A Proposal to Increase Faculty Diversity

In 1992, the well-argued Report of the Subcommittee on Diversity stated that Bowdoin “has long been committed to the goal of increasing the range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds represented in the faculty as part of a larger goal of creating a community characterized by as much cultural and intellectual variety as possible. But we have not done well in this regard.” In recent years we have made much progress in enrolling a more diverse student body, for which our admissions office deserves praise, and we have made some inroads into diversifying the curriculum but have made less progress in increasing the diversity of the faculty. We seek to redress the latter with the recommendations below in the firm belief that these are interdependent aims. As we have added diversity requirements to the curriculum, the demand for faculty who have expertise in nontraditional areas has increased. Research continues to show a correlation between faculty diversity and the introduction of new scholarship that engages issues of diversity for all students. As well, a diverse faculty connects campuses to new bodies of work and new communities. Perhaps most importantly, a more diverse faculty creates classroom environments which support the academic and social success of students from diverse backgrounds.1 On balance, student retention and eventual success are related to available networks of support at every level of the collegiate environment.

Indeed, in Bowdoin’s mission statement, we pledge to offer students “a context of density and variety—of ideas, artistic expression, and exposure to other cultures and other races—so that personal identity will not become an illusion of centrality.” Further, we assert that our mission is “to assist a student to deepen and broaden intellectual capacities that are also attributes of maturity and wisdom: self-knowledge, intellectual honesty, clarity of thought, depth of knowledge, an independent capacity to learn, mental courage, self discipline, tolerance and interest in differences of culture and belief, and a willingness to serve the common good and subordinate self to higher goals.” We thereby demonstrate our understanding that beyond the changing demographic of the student body, “an even more compelling reason to rethink faculty searches is a need to educate all students for diversity” (Smith, 6). We regard enhanced diversity among the faculty as an essential component of this mission.

---

Building a community with increased cultural and intellectual variety is no small task. Our commitment to these goals involves a willingness to prioritize them. We ask the faculty and administration to refocus their energies on achieving Bowdoin’s longstanding goal of increased diversity among the faculty.

**Motion**: We reaffirm our long-standing commitment to increase the diversity of the faculty. To that end, we urge that the recommendations in this report be implemented.

**Recommendations**

I. Faculty Diversity Committee

We recommend that the Governance committee establish a standing Faculty Diversity Committee. This committee will be the vehicle to implement many of the recommendations that follow. The committee’s charge:

- Educate the faculty about best practices in faculty hiring and retention.
- Work with the Dean to ensure that departments and programs understand college hiring procedures.
- Provide trained faculty members to serve on tenure-track search committees as described below.

We recommend that the committee be composed of tenured members of the faculty appointed by GFA, the Dean for Academic Affairs, and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (who serves as the college Affirmative Action Officer in academic searches).

II. Hiring Plans for Faculty Positions

1. **Workshops on best practices.** The Faculty Diversity Committee in conjunction with the Dean’s Office will provide workshops for departments that may be hiring in next three years. These workshops will discuss best practices for deepening and increasing the diversity of candidate pools, including discussion of what has worked in the past for Bowdoin departments/programs. Workshops will discuss sources of information on availability of candidates from historically underrepresented groups by field, and lists of organizations or graduate programs that may contribute to a strong representation of diverse candidates. In addition, workshops will discuss how to evaluate candidates with non-traditional career paths, or unconventional vitae.

   Departments/programs are encouraged to move deliberately and have early discussions of how to expand their potential candidate pool. If a department with a tenure-track vacancy would benefit from additional time while it develops a plan, funds should be provided to hire visiting faculty.

2. **Hiring Plan.** Departments/programs with upcoming vacancies should prepare a hiring plan that explains how the department intends to develop a deep and diverse pool of qualified candidates for the upcoming search. The plan should discuss availability of candidates from historically underrepresented groups by discipline field. The plan must...
be approved by the Affirmative Action officer and the Dean before the hiring process commences.

3. Developing Networks. Pre- and Post-Doc Programs. Bowdoin should demonstrate its commitment to hiring a diverse faculty by encouraging consistent and visible attendance at conferences or meetings that are known to have a significant presence of scholars from a variety of underrepresented groups. Department/program hiring plans should include a discussion of these conferences or meetings. Cross disciplinary conferences may be crucial in this effort. In addition, departments/programs are encouraged to establish relations with key graduate schools with good network connections and/or a significant presence of diverse scholars. Bowdoin faculty members are encouraged to visit such schools, meet faculty, give talks, etc. The Dean’s office should provide funds to allow faculty members to travel to attend such conferences and visit appropriate schools.

A long run objective of the academy is to increase the number of well-qualified potential faculty members. The college should do its part to increase the number of graduates from historically underrepresented groups who complete the highest degree in their fields (Ph.D., MFA, etc.) and pursue college teaching. To this end the college should continue to participate actively in pre- and post-doc programs, including the Consortium for Faculty Diversity Fellow program.

III. Hiring Process

1. Search committees. Each tenure track search committee will include a member of the Faculty Diversity Committee. While this person would not vote, he or she would participate throughout the search process. This person’s responsibilities include serving as a resource for information, insuring that departments/programs are aware of and use the best practices relevant to their discipline for increasing the diversity of candidate pools as outlined in their hiring plan, and that diversity issues are considered in a serious way. To the extent possible, the Governance committee should endeavor to appoint people to serve in this role with experience in fields germane to the search.

2. Long List and Short List Report. When a search committee has identified a long list of 10-15 candidates, the search committee chair should prepare a brief report explaining the implementation of the hiring plan, actions taken to increase the diversity of the candidate pool, and the status of diversity candidates on the long list, to the extent that information is known. This report should be shared with the Associate Dean in advance of a meeting to discuss the long list. Any plans for contact with the long list (e.g. phone interviews, conversations with referees) will be discussed in this meeting. The Dean’s office, in consultation with the Faculty Diversity Committee representative, will decide whether the department can proceed with current candidates or whether the department needs to take further actions to develop its pool of candidates. When the search committee arrives at a short list of candidates whom they desire to bring to campus, a similar meeting and authorization will occur.
3. **Interview Structure.** In scheduling and organizing campus interviews, departments are reminded that such visits serve not only as a time for Bowdoin to evaluate a candidate, but also an opportunity to recruit a new faculty member to campus. To this end, meeting with faculty beyond the Department / Program of hire is often an important component of a successful interview, especially for faculty from traditionally underrepresented groups. *Ad hoc* committees should be formed sufficiently in advance so that they can serve in some measure to represent the diversity of the Bowdoin faculty in gender, disciplinary focus, race and ethnicity, seniority and so forth. Ideally all the *ad hoc* committees should be formed at the same time to create a good distribution of available faculty. The *ad hoc* committee should have a clear charge and should not be treated as an afterthought in the scheduling process.

Candidate’s job talks should be advertised appropriately so that members of the campus from other departments or programs whose work might overlap, however tangentially, are encouraged to come to the talks or attend an informal conversation after the seminar. This might offer a candidate a positive sense of others at Bowdoin with whom he or she might work.

**IV. Retention and Faculty Development**

New faculty members face many challenges upon arriving at Bowdoin. They must establish their professional and personal lives while finding balance in their teaching, service, and research work, learn student and peer expectations, involve themselves in the campus community, and develop a support structure among colleagues. These challenges may be particularly acute for faculty from backgrounds without familiarity with a liberal arts college, or from groups underrepresented in Brunswick and Maine culture. If these initial challenges are not addressed in a satisfactory way, new faculty may fail to thrive or simply move on.

