To realize transformative gains in regard to student and faculty diversity in the academy, culture-changing innovations and creative initiatives are needed. Herein, I focus on interventions including mentoring and institutional transformation related to recruiting and retaining diverse students, faculty, and administrators.

### **Identifying and mediating environmental barriers to promoting diversity**

#### *The role of mentoring in promoting diversity*

One area with significant evidence for documented impact on retention among the broad range of individuals in the academy (students, staff and faculty), especially individuals from underrepresented groups, is effective mentoring and promotion of supportive cultures. Access to effective mentoring is positively correlated with recruitment, retention and successful advancement of faculty from diverse backgrounds, and its absence has been specifically noted to have negative impacts on individuals from underrepresented groups (Alexander, 1992; Montgomery et al., 2014; Rockquemore and Laszloffy, 2008; Sorcinelli and Yun, 2007; Turner et al., 2008; Whittaker et al., 2015; Zambrana et al., 2015). Effective engagement of mentoring into the practices and policies of units and institutions is strongly supported by the actions of leaders (Whittaker et al., 2015). Leaders can serve directly as mentors themselves or through their roles of promoting a culture of mentoring and support, as well as related systems of accountability (Bensimon et al., 2000; Laden and Hagedorn, 2000; Whittaker et al., 2015).

Evidence-based mentoring and leadership practices for supporting individuals from underrepresented groups to succeed and advance in the academy have been discussed in detail recently (e.g., Montgomery et al., 2014; Montgomery, 2017; Zambrana et al., 2015). Mentoring often can, and frequently is, provided in ‘top-down’ mode that supports individuals in getting insights and input into factors upon which to focus in the pursuit of institutionally-defined goals or recognized milestones, such as graduation or tenure and promotion, in academic units and institutions (Fig. 1A; Montgomery, 2017). However, shifting the focus of mentoring from transferring knowledge from an experienced or senior colleague to a novice to support advancement of the latter to a more individual-center perspective supports a focus on the

individual's personalized career vision as the motivation to drive mentoring, in the context of a particular institution (Fig. 1B; Montgomery, 2017). The focus of a successful mentoring exchange can then be about supporting a mentee's personalized vision of career success. That in turn positions the individual to contribute in a particular institutional context. An ability to support such individually-centered perspectives of success is central to retention of students, staff and faculty.

Additionally, mentoring that has the greatest impact on promoting individuals from diverse backgrounds focuses bilaterally on individuals *and* the environments in which they exist and seek to advance. Too frequently, approaches to engage individuals in mentoring are focused on individual deficits, rather than on individual potential for growth and development (Montgomery, 2018). In such deficit-focused mentoring perspectives, the environments in which individuals exist and work are largely presumed neutral, or worse are presumed infallible or free of detrimental impacts termed 'environmental barriers' (Whittaker and Montgomery, 2012). Such deficit-focused approaches may limit the potential of individual success. To fully promote the development and progression of individuals in context, specific mentoring and leadership interventions that are based on growth-promoting perspectives and focus bilaterally on individuals and ecosystem health are encouraged (Montgomery, 2018).

### **Recruitment, retention and innovative faculty development**

On many levels, the challenges related to faculty development and engagement (including the aforementioned mentoring) appear to be particularly amenable to innovation and/or creative approaches. One of the primary factors that may support the use and potential outcomes of such progressive innovation in regard to faculty development is the ability to support innovation in an arena separate from the normal faculty review and reward system. Standard practices related to faculty review and assessment largely reward attention to research innovations (Fox, 1992), teaching, and less frequently service; however, these assessments generally occur in a highly competitive environment that can stifle collaboration and true progress beyond incremental innovation (Whittaker and Montgomery, 2014). Thus, new means and spaces may be needed to effectively engage faculty in new developmental opportunities. Any such endeavors should be initiatives that "provide opportunities for faculty activity that both shape the nature of faculty leadership...and set the stage for institutional change" (Castro et al., 2009; p. 212).

