

DIVERSITY & THE PH.D.

A REVIEW OF EFFORTS TO BROADEN RACE & ETHNICITY
IN U.S. DOCTORAL EDUCATION

**THE WOODROW WILSON
NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP FOUNDATION
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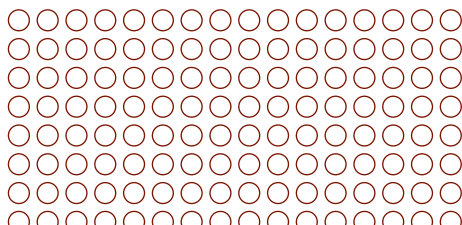
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- **PLEASE NOTE:** This report focuses on educational attainment among African Americans and Hispanics because they are the largest underrepresented groups in higher education, relative to their presence in the nation's population. Similar patterns hold for the very small number of American Indians in doctoral education—just 133 out of nearly 26,000 citizen Ph.D.s in 2003, comprising 0.5% of all U.S. doctoral recipients but 0.9% of the overall population. Asians, on the other hand, received 5.2% of all Ph.D.s granted to U.S. citizens in 2003, when they represented 4.1% of the population, and are therefore not considered underrepresented. (Data on these and other populations come from *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report 2003*, based on the Survey of Earned Doctorates (Chicago: University of Chicago [National Opinion Research Center], December 2004.) For that matter, while inequities of income and gender (in some fields, particularly the physical sciences) are also of concern, this particular report gives itself over to matters of race and ethnicity, on the grounds that these issues in doctoral education remain not only vexing, but also—as will become clear—politically and culturally difficult to address.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. **Doctoral education's diversity record is poor.** Despite some gains in recent years, by 2003 only 7 percent of all doctoral recipients were African American or Hispanic—11 percent, if international students are excluded—compared to 32 percent of doctoral-age U.S. citizens from those groups.
2. **It's getting worse.** Despite extraordinary support within and beyond academia for affirmative action admissions programs—as evidenced by the University of Michigan case—court challenges have had a significant chilling effect, resulting in a dilution of resources and a weakening of institutional will.
 - a) There has been a decided shift away from programs offering significant fellowship support for graduate study for minority students.
 - b) The level of financial support for minority doctoral students is also falling.
 - c) The change in the mix of support programs increasingly excludes midlevel minority applicants, many of whom in the past have gone on to successful graduate and postgraduate careers.
 - d) There has been a substantial decline in federal direct investment in doctoral education for minority students.
 - e) Aid packages are focusing more on need, on low-income students, and less on underrepresentation, resulting in a major reduction for minority student support.
 - f) As support for minority students is labeled euphemistically, fewer students of color become aware of possibilities for support.
3. Though a large number of programs still bolster opportunities for minority students, **there is no significant coalition** that might share strategies and information or that might attempt to coordinate efforts so that the overall national effort could become coherent.
4. With a few exceptions, **little data and only partial assessments are available.** Support for data collection has lessened. To a large degree, it is simply unclear what works best, or what does not work, in recruiting and retaining doctoral students of color.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Communication.** Programs must learn from each other and coordinate efforts to avoid overlap and gaps. This can be achieved by creation of an active consortium of organizations committed to the improvement of minority representation.
- 2. Research.** By assessment, educators can learn what strategies work and which do not. Longitudinal data is particularly necessary. More understanding and less reductive politicking on all sides will lead to better results—and a better society.
- 3. Vertical integration.** Graduate education, and especially doctoral education, must make alliances with efforts at school reform in K–12, ensuring that young students learn about the opportunities for an advanced degree. Graduate education must also form alliances with community colleges, with their large population of students of color.
- 4. Intellectual support.** Doctoral education and the various disciplines may engage in habitual practices—from the nature of student orientation programs to what is considered important in an academic field—that serve as a subtle discouragement to interest for students of color. The image of the doctorate, discipline by discipline, must become less abstract and more socially responsive in a non-reductive way.
- 5. Mentoring and professionalizing experiences.** One of the few verifiable results gleaned from actual experience demonstrates the importance of a wide range of mentoring activities, for all students but especially for students of color. Systems of financial support for minority students must not obviate participation in such professionalizing experiences as laboratory work in the sciences and teaching experience in all disciplines.
- 6. Race and need together.** These two efforts to even the playing field need not and should not be made oppositional and alternative, for such criteria as need or “first in family” will not provide anything akin to the same results in improving racial and ethnic diversity as programs frankly treating diversity as a goal.
- 7. Leadership.** The various federal agencies that have required programs to include faculty and students of color and to demonstrate their inclusiveness have, at the same time, provided little guidance or assistance to support these mandates. The federal government must take a more active role in such efforts.

PRESIDENT'S PREFACE

An expertise gap besets the United States. The Ph.D. cohort, source of the nation's college and university faculty, is not changing quickly enough to reflect the diversity of the nation. The next generation of college students will include dramatically more students of color, but their teachers will remain overwhelmingly white, because a white student is three times as likely as a student of color to earn the doctorate.

Doctoral programs have made less progress in diversifying than business, government, and other levels of education.

This expertise gap extends beyond the profession. It is also diminishing our national leadership in any number of professional endeavors, from determining economic policy to designing museums to inventing new pharmaceuticals. The Ph.D.s who lead the way in the world of thought and discovery are far more monochromatic than the population. In all, if diversity matters, it matters greatly at the doctoral level.

As this report indicates, higher education has demonstrated a real intent to diversify the American doctorate, and several major philanthropic foundations and government agencies have made mighty efforts to assist. Yet, while there has been real progress, these organizations confront powerful forces of history, as well as wide inequities in economic and social status.

