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# Are They a Good Fit? Increasing Minority Faculty and Staff

Lisa Cole

Johnson County Community College, [lmcole@jccc.edu](mailto:lmcole@jccc.edu)

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## ARE THEY A GOOD FIT?: INCREASING MINORITY FACULTY AND STAFF by Lisa Cole



During the past two years I have attended numerous seminars and read many articles on how to increase minority faculty and staff on college campuses. I even researched other colleges to see what they were doing and if their models would work for us. Virginia Tech committed \$1 million over a five-year period to

increase ethnic diversity on campus, which includes faculty and staff. Dallas County Community College (DCCC), since the inception of their Visiting Scholars Program, has had 336 participants in the program. One hundred sixty-one of those scholars have been converted to or offered full time, permanent contracts. The bottom line is many colleges are stepping up their efforts and funding to recruit, hire and retain faculty and staff of color on their campuses. They understand, like in the words of Andrew C. Jones of DCCC and Karen T. Wilson of Delta College that “A diverse faculty can carry out the mission of the community college better than a nondiverse one and enrich students with a rich array of varying perspectives.” All colleges have to believe this statement in order to achieve these goals.

I am hard pressed to see how the research, the planning and the initiatives actually turn into the successful hiring of highly

qualified minority candidates without the college taking deep ownership in a “diversity equals quality” statement. The reality has to start with the hiring committee’s belief that there is an advantage to hiring a minority in their open position. If the discussion is not had at the committee level and a commitment made, there will be no effort to throw a wide enough net in the pool to catch a qualified minority candidate. I believe the candidates are out there; it is a matter of casting a wide enough net to get them. Placing a worm or a pretty lure (the position) on the hook in an effort to attract the biggest fish may not get it done. Sometimes we have to leave the dock and go out and get in a boat in order to get the biggest, brightest, highly qualified fish. Taking an aggressive approach to hiring will help diversify the pool of applicants, thus diversifying the interview pool, which can potentially lead to the hiring of a qualified minority candidate.

All the information I’ve gathered continues to stress and emphasize the recruitment process. College athletic programs that consistently win championships do it through recruiting the best talent. Faculty and staff recruitment leads to building top-ranked academic programs, departments and colleges. Discussions about the benefits of diversity in programs and departments impact the hiring committees and lead to well thought-out searches.





and community-wide. Recruitment is not only done by the current minority faculty and staff, but nonminority faculty have to take ownership and participate in the process as well. Complete participation in the process shows the college's overall commitment to the goal and not just the desires of the diversity committee and, in our case, the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI).

There are numerous initiatives and programs that can be effective in increasing the number of minority faculty and staff. Below are a few:

- Develop inclusive position descriptions.
- Include a diversity question on the application.
- Actively recruit at professional conferences and meetings.
- Develop a recruitment Web site and pamphlet.
- Establish a Diversity Visiting Scholars Program.
- Establish relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Native American Tribal Colleges and other Minority Serving Institutions as a whole.

Recruitment is an active approach to contacting and developing relationships with potential minority candidates. Recruitment not only takes place when there is a job opening but is a continuous process that builds relationships campus

As programs like these are implemented, hiring committees assembled and searches are begun at all levels on campus, "Yes, they are!" will begin to answer the often asked question by these committees – "Are they a good fit?"