#### *Specific recommendations for addressing recruitment and retention*

Recommended means for addressing retention of faculty from groups underrepresented in the academy include the following: conducting a thorough climate assessment, intentional mentoring and promotion of leaders from underrepresented groups, promoting collaborative engagement linked to advancement of scholarship, communication and implementation plans to galvanize collective thought and targeted goals, as well as intentional institutional-level interventions (Whittaker et al., 2015). For many of these approaches to have a significant impact, the assessment of institutional climates is a critical early step. There are recognized and evidence-based practices for conducting culture or climate assessments, including specific means for identifying explicit features of environmental climate needing attention (Dowd et al. 2013; Elliott et al. 1996; Hurtado et al. 1998, 2008; Rankin and Reason, 2008; Thompson and Campbell 2013; Whittaker and Montgomery 2012, 2014). If they are to stimulate intended positive outcomes, climate assessments must include honest appraisal of attitudes and processes,

including search and retention processes. These assessments often lead to difficult conversations and need to address entrenched attitudes and practices. Assessments can lead to difficult truths such as that faculty search committee members “rarely view the problem as having to do with how they go about hiring or how their racial beliefs about quality, competence and fit are the root cause of the whiteness of the faculty” (Bensimon, 2018). Inabilities to address such realities can result in the development and deployment of interventions related to recruitment and retention that have limited impact as they fail to address and mitigate underlying and persistent causes (Whittaker et al., 2015).

*Moving from implementation of mentoring lessons and faculty development to institutional ecosystem transformation*

Instituting practices and systems of accountability designed to shift to improved ecosystems with recognized cultures for support and inclusive mentoring require following culture assessments with targeted interventions to transform cultures when and where needed. Indeed, the outcomes of culture or climate assessments are most impactful when “the results serve as a catalyst for institutional transformation” (Rankin and Reason, 2008, p. 265). One approach with significant merit includes an ecosystem-based approach to institutional transformation which involves progressive steps from education about a particular issue through gathering buy-in/engagement to implementation and scale-up (Fig. 2). This model is designed to promote institutional innovation that includes defined progressive steps—education of internal and external stakeholders, facilitation of broad-based buy-in or stakeholder engagement, implementation of specific change/innovation initiatives, dissemination of outcomes, and strengthening institutional commitment to change and improvement through governance (Fig. 2B). This model is embedded in being responsive to the environment in which change is being initiated. Notably, the system is iterative in that as knowledge is gained (i.e., education), broad engagement and buy-in are cultivated that support improved systems which lead to active implementation (Fig. 2B).

Successful implementation by universities in turn leads to an ability to promote dissemination of useful models (i.e., information sharing), and to move towards institutionalization in which all of what is learned can be used to determine how to govern (i.e., governance) (Fig. 2B). This system for promoting innovation can be impacted by environmental and sociocultural factors (both internal and external) at any point. Thus, to maximize the impact of innovation in complex, dynamic environments, a central part of such efforts requires the intentional integration and cultivation of ‘sensors’ in the system that allow for rapid detection of changes and ensure agility and timely adaptation of the innovation (horizontal red bars in Fig. 2B). Thus, sensors detect what is going on externally and engage across internal and external constituencies to gauge the potential impacts of external demands and challenges and to ensure that effective communication that must be in place between all internal and external elements for any institution to be effective is an integral and actively cultivated part of the system. An assessment of how proposed innovations translate to the external environment can allow both internal and external constituents to experience a transparent, lean approach to institutional engagement and transformation.

Effective utilization of this platform requires bilateral communication, transparency, reiterative buy-in and engagement, implementation and governance that together lead to innovative change and environmental/cultural improvements through iterative learning and agility. These models

have the potential to provide broad-based communication and transparency that engages institutional constituencies across the board and drives intentional policies and institutional level interventions and accountability. Approaches targeted towards such institutional change have been described as “transformational intervention strategies” (Rankin and Reason, 2008, p. 265).