The fact remains that doctoral programs have made significantly less progress in diversifying than have business and government, or for that matter other levels of the educational system. Even as we acknowledge the prodigious efforts and incremental progress made thus far, the nation and the academy must look frankly at the job ahead.

The dimensions of the challenge are startling. In 2003, roughly one in four Americans was African American or Hispanic—in fact, nearly one in three, within the usual age group for doctoral recipients¹—but only one in nine Ph.D.s conferred on U.S. citizens that year was awarded to an African American or Hispanic

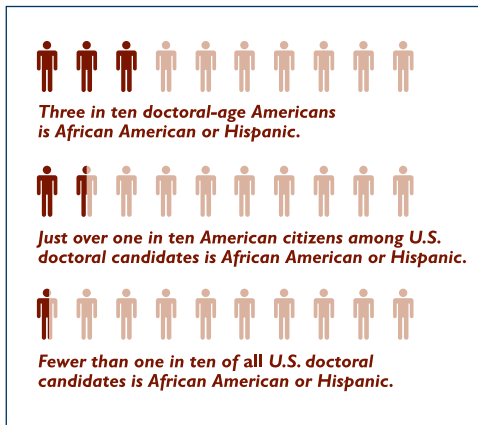
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student. When the full context of U.S. doctorates that same year is considered, including the one in three Ph.D.s that went to foreign students in 2003, fewer than one in fourteen of the total Ph.D.s awarded in U.S. universities that same year went to an African American or Hispanic U.S. citizen.²

Why be concerned with doctoral diversity? The reasons are practical, ethical, and intellectual. At the most pragmatic level, the nation must strengthen domestic doctoral

1. Typically late 20s to late 30s. See *Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities: Summary Report 2003*, from the Survey of Earned Doctorates (Chicago: University of Chicago [National Opinion Research Center], 2004), p. 61 (Table 17). Demographic data for the 25–40 age bracket derived from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Annual Estimates of the Population by Sex and Age of Hispanic or Latino Origin for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2003 and Annual Estimates of the Population by Sex and Age of Black or African American Alone or in Combination for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2003, accessed (respectively) at <<http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2003/NC-EST2003-04-12.xls>> and <<http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2003/NC-EST2003-04-04.xls>>.

2. The figures: Of 40,710 research doctorates awarded in 2003 in the United States, 26,413 went to U.S. citizens; of these citizens, 25,705 identified their race and ethnicity. Among these, 1,708 of new Ph.D.s in 2003 were African American and 1,270 were Hispanic. In the same year, 77,142,125 U.S. citizens were African American and/or Hispanic, or roughly 26.5%. See *Doctorate Recipients 2003*, especially pp. 4 and 50 (Table 8). Population data come from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Annual Estimates of the Population by Sex, Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2003 (accessed online at <<http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/NC-EST2003-srh.html>>).



enrollments to capitalize fully on the nation’s intellectual resources. The failure to do so is dramatized by a research dependence on foreign students, who received more than 35 percent of all U.S. doctoral degrees in 2003, and as many as one-half to two-thirds of Ph.D.s in engineering and the bench sciences. While U.S. doctoral institutions have boasted justly of serving as classrooms to the world, these circumstances render the nation vulnerable to changes in geopolitics and education that could leave the academic workforce vastly underpopulated. Indeed, recent studies suggest that overseas enrollment in American graduate schools is declining, a development perhaps predictable after 9/11, but troubling nonetheless for the academic market.³ For this reason alone, the United States needs to enroll a broader base of American citizens in its graduate programs.

While a strong presence of international students constitutes one desirable form of academic diversity, it must not substitute for the form of diversity we are discussing here. In 2003, nearly five times as many citizens of other nations

(some 14,300) earned U.S. doctorates as did U.S. citizens who are African American and Hispanic (roughly 3,000).⁴ The fact that so many more U.S. doctorates go to foreign students than to U.S. minority students raises another aspect of the issue: Educating the world’s students while neglecting significant groups of the national population is a vast inequality at the highest academic level. This situation diminishes the value of American citizenship for too many of our citizens, and runs counter to the founding principles of the United States.

However one might address practicalities and argue ethics, there is a fundamental academic reason to grapple with these issues. The

The presence of more faculty from under-represented groups can position universities to achieve greater successes.

diversification of the Ph.D. is in fact the diversification of the American mind, a way of ensuring the hybrid vigor of the national intellect. While the manner in which an individual thinks has any number of complex causes, cultural identity certainly plays a part. Academic disciplines also have their own cultures—habits of thought. The mingling of cultural and disciplinary habits guarantees the range and fullness of intellectual discovery that earns the epithet “cosmopolitan.” The diversification of the American mind is therefore not a politically correct platitude, but a first scholarly and pedagogical principle.⁵

3. See “New Survey Indicates Apparent Decline in New Enrollments of International Graduate Students at U.S. Universities,” NAFSA: Association of International Educators, November 10, 2004 <<http://www.nafsa.org/content/publicpolicy/forthemedia/enrollmentsurveyjointrelease.htm>>.

4. *Doctorate Recipients 2003*, Tables 8 and 11 (pp. 50–51, 54).

5. Academic conservatives often respond to this point by asking whether higher education institutions are not insufficiently diverse in terms of political

Diversity and the Ph.D., sponsored by grants from the Atlantic Philanthropies and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, is an integral part of the Responsive Ph.D. initiative at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. In this initiative, nineteen leading doctoral institutions have explored innovations in the arts and sciences Ph.D.: ways to promote more adventurous scholarship; provide better teaching preparation; forge stronger connections between graