

Governance and Personnel Policy Committee of Faculty Senate
Tuesday, November 21, 2017
Faculty Collaborative Conference Room, D.H. Hill

Attendees: Ron Sederhoff, Kerry Havner, Karen Bullock, Paul Huffman, Doug Pearce, Phil Sannes

Guests: Marcia Gumpertz and Courtney Thornton

Discussion: Retention of underrepresented minorities and women in STEM disciplines in academia

- A very recent article published by Marcia Gumpertz in PlosOne provided the subject for a discussion on retention of underrepresented minorities and women in STEM disciplines in academia. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29091958>
- The differences between STEM and other disciplines are important. One weakness is the study was the actual numbers of underrepresented minorities in the sample, which limited the conclusions from the study. This is in part due to the shrinking pool of PhDs in related fields, which is in agreement with statistics on reduced hiring. Not surprisingly, the data is relatively discipline specific.
- The question arose whether the data should drive a goal and what that goal might be. How do departments and institutions create welcoming environments that might alter the situation? With the number of underrepresented minorities in the general population, there would seem to be an abundance of potentially wasted talent?
- Outreach and recruitment efforts are admittedly important. Evidence indicates that in certain disciplines that can make a big difference. Other factors are establishing better role models, improved mentoring, and stronger leadership, as well as reducing barriers at all levels. One practical suggestion is developing more widely available and affordable day care. These would seem to go hand in hand with making happier and inclusive working environments.
- There was general agreement that more specific action plans are best developed at departmental levels. Broader approaches may be less effective.