### **Conclusions**

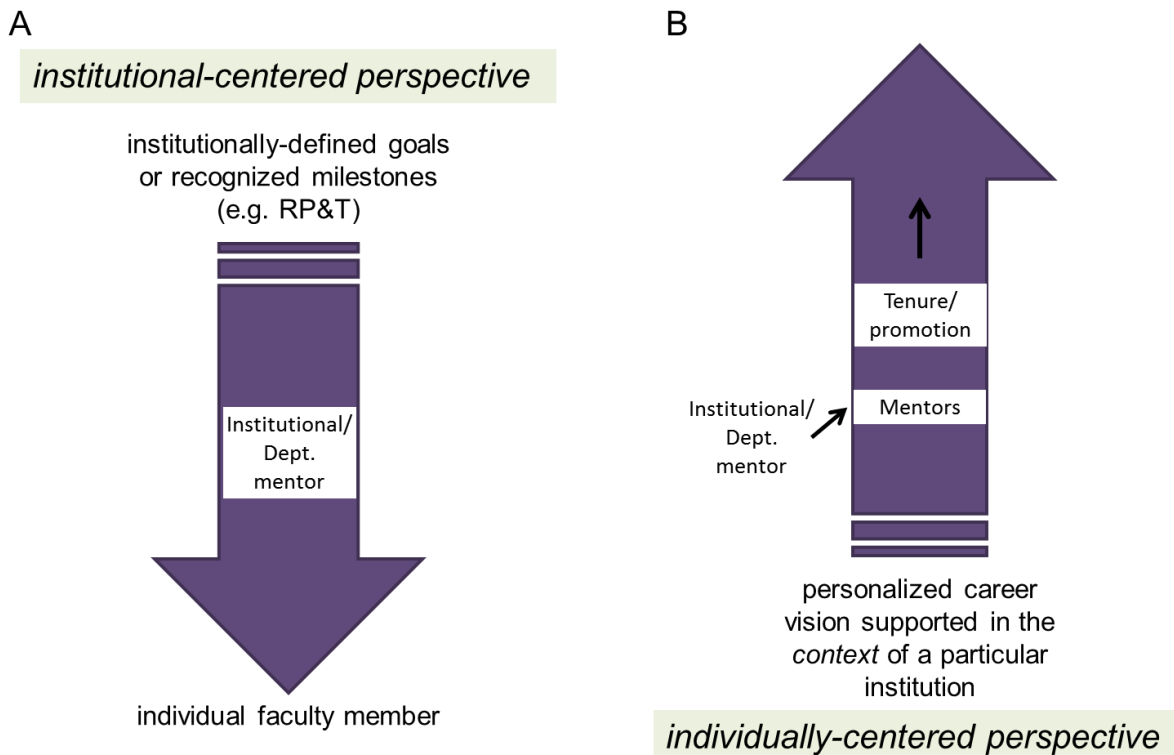
Moving beyond incremental progress in supporting individuals from diverse backgrounds in the academy requires innovations and community-wide engagement. Facilitating progress in interpersonal interactions and building communities of support through structured mentoring, institutional culture evaluation or climate assessment, and institutional transformation to support the growth and success of a broad range of faculty has significant potential for accelerating and sustaining progress. Whereas pockets of success have been noted, such efforts have largely been attributable to individual change agents and social justice advocates committed to effective mentoring and leadership. To extend such efforts to ecosystem-wide approaches for promoting mentoring and other institutional transformations can be supported by intentional models for ecosystem transformation that will require integrated and comprehensive approaches for engaging mentors and leaders widely, coupled with systems of implementation and accountability designed to promote lasting change and innovation in specific institutions and across the higher education ecosystem as a whole.

### **Acknowledgements**

I thank Dr. Joseph A. Whittaker, my frequent co-author, collaborator and ‘co-thinker’ for numerous discussions and inputs to the ecosystem-wide institutional change model. I also thank the many individuals with whom I have engaged during campus visits and consultations whose questions, inputs and discussion have undoubtedly influenced and enriched my work and thinking around ways to promote success of diverse individuals through progressive mentoring, leadership and institutional change.

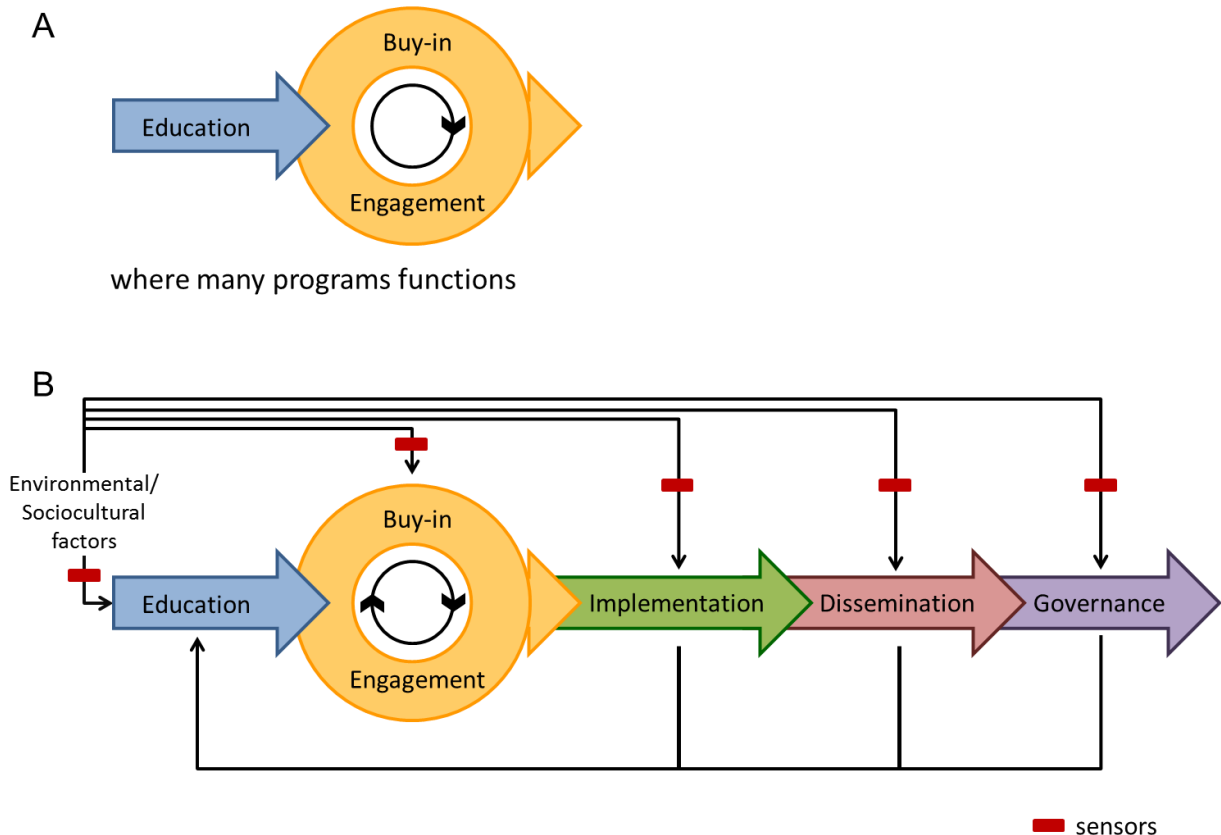


**Figure 1. Alternative Mentoring Models for Promoting Faculty Success.**



(A) Traditional mentoring models are centered on providing input into factors that contribute to faculty achieving institutionally-defined goals or successfully traversing towards recognized milestones such as tenure or promotion. In such a mentoring framework an institutional or departmental advisor or mentor, for example, helps an individual understand norms and policies that are a part of the review for promotion and tenure (RP&T) process(es). (B) An alternative model for promoting personalized career success which likewise can contribute to advancement, and *perhaps* increased retention, is centered in identifying and supporting an individual’s personal career vision with insights in relation to the context (department, unit, college or university) in which the individual is working and seeking to advance. The institutional mentor is an important component of the mentoring process, yet, is likely to be part of a larger network of mentors designed to promote a specific individual’s view of career success and professional advancement, including key milestones such as graduation or achievement of tenure, promotion, and beyond.

**Figure 2. Change management platform for promoting institutional innovation and transformation.**



(A) Frequently engaged attempts to facilitate change in an academic ecosystem are initiated by a cycle of education and engagement observed in academic environments that leads to increase awareness but limited long-term change. Often groups are stuck in endless cycles of education and engagement due to time lapses after engagement or frequently changing priorities; (B) Optimized comprehensive cycle of ecosystem transformation that progresses from education and buy-in/engagement to implementation, dissemination, and institutionalization through governance. Red horizontal bars represent sensors in the system that allow rapid detection of changes in relevant environmental or sociocultural factors, key intervention points and timely adaptation of the innovation intervention. A sensor-facilitated traversing of this cycle is a more comprehensive approach to ecosystem or institutional transformation designed to facilitate lasting change, improvement and/or innovation.

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# The Role of Religion in Inclusion: An International Graduate Student's Perspective

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*These remarks were originally prepared for the Conversations about Inclusion series of the Butler Center for the session titled, The Role of Religion in Inclusion, on 3/30/2018.*

Sociologists have long argued that understanding religion is the basis of understanding a specific society. Therefore, it would be fundamental for me to say that we need to understand the role of religion to consider making Purdue and its surrounding community inclusive. Considering religion in relation to inclusivity, I argue that there are three points requiring special attention. I will address these points before providing some suggestions to consider such inclusion.

