



CENTER *for* URBAN
EDUCATION

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF POLICIES AND
PRACTICES ON FACULTY OF COLOR

Read the faculty narrative below. At your table, discuss the questions below.

FACULTY NARRATIVE

In this narrative, we spoke to Maria, a Latina tenure track professor in the Language department at a local college. We asked if there were any tips she wish had been shared with her regarding how to navigate her department. She stated that she would have liked to meet with other faculty of color or junior faculty so they would share their experiences. She continues to answer the question by sharing this example:

I wish we have different meetings with faculty of color. Or, for example, meetings with [junior] faculty. So we can talk about some of our anxieties, or problems that we're having in the courses. But, specifically with faculty of color, I think I would've loved to have that space that we can talk about some of the problems that we have, for example in class. Because sometimes when I talk about some of the problems that I have with white faculty, they just don't understand. And I can give you an example I had two semesters ago in my Spanish class, I had some students who were very vocal against learning culture about Latin America. They said that that was not important. They think that what's important is just the grammar and that's it. At the beginning, I tried to explain how grammar and culture are connected. You cannot learn one without the other. And also, it's part of the mission of [institution] to be global citizens, so I explained that, but some of them was like, "Well, we don't care about our own culture. Why we care about Uruguayan culture, Mexican culture?" One thing that I tried to explain to them is "You may not necessarily care about your culture if you are a white student because your culture is everywhere, and even it is spread outside the United States. So your culture is not in danger of being lost while other cultures are. So yes, you have the luxury of "Don't care" because it's so dominant.

When I was explaining that to them at the very beginning, I tried to make everything by the book. Like culture is related to language, you have the mission statement and everything. But there was something in the class that it didn't make me feel well. That explanation for me wasn't enough. Just going by the book. Because it hurt me as an individual. And I wanted the students to understand why it hurt me, to hear them that they don't care about my culture. To hear them that they don't care about my heritage. That was something that was for me, it diminished me and I needed them to understand that. This is when I spoke about



the dominant culture and all the values and this and that. But when I was trying to explain my situation with other colleagues and how I felt, I had a white colleague that said, "Well, I never had that problem. When I tell this to my students, they understand."

But what she failed to realize is that she was white and she was coming from also a dominant place explaining that to their students. So it was in a more powerful position than I was. While in my case, I had to justify this. There are certain things that even speaking or talking with my colleagues, they don't understand. And I even explained this to the Dean, and the Dean gave me the "Go by the book" explanation. "Well, why you didn't tell the students that our mission statement is this and this and this?" I was like, "Well, I did, and I also did this, but this for me as a person wasn't enough." And what the Dean mentioned to me is like, "Well, the problem is that you made it personal." And this is personal. How is it that I cannot make it personal?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION: REFLECTING ON MARIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH STUDENTS AND COLLEAGUES

1. Does she experience bias or discrimination – if so what is it? What is the message that is being conveyed?

2. What does this tell us about the unspoken rules a Latina professor is supposed to follow at this campus?

3. What are our unspoken rules, for example in the Humanities Dept., for Latina professors? How might they be different for White professors? For other faculty of color?



THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON FACULTY OF COLOR EXPERIENCES

WHAT IS ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE?

Organizational culture describes patterns of artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions shared by members of an organization¹. More often than not, we think of an organizational culture as being transmitted through leadership and administration in a top-down manner; however, culture manifests in everything from the look and feel of campus² to student outcomes³. Organizational culture can also influence **organizational silence**, a phenomenon in which a widely-perceived norm prohibits individuals from speaking out about organizational issues because of the fear that dissent is futile or dangerous⁴. These elements of organizational culture begin to highlight why culture is so important to the experience of faculty of color. This resource provides characteristics that both affirm and do not affirm faculty of color experiences, presence, and expertise in the professoriate.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN AFFIRMING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE FOR FACULTY OF COLOR

1. Campus and departments organize planned social events.
2. Deans and department chairs validate faculty of color experiences often.
3. Faculty of color feel a sense of belonging.
4. Faculty of color feel that their experiences are validated.
5. Faculty of color expertise is considered in decision-making.
6. There's a campus-wide awareness that faculty of color are not solely responsible for sharing their possibly traumatic experiences in academia to teach others about being race conscious and equitable.
7. The campus as a whole values plurality of voices and perspectives not merely representational diversity.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A NON-AFFIRMING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

1. Faculty of color feel a sense of isolation.
2. Campus structure is one of stratification or decentralization.
3. Experiences of faculty of color are dismissed.
4. Racial microaggressions come from leadership and colleagues.
5. Leadership and/or colleagues have deficit-minded views of students.
6. A campus-wide assumption that faculty of color will be the voice of diversity on committees.
7. An expectation that faculty of color have to do the intellectual and emotional labor to teach white faculty about being race conscious.
8. Campus defers to white men or white faculty as authorities.

¹ Schein, E. H. (1996). Organizational Culture. *American Psychologist*, 45(2), 409-419.

² Marion, R., & Gonzales, T. D. (2013). *Teacher'ship in Education*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.

³ Zucker, L. G. (1977). The Role of Institutionalization in Cultural Persistence. *American Sociological Review*, 42(5), 726-743.

⁴ Atkinson, J. W., & Miliken, F. J. (2000). Organizational Silence: A Barrier to Change and Development in a Pluralistic World. *The Academy of Management Review*, 25 (4), pp. 706-725.



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SESSION 4: CAMPUS CULTURE – NEXT STEPS CHECK LIST

To support campus culture change and move towards actionable next steps, consider implementation of the items below.

GENERAL

- Leaders discuss or continue discussing and supporting equity efforts in public spaces.
- In addition to representational diversity, build a plurality of perspectives and voices with diverse backgrounds.
- Hire faculty of color in clusters or cohorts.

NEW FACULTY ORIENTATION

- Assess whether teaching and service loads are manageable, sustainable, and appropriate given additional roles and responsibilities of faculty of color.
- Map the campus socialization process – include new experts (HR, Instructional Faculty, Counseling Faculty etc.)
- Include questions about experiences with bias in faculty surveys.
- Review the campus discrimination complaint process – how effective is it? Who does it work for?

POLICIES

- Legitimize service work addressing issues on racial equity for tenure and promotion: course buy-out, stipends, reduction of unrelated service roles.
- Triangulate or reduce the role of student evaluations for faculty of color when overly critical based on identity.
- Put in place a process for the campus to shoulder responsibility to address micro-aggressions.

ORIENTATION

- Ensure the creation of equity minded structured socialization – as opposed to relying exclusively on unstructured or informal socialization.
- Develop a method for providing the department a comprehensive briefing on the new faculty in order to communicate care and respect for the new member.

SUPPORTS

- Create informal peer-to-peer support networks for African American, Latinx, Native American and Asian / Pacific Islander faculty.
- Create a structured mentor program through which tenured faculty mentor junior faculty from a culturally competent lens.
- Provide faculty of color opportunities to work collaboratively with other faculty of color.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Provide professional training for deans and department chairs (awareness of issues faced by faculty of color, role of additional cognitive, emotional and physical labor, how diverse perspectives add value to departments).
- Put in place campus professional development around bias (ex. stereotype threat, implicit & explicit bias).
- Support faculty in their efforts to make their courses culturally relevant.
- Include in department-level professional development what it looks like and what it means to be race conscious.