

from Danielle 3/18/98
P.S. = These are summarized from my review

Review of Responses of Focus Group Report

Positive Issues

Areas of Improvement

- Friendly community
 - Cost of living
 - Good schools - K-12, excellent pre-school and daycare opportunities
 - Proximity to Kansas City
 - Safety
 - Students work hard
 - Midwest is pleasant
 - Would encourage others to come here for first job
- What brings Minority faculty here
- The job
 - Their children or other faculty members
 - Knowing someone here
 - Activism of the '60's and '70's
- Minority faculty work harder/a lot of committee work with no reward
 - Tenure process is difficult and painful
 - Isolation in departments, little interaction with other faculty
 - Not enough support for professional development
 - Do not feel there is a real commitment to diversity (words but no action among faculty)
 - Few persons of color in leadership roles
 - Need effective evaluation of deans on diversity efforts
 - University needs to develop relationship with Haskell
 - Low pay in some disciplines
 - Need commitment to diversity; i.e., "If minorities come here, I'll be nice-but I'm not going to actually recruit minorities"
 - Need aggressive recruitment of faculty and students of color
 - Lack of mentoring
 - Administration/departmental level-two different views of issues

1997 Summary Report

A Focus Group Report on KU Minority Faculty



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Focus Group Report on KU Minority Faculty

Introduction, Sample, Methods, and Analysis

Introduction

In February 1997, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Office of Equal Opportunity conducted three focus groups with minority faculty members to learn more about their views concerning the University of Kansas. The issues of discussion focused on recruitment, retention, and campus climate as perceived by minority faculty across the University.

Sample

The sample for the focus groups was randomly drawn from the pool of all full times, tenure-track minority faculty on campus. The sample was stratified by faculty rank with some 30 participants representing most of the professional schools and the three divisions in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Participation in the study was voluntary and all data will be kept confidential.

Methods and Procedures

Each focus group consisted of 8 to 10 participants, a moderator, a note taker and the Director of OEO. Each session lasted about an hour. The sessions were recorded and transcribed verbatim (see Appendix A); quotes included in this report are taken from the transcriptions. The moderator used an open-ended interview guide designed to explore three general areas: recruitment, retention, and campus climate.

Analysis

Data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Responses were pooled across the three focus groups for each of the questions asked. Themes were identified for each set of answers. The next section of this report discusses the results of this analysis.

Issues of Retention, Recruitment, and Campus Climate

What brought you to KU?

I was impressed with the schools and found people who were doctors and lawyers, who were volunteering their time, so we thought the kids would get an education that was affordable. (T3, 29-31)

I came here because my husband and I both got a job here. (T1, 30)

I found that it was the warmest place in terms of attitudes—people were polite and easy to teach. (T1, 50-51)

I came here for- because of my family members. They like Lawrence. (T2, 2-3)

There was an opening in our department that seemed to fit my area of expertise. (T1, 225-226)

The two major themes emerging from the data related to family issues and a general liking for the community and University. Respondents frequently indicated they came to KU because of their spouses or children. Many felt that the Lawrence community was an excellent and affordable place to raise their children. In addition, respondents noted they felt "welcomed" by the community and the University seemed like "a very comfortable place to be."

Several respondents felt that current minority recruitment by the University did not have the rigor it had in the early 70's. Other respondents echoed this perception, indicating that current recruitment often occurs because of a specific individual rather than at the department or University level.

Issue 2: What were your first impressions of KU?

..I was vigorously, actively recruited and I was made to feel that I had a place here—that I was needed. (T2,97-98)

My first impression from my colleagues was students were hard working and I have heard several times that it was a student-centered University. (T1, 136-137)

I too was struck by the lack of diversity. And yet in a way it was not such a bad thing. At Princeton there are minorities there but they are the ones working at Burger King sweeping the floors...that's what you don't see in Lawrence. You don't see a clear division—this segregation of the races—and that is a positive thing. (T3, 75-80)

I found it a little too welcoming in the beginning. (T3, 83-84)

The welcoming atmosphere, the lack of visible diversity and a strong focus on students were dominant themes emerging from the data. Many of the respondents felt that both the University and community were very welcoming. While several respondents indicated a lack of visible diversity, the general feeling among them was the lack of visible diversity "didn't seem to matter," or was "not an issue." It is important to note, however, that some respondents felt the atmosphere at the University changed once they came to the University. They indicated that once they accepted a position at the University, more demands were placed on them.