Purdue University is a public institution with the largest number of international students in the country. Purdue has students from all continents; however, when we look at the list of countries of origin of most of the international students, we see an interesting picture. In Fall 2017, most international students- both undergraduate and graduate- were admitted from China, India, South Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia in addition to Columbia and Brazil (Purdue ISS 2017). It is easy to notice that, other than the last two countries, the rest are not known to have large Christian populations. Therefore, Purdue admits a large body of international students who bring a diverse set of religious and cultural values. This situation fits very well with the overall trend in the country as the statistics indicate that new immigrants to the U.S. are increasingly from Muslim and Hindu faiths compared to the earlier waves of predominantly Christian immigrants (Pew Research 2013). Yet, our conversations around the role of religion in inclusion might be slow to catch up with this new trend. Therefore, I would like for us to ponder this question: Is the U.S. society in general and Purdue community in particular ready to acknowledge and address the increasingly diverse set of values and expressions for which new members of their communities would demand to have space and recognition?

There has been a lack of understanding of how religious identities might be shaped by someone's nationality and race outside of their own individual choices. For example, I identify as a secular and agnostic person, and that plays into how other people perceive me and what kind of a lifestyle I prefer and strive to have in Turkey. This identity also leads to tensions and a feeling of threat from the increasingly religious organization of everyday life in Turkey. However, coming

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to the U.S. made me realize that I do not have much control over my religious identity or how other people perceive me. My identity is almost fixed as my religion is tied to my nationality and therefore racialized outside of my voluntary choices. As an international graduate student from Turkey, I encountered many people assuming that being from a ‘Middle-Eastern’ country makes me an Arab, not Turkish, and a Muslim, but definitely not agnostic or even Christian or Jewish. This fixed identity is also closely tied to the prejudices and assumptions about how a Muslim looks and acts. When on several occasions I act outside of these presumptions, confusion and discomfort follow because I do not fit the stereotypical image of a Muslim woman.

We acknowledge Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism as institutional religions and have some set of rules and religious rituals that differentiate them from one another. However, what is becoming increasingly obvious is that there is a greater diversity in the way people identify with these institutional religions. There is no single way of being Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, or Buddhist. In the U.S., it is relatively easy for people to differentiate numerous denominations of Christianity. Christianity is recognized as diverse because of the variety in religious values and expressions among its denominations. This understanding of diversity in what it means to be of Christian faith seldom extends to other religions. Being raised in a secular Muslim family – what does that mean? It might be very difficult to imagine a secular Muslim person who does not veil or opts to drink alcohol. It might be hard to acknowledge how every little bit of difference in the lived religious experiences of an individual can have consequences. However, reducing a whole group of people from a specific religious background to a single and stereotypical image would eventually lead to ignorance of the diversity within the group.

Based on the key points raised above, I have three suggestions for how to create a more inclusive environment around Purdue for students, faculty, and staff with diverse religious and non-religious identities.

First, we need to start with acknowledging the ‘elephant’ in the room, that there are non-Christian, agnostic, and atheist members of Purdue community. We cannot and should not act like they do not exist, or they do not need an overdue acknowledgement in the discussions and practices addressing inclusion and diversity. Furthermore, there is an immense diversity among non-Christian groups of people. To ensure their right to express or not express their own religious identity the way they want to and have a safe space for that, requires us to carefully understand the scope and nature of this diversity. Understanding the diversity in the ways in which people identify with and live as a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Muslim, or an atheist requires education, listening, as well as open and safe interactions among these people. Interactions and exchanges are prerequisite to inclusion. Thus, we need to create safe spaces where they can take place. It should not be extremely uncomfortable for anyone to talk about the cultural and religious/non-religious elements of their identity among a predominantly White and Christian group of people. It is in fact very commonplace to hear people from the dominant culture talking about their own religious and cultural values, experiences, and opinions on this campus. The same comfort should be granted to people of other faiths and non-faith to share both profane and sacred components of their everyday life. While granting any freedom of expression on campus life, we need to also acknowledge power dynamics and inequalities embedded in it. For example, it is quite typical for a student to survey other students on their opinions related to dominant cultural and religious values, rituals, or holidays on campus. Just recently, I agreed to answer a

student's survey questions about Easter for her club while having lunch on campus. Now, imagine that another student wants to survey anyone on campus on a non-Christian holiday such as Ramadan, or Passover, or Diwali. Would the reactions of the people she requests to survey be the same in both situations? If not, what would that mean about the inclusiveness of the Purdue community in terms of allowing the expression of different religious/cultural ideas and values?

In addition, we cannot assume or demand that students from non-Christian or minority groups should be the ones to make an effort to be included unless we are also willing to teach the majority group about their religious, and cultural backgrounds. Because if we put that burden solely on minority groups, it would be called assimilation, not inclusion. As an example, all international students go through an intense orientation period when are admitted into departments/programs at Purdue. This orientation period includes several presentations and demonstrations on American culture. However, domestic students do not go through the same intense process. One important fact to note is that many international students already know a lot about American culture including the dominant religious values, more so than an average American student might know about any other culture. I understand that every domestic student cannot be taught about every single culture in the world but there are several ways this disparity could be overcome. Fortunately, Purdue houses several cultural centers and student associations of different nationalities setting an admirable example with their contributions to the diversity in campus activities. We need to support these centers and student associations in their efforts of both educating and creating exchanges among members of the Purdue community.

To ensure an ongoing exchange of religious values as well as expressions, we can surely make large-scale efforts. Nonetheless, we should also acknowledge the impact of very small changes which can be easily implemented. I would like to share an example of the effectiveness of very small adjustments we could consider. When I was an exchange student as an undergraduate at Emory University, the syllabi of courses I took included all religious holidays in the schedule. It was enlightening to see that every day had a religious significance for some group of students and sometimes, a single day was significant to more than one group. It helped me feel welcomed and acknowledged as a student not belonging to the dominant culture. I enjoyed taking the day off on a Muslim holiday which also has a cultural significance for me and my family just like Christmas is culturally and religiously important for many American people. Students, faculty, and staff would be able to learn about these holidays which many students might cherish. In addition, this would help us as educators and university officials to take into consideration what these students might be going through during a day which is important for them considering that they are away from their family and community.

Second, I would like to argue that any efforts for inclusion in the Purdue community should be in an active form. In this sense, we cannot simply be nice and smile at a Muslim woman student with a hijab and assume that she feels safer and more included on this campus. We need to ensure that she feels safe and included through active inclusive efforts. This starts by ensuring students of diverse backgrounds are given an equal place at the table and are actively included in the conversations around how to achieve and sustain inclusivity in and around Purdue community. Any inclusivity initiative should also aim to enable these members to actively contribute to their inclusion on this campus. Policies regarding inclusion should be carefully explained and made accessible to students. There is especially a lot to be done by those who are in power in their respective positions. We need to make sure that students have places to go,

people to turn to when they feel endangered and not welcomed in this community because of some flyers, or racial and xenophobic slurs, or some governmental regulations endangering their presence and participation in this educational institution. In the face of new exclusionary policies of the U.S. government related to certain religious groups, we must reach out and make sure students feel safe so that they can concentrate on their education. For example, during the infamous Muslim ban, receiving a supporting email from the Office of International Programs as well as from the Sociology department meant a lot to me.

Finally, we need to strongly recognize the fact that efforts towards broader inclusion on campus should transcend religion. I think that secularism plays a key role, and we need to acknowledge that inclusion is first and foremost a secular value. Education is and, in my opinion, must be secular. Every member of the Purdue community from every walk of life should be able to come together and feel connected to each other through collaboratively defined and established values shared by everyone. Any student's cultural and religious background should not impede their access to education including the material, discussions, as well as extra-curricular activities taking place in any educational institution. However, there must be an intricate balance of acknowledging every community member's religious and cultural backgrounds and catering to every single value that might in certain instances contradict the basic principles of inclusion. We cannot let these religious expressions and demands endanger the basic rights of groups who are excluded on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, ability, and age. We need to acknowledge how granting religious freedom to the expression of certain ideas on campus might create alienation of some other groups. For example, the commencement ceremonies include a short invocation and benediction conducted by different religious leaders each year. Considering that Purdue is a public and state-funded university, these segments of official ceremonies could be considered exclusionary for solely serving to the religious members of the community and alienating non-religious members. Inclusive ceremonies should be achieved not through non-denominational invocations but rather through the absence of any invocations.

In conclusion, understanding religion is crucial for our discussions around inclusion in Purdue community. Considering the scope of religious diversity among the members of this community, our discussions and practices need to address what this diversity means and how we can create a strong connection between diversity and inclusion. Primarily, it is essential to recognize all religious and non-religious expressions, beliefs, and practices among the new and old members of this community. We also need to acknowledge the challenges as well as contributions they bring to the existing order of things on this campus. Our second step would follow with enabling exchanges among groups of people with diverse backgrounds. Finally, we must actively engage in inclusive discussions and practices to understand and address the needs of members of diverse religious backgrounds by not only making space for them, but by openly confronting inequalities that lead to their social exclusion.

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