

Compact for Faculty Diversity

A Summary of:

“Progress and Promise: An Evaluation of the Compact for Faculty Diversity” (January 2000) Southern Regional Education Board. By Daryl Smith and Sharon Parker.

Focus

- Early Childhood
- Primary School
- Middle School
- Secondary School
- ✓ Postsecondary
- Extended Learning

Overview

Since its inception in 1993, the Compact for Faculty Diversity has linked three regional educational associations to create programs that support minority graduate students as they complete their doctorates and enter college or university teaching positions. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE) and the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) administer and oversee the Compact for Faculty Diversity in their respective regions. While each region’s implementation strategy is unique, all have two broad goals. First, the Compact for Faculty Diversity works with states and graduate institutions in each region to ensure that minority doctoral students have continuous funding and financial aid as they complete their doctorates. Second, the Compact fosters a community of established minority scholars and peers who support minority doctoral students as they complete their degrees and

POPULATION

From 1993 to the end of 1999, the program served 435 minority scholars: 259 (60%) were women, 305 (70%) African Americans, 82 (19%) Latino, 31 (7%) Native American, 13 (3%) Asian American, and 4 (1%) other. Though the evaluators did not give data on economic backgrounds of students, they wrote that “most of the [Compact scholars] do not come from highly privileged backgrounds. Moreover, they have not usually attended elite undergraduate institutions in which attendance at graduate school is part of the culture.”

enter the professional world. One way that the Compact for Faculty Diversity fosters this community is through an annual Institute for Teaching and Mentoring, which brings together minority graduate students and professors from across the country to discuss the possibilities and pitfalls in the world of higher education.

Key Findings

By the end of 1999, 92% of graduates served by the Compact for Faculty Diversity had completed or were continuing their degree programs. Eighty-four of the Compact scholars had completed their Ph.D., and of these:

- ◆ Seventy percent had earned faculty positions.
- ◆ Eighteen percent were in post-doctoral programs

- ◆ Twelve percent worked in college administration, industry, federal policy or as adjunct faculty

Evaluators favorably compared Compact’s 92% retention rate with a persistence figure of 40-50% regularly reported in general literature on graduate education.

Program Components

Compact's most visible component is the long-term financial support for minority graduate education; however, other program features accompany the financial aid:

- ◆ Environments of support were provided for scholars in their departments through orientation programs, faculty and peer mentors, academic activities and teaching activities.
- ◆ An annual institute for teaching and mentoring prepared Ph.D. candidates for college and university teaching. At the institute, participants shared their "lessons learned."
- ◆ Materials about minority recruitment and retention were distributed to participating schools.
- ◆ Assistance with faculty job searches was also provided.

"The results of the evaluation reflect extraordinary success for students participating in the Compact."

—Daryl Smith and Sharon Parker, evaluators,
Compact for Faculty Diversity

- ◆ Committees that included the scholars themselves, key administrators, mentors and other interested community members, were established to check on the progress of the student, intervene if issues emerged and provide general oversight.
- ◆ Continuity of funding helped students know that their academic paths would not be interrupted. In 2000, the SREB component of the Compact for Faculty Diversity provided an annual stipend of \$12,000 for three years plus \$500 in general academic support and \$1500 to attend the annual Compact institute. Partnering universities waived tuition and fees for Compact graduate students and provided an additional \$12,000 stipend for the fourth and fifth years of the degree program.

Contributing Factors

Support Network

It was not only funding, but a close network of personal support that retained Compact students. Regular contact with mentors, advisors and peers helped graduate students who may have otherwise felt isolated in their programs and on their campuses. According to the evaluators, "there are numerous opportunities at the campus, institute and program level where students can seek support and advice, and where interventions can take place that maximize opportunities for success."

Professional Socialization

"For the scholar, the institute provides locations for students to discuss, in a relatively safe environment, concerns, issues, successes and failures," noted the evaluators. The institute also allowed scholars to achieve "professional socialization" by providing an opportunity for meeting other scholars and faculty throughout the country and by providing an

"Given the intensity of graduate study, given the sense of isolation that many students experience in their programs and on their campuses, given limited access to family and peers who understand what they are doing, the design of the Compact is precisely what is required."

—Daryl Smith and Sharon Parker, evaluators,
Compact for Faculty Diversity

environment that develops a professional understanding of the faculty role, particularly in a rapidly changing higher education environment.

Peer and Professional Mentors

The Compact program connected participating graduate students to mentors of all backgrounds throughout the country who were committed to them personally and to diversity in higher education.

An added benefit of this national connection to mentors was it naturally transformed into a job network.

Alumni Involvement

Some Compact scholars developed an alumni group that provided support to current scholars. Compact alumni also formed a cadre of experts in diversifying faculty and graduate education.

Individualized Attention

Through the Compact program, many scholars received what would be their only opportunity to work one-on-one with a faculty member. Individual faculty members often developed a serious interest and engagement in the scholars and their experiences.

Evaluator Comments

Evaluators pointed out that, while the number of scholars served by the Compact program may have been small in comparison to other widespread national school programs, the impact is widened by the network of Compact alumni who then serve as mentors and role models for future scholars.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The evaluators examined data and documents throughout the six years of the program, including annual surveys of all students and annual evaluations of the Institute for Teaching and Mentoring in addition to conducting phone interviews, focus groups and campus visits. Finally, data from other minority graduate student fellowships allowed them to evaluate the relative impact of the strategies employed by the Compact for Faculty Diversity. Compact scholars are chosen for the program, so there is a self-selection bias in the study sample.

EVALUATION & PROGRAM FUNDING

The Ford Foundation and Pew Charitable Trust funded the research and development of the Compact for Diversity. The SREB, NEBHE and

WICHE jointly covered the operating expense of the program. The Ford Foundation funded the evaluation of the program in the late fall of 1998.

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

The graduate students served by the Compact for Faculty Diversity attended 103 graduate institutions in 35 states.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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