Issue 3: What keeps you here?

I like the opportunities to do my graduate work. I can truly say it is not my salary that keeps me here. (T3, 163-164)

In my department, at least at this moment, they are surprisingly allowing me to develop my own research environment. (T3, 173-174)

Probably golden handcuffs....I'll probably finish my time here. I am fairly confident that I will. I pretty much like where I am. I'm not sure that if I went somewhere else it would be significantly different. I am pretty comfortable with KU. Its grown on me. It's home for me. (T2, 177-180)

I don't want to be quoted but I do actually like my colleagues. (T3, 190)

Opportunities, family, friendly colleagues and a comfortable atmosphere frequently were cited by participants as things that keep them here. Many respondents expressed a general level of satisfaction for the University and the community. The presence of various minority groups to work with also was considered a positive aspect of the University community. They also felt the proximity of Lawrence to Kansas City gives them the benefits of big city living without the hassles of a big city.

However, respondents also indicated that the process for receiving tenure was a major problem. In this regard, many said they were called to service because they are a minority, but that the University or departments do not value service. The issue of service obligation was echoed throughout the interviews. Participants felt the amount of service demanded of them (either by the University or a feeling of personal obligation) interfered with their ability to do research and receive tenure and promotions.

Would you encourage others to come? What about recruitment?

Yes. I think specifically in terms of my department. I have had a very good experience. For the most part, and again, I say that the leadership has been good. (T1, 252-253)

Give them good positions as you give everyone else. Have equal opportunity. (T1, 278-279)

I would love to have more minorities here. But on the other hand we must be fair to them. I think what we need to do is go critical mass. (T2, 322-324)

I would encourage more minorities to come primarily because it increases our numbers, so it would be very self-serving in that regard. (T2, 307-312)

The general feeling among participants is that they would encourage other minorities to come to KU. Participants indicated that **direct hires and equal opportunities** are key mechanisms for recruiting minority faculty. Again, individuals expressed concern about the amount of service required for minority faculty. Several respondents indicated that recruiting also should occur at the department level. As one respondent pointed out, "There seems to be a gap between the administration and what they hope to see happen and what happens at the departmental level." The general feeling among participants was that department chairs should be more involved in University-wide recruitment, and active recruitment at the department level often does not occur because of a "lack of communication between administration and department chairs."

Direct hires

I guess that what I am concerned about is the context in which that occurs and I think the way that it is in my department it is very much a critical mass issue and not one that is about what I think direct hires should be about in terms of the educational importance. (T2, 369-372)

Direct hires are perfect. In our department they are working great. (T3, 285-286)

I don't know if it helps in the recruitment of new students but once a minority student is here

Overwhelming, participants felt direct hires benefit the University. In this regard, they felt direct hires **increase critical mass and increase the visibility of minorities** on campus. Some participants felt some of their colleagues were less favorable about direct hires and saw them simply as a way of increasing the number of faculty rather than enriching education. In these cases, respondents were concerned about resulting tensions that might make direct hires uncomfortable.

Center for Teaching and Learning

I would be inclined to use it but I will have to not do something else if I am going to do that and that is exactly the dilemma we have been talking about. (T1, 349-351)

I also think there is a great opportunity for KU to begin to promote multi-cultural instruction. (T1, 377-378)

It would be nice if they would actually teach a little cultural sensitivity to the faculty. (T2, 456-457)

I suspect that many of us who are minority may not have the same kind of support in terms of that formal system and that informal system is more important than the formal system. But at least, if that formal system was established through the Center, it could provide a significant degree of support for start-up faculty in terms of getting on with teaching. (T2, 487-490)

Generally, participants had very little information about the Center. Most felt the Center is a good idea if it is used properly. Again, participants expressed concern that to use the Center means they will have to give up time doing other things. Most believe the Center will be best served if it provides minority faculty with a **formal system of support, is used to increase cultural sensitivity, and is well connected with other departments and resources at the University**

Summary

Generally, respondents expressed liking for the University and the Lawrence community. Many indicated the *University atmosphere* was very welcoming. Participants cited opportunities, family, and friendly colleagues as things that keep them here. They noted, however, that there was a general lack of support for minorities at the departmental level and that minority faculty often are called to service more frequently than other faculty members. Participants felt direct hires benefit the University. Finally, respondents generally liked the idea of a Center for Teaching and Learning if the Center would be used to create a formal system of support, used to increase cultural sensitivity, and was well connected to departments and resources.