We view department and program chairs as having the primary responsibility for supporting and advising new faculty members, but we all bear a collective responsibility. We recommend that department chairs discuss potential mentors with new faculty members with the expectation that, through time, untenured faculty members would gain enough information to help them identify new or additional mentors themselves. Mentors should help new members develop professionally as teachers and researchers, understand expectations and college rules, and become members of the campus community both professionally and socially.

We strongly suggest that the untenured members of the Governance and Faculty Affairs Committee organize periodic meetings of the untenured faculty to address questions of common concern and to build community. In past years, such meetings have proved to be productive. In keeping with current practice, the Dean’s office should continue to organize periodic meetings of first year faculty as well as pre- and post-doc fellows.

To raise the visibility of diversity issues and presence of diverse scholars, we recommend that the Events Office and Lectures and Concerts Committee work to increase the offerings of programs discussing diversity issues. In particular, presentations by scholars from historically underrepresented groups should be given special consideration. In addition, in the case of temporary faculty vacancies, we recommend that
funds be raised so that distinguished scholars from historically underrepresented groups can be brought to campus as Distinguished Visitors.

We believe it important to further strengthen the college as a community where all members feel accepted and valued. To that end, students, staff, and faculty should work to create a constructive multicultural campus environment. We should recognize the variety of service activities that create and maintain a positive campus climate such as extraordinary mentoring activities or the organization of and participation in co-curricular activities and programs that contribute to a vibrant intellectual atmosphere.

As part of faculty development, we recommend that the college continue to build associations with other colleges such as the Mellon CBB collaborative and support the development and maintenance of outside connections that new faculty bring with them. As a long-term proposal to encourage research visibility and productivity, we recommend that Bowdoin establish a research institute. The institute could be organized on an annual or multiyear basis and bring in a nationally known scholar to be in residence to organize programs. Through time, we expect that the institute would become nationally known. The institute could formally involve our Consortium for Faculty Diversity (CFD) fellows as well as current faculty members.

V. Target of Opportunity Positions

In Spring 2008, the faculty passed a recommendation that the administration seek funding beyond the faculty positions allocated in the Capital Campaign to support “Target of Opportunity” hiring as a means of increasing faculty diversity. The present economic situation suggests that -- while a high priority -- funding for such positions may not be realized for some time. In the interim, three possibilities should be considered for potential target-of-opportunity hires.

1. Converting the line of a Consortium for Faculty Diversity (CFD) Fellow into a tenure-track position. In exceptional circumstances, a Department or Program may propose converting the line of an existing Consortium for Faculty Diversity Fellow into a tenure-track appointment. The Department or Program would need to make the case of the extraordinary potential of the candidate as a teacher and scholar, the curricular needs the candidate would fill, and the ways in which the candidate contributed to the diversity of the College. Such a change of status would mean the loss of one CFD line going forward, so any appointment will need to be considered with great care. If for some reason the faculty member appointed in this way left the College, the line would revert to the pool of CFD fellows and the department or program would have no specific claims on the line.

2. Filling one or more remaining campaign positions through targeted hiring as the positions are funded and authorized. Four positions remain to be funded in the campaign. Areas of specialization have already been allocated for two (hard rock geology and oceanography) and CEP narrowed the areas of specialization under consideration for the remaining positions to four existing proposals (Psychology, Neuroscience, GWS/GLS, and Film).
Funding these endowed positions remains a priority of the campaign. When funded, they could be filled by means of a targeted search within the already identified areas of specialization.

3. **“Mortgaging” a retirement for an early targeted-hire replacement.** With this approach, when a faculty member commits to a retirement at a specific future date, the Department or Program is allowed to proceed with a targeted search for the replacement rather than wait for the reauthorization. This allows the possibility of an extended period to identify an outstanding candidate for the replacement.

VI. Conclusion

Efforts to increase the diversity of the faculty will enable us to broaden the curriculum, push the boundaries of inquiry, better serve our students and community, and help us accomplish the mission of the college. We urge the college to confirm the priority of these efforts.