Chapter 27
Underrepresentation of Latina Faculty in Academia

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the contributing factors of the underrepresentation of Latina faculty in tenured positions in one higher education institution through a qualitative case study. The narratives from eight tenured Latina faculty in one state public four-year university in the southeast area of the United States were analyzed to identify barriers or supports these minority faculty experienced while working to achieve tenure. Five main themes emerged from the analysis: organizational exclusionary practices, white male-oriented culture where resources are used to benefit white males, demoralizing microaggressions from white faculty, the university leadership's lack of action and accountability to address diversity and inclusion challenges, and the lack of support networks and mentoring. This chapter addresses various reasons higher educational institutions need to remove barriers that negatively affect recruitment and retention of Latina faculty and provides recommendations to academic leaders to implement and hold everyone accountable to an inclusive academic environment.

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century university landscape has evolved in response to increased diversity in the general population and the movement towards a more global economy, as reflected in the races, ethnicities, genders, and ages of its students, faculty, and administration. Unfortunately, however, the level of ethnic diversity among faculty--particularly Latina faculty--has not kept pace with larger changes in the population and workforce (Kanter, 2011). As more Latino students enter college, Latina faculty are critical in serving both minority and non-minority students in an inclusive environment.

The general problem is that only a third of the 3% Latino faculty in higher education are Latinas, demonstrating a crisis in academia (U.S. Department of Education, 2019b; Machado-Casas, Ruiz, & Cantu, 2013). Among the many consequences of this statistic is the severe lack of Latina faculty to serve as mentors and supporters. Hispanic students thus find it more difficult to navigate their way to

and through college, which can contribute to a never-ending cycle; less prepared Latinos lack the role models they need, and therefore are less likely to fill those roles for younger generations who aspire to attend college (Santos & Reigadas, 2002). The impact on the broader community is an immeasurable loss of talent to society (Gonzalez, Murakami, & Nunez, 2013).

This chapter showcases a qualitative case study of underrepresented Latina faculty in a public state four-year university in the southeast area of the United States, and explores through their lived experiences how and why such underrepresentation persists. Framing the case study is a brief historical background leading to the present academic environment, and an overview of contributing factors to underrepresentation. The objective is to identify the practices, disparities, and barriers that contribute to the underrepresentation of Latina faculty, present new directions and ways of functioning in response to the new faces on campus, and suggest changes that higher education administration can make to support Latina faculty in securing tenure. Reflecting and responding to growing multi-ethnic and racial student populations by proactively focusing on the recruitment and retention of Latinas (Sanchez at al., 2013) would not only increase representation of Latina scholars, but contribute to a more equally diverse and inclusive academic environment, and help universities compete on more global scale.

BACKGROUND

Current Statistics and Challenges for Latina Faculty

Latinos or Hispanics, as named by the U.S. Census Bureau, continue to grow as the largest minority group, representing 59.9 million or 18.3% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). There has been a 63% increase in Latino attainment of bachelor's degrees between 1.9 million in 2004 and 3.1 million in 2013 (Excelencia in Education, 2015, p.9). However, Latinos still lag behind; in 2016, only 15% of Latino male and female adults 25 or older held bachelor's degrees, compared to 35% of Whites, 21% of African Americans, and 54% of Asians (U.S. Department of Education, 2019a, p. 162). Having the lowest educational attainment among the most significantly growing minority can negatively impact the Latino community in the global market, which requires workers with higher intellectual capital (Mellahi & Frynas, 2015).

With more Latino students enrolling in higher education, a critical strategy for supporting their unique needs is adequate representation among faculty (Martinez & Toutkoushian, 2014). In 2017, Latino faculty represented only three percent full-time professor rank compared to 81% of Whites, 4% of African American, and 9% of Asians; only one percent of Latino faculty were women (U.S. Department of Education, 2019b). When comparing female Latina faculty to women faculty overall, in 2017, 81% of total female faculty were White, nine percent were Asian, six percent were African American, and three percent were Latina (U.S. Department of Education, 2019b). Further, Latina faculty were significantly underrepresented in tenure positions; in senior college leadership roles, Latinos represented only four percent of higher-level administrators (Wilson & Myer, 2013, p.92).

Among the factors which to contribute to the underrepresentation of minority and female faculty is the concept of the "pipeline" for adequately qualified candidates. In this context, Latinos are earning more doctoral degrees than the past, increasing by 126% from 5,200 to 11,800 between 2000 and 2016, allowing more prepared candidates to pursue an academic career (U.S. Department of Education, 2019a). However, even with a larger pool of candidates, higher levels of representation in faculty roles has not

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