

## Putting A New Face On The Faculty

By GIL KLEIN Media General News Service

Published: Mar 25, 2007

WASHINGTON - A student can - and probably will - go through four years of college and never have a black or Hispanic professor.

Colleges and universities say they want to hire more minority professors, but the numbers remain small, especially in the sciences, mathematics and technology.

"If we are going to send the message to minority students they too can learn and they too should be on these campuses, we should be putting minority faculty in front of those classrooms," said Ansley Abraham of the Southern Regional Education Board, a nonprofit association that works to improve education in the South.

But the presence of professors of color is important not just for minority students, he said.

"It is also sending a message to majority-group students that they too can learn something from someone who doesn't look like them," he said.

Nationally, only about 5 percent of college faculty is African American and less than 5 percent is Hispanic. About half of minority faculty members teach at schools that serve mostly black or Hispanic students. That doesn't leave many in the rest of the country's colleges and universities.

The ranks of black faculty have been growing. But, Bruce Slater, editor of the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, said, "At the current rate of progress, it would take more than a century for racial parity in faculty positions to be achieved."

Lack of diversity among professors is not just a southern phenomenon.

"Geography is not an issue," said William Harvey, who in 2005 became the University of Virginia's first vice president for diversity and equity.

"I worked in New York and Wisconsin. I didn't see any more qualitative differences there than I do in Virginia," he said.

Universities need to encourage and support blacks and Hispanics to travel the long, difficult road to a Ph.D, Abraham said. When hiring new faculty, colleges and universities need to broaden their searches.

"You hear it all the time, 'We had the search and no one applied,'" Abraham said.

"Clearly what we see today is the result of institutions doing business as they always have."

Samuel Jones knows how hard it can be.

He grew up poor in Alabama and struggled for years to put himself through college and three masters degree programs in California. To get into a University of Alabama Ph.D. program in psychology, he made a special plea to the admissions committee.

Not once during all of those years did he have a black professor.

"There were times I wanted to quit," he said. "I had some professors who gave me a hard time. 'Your work is not of good quality. You're not doing well. Why are you here?' But I didn't give up."

Now he teaches psychology at Birmingham's Jefferson State Community College, where he was professor of the year in 2004. Yet even though minorities make up more than 30 percent of the student body, Jones is still the only full-time black professor in the liberal arts division, and one of about 20 in the college.

"If we don't have role models, a person who looks like us doing something, we think maybe this isn't an area I should go into," he said.

More blacks and Hispanics are attending college. By 2015 nationwide, 37 percent of college students are expected to be minorities. In some states - Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Maryland, New York, New Jersey and Texas - minority enrollment will exceed 40 percent.

The number of doctorates awarded to blacks hit a record 1,869 in 2004, representing more than 7 percent of all the Ph.D.s awarded in the United States. Forty-one percent of the doctorates were in education, earned by aspiring public school administrators.

In the sciences and math, blacks lag far behind whites. Blacks earned only 10 doctorates in mathematics and 13 in physics in 2004 - and not one in astronomy or astrophysics, according to the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education.

Delicia Munfus is one of the exceptions - "the one percent of the one percent," she says. A product of a poor Orlando neighborhood that was home mostly to blacks and immigrants, she recently completed a Ph.D. in microbiology at the University of Alabama in Birmingham and is working on a medical degree. Her dream is to teach and do research at a leading university.

At the University of Florida, she had no black teachers. Not until she attended a conference sponsored by a federal program aimed at minority college science students did she see her first black scientist with a Ph.D.

"I said, 'Wow, maybe I can do this,' " she recalls.

Many minority students with professorial potential are lured away by business or become doctors and lawyers.

Nisha Botchwey understands this pull. The daughter of Jamaican immigrants, she was accepted at Harvard after graduating first in her class at a Miami high school. She earned a Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania and teaches in the school of architecture at the University of Virginia. Her husband, Edward, is a biomedical engineering professor.

Many of Botchwey's peers took other routes.

"If the family has put you through college, cousins are helping buy your books and mom is working extra, the expectation is you will finish up and help the next cousin get through," she said. "You graduate from Harvard and you can get a job for \$60,000 a

year or you can become a graduate assistant at \$15,000."

Doctoral students sometimes find themselves isolated. Alexandria Graves received a doctorate at Virginia Tech before she started teaching soil science at North Carolina State University. She said many blacks and Hispanics drop out of Ph.D. programs because they can't get along with their faculty advisers.

"If you are a minority, it is harder to get an adviser who believes in you," she said.

Non-profit groups like the Southern Regional Education Board in Atlanta and the Florida Education Foundation in Tampa provide fellowships and academic support to minority students who are good prospects as college professors.

The Southern Regional Education Board, which has helped 300 blacks and Hispanics earn Ph.D.s in 13 years, was essential to Pablo Arriaza. He immigrated to Miami from Chile when he was 11 and will be the first Hispanic to get a Ph.D. from the University of Alabama's school of social work.

"It's an emotional care package," he said. "I know if I had a paper and I was freaking out at 3 in the morning, there will be somebody there I can call. They want to make sure we succeed."

Colleges and universities have the chance to change the ethnic makeup of the faculty as white baby boomers retire.

"We are projecting that 50 to 75 percent of our faculty who will be teaching in 2015 are not here yet," said Earl Lewis, Emory University's vice president for academic affairs.

"This is a prime moment for attracting minority professors."

That will require universities to change the way they recruit.

At most universities, hiring is done by departmental search committees.

"They create a job description that would attract faculty members much like themselves," said Carolina Turner, who advises universities on how to diversify faculty.

"They advertise the position in publications that most people like themselves read. They invite candidates for interviews who are similar to themselves."

And then they wonder why they can't diversify, she said.

But with more minority students in college, the value of finding more black and Hispanic teachers becomes evident.

Francisco Yegres, who was born in Venezuela, grew up in Tuscaloosa and is a junior at the University of Alabama, said his face lit up when he saw Pablo Arriaza was teaching one of his classes.

"I knew I was going to get another viewpoint," he said. "I didn't feel like I was alone. You feel like a minority everywhere you go here. But to have a professor you can talk to in Spanish after class and talk about our cultures, that means something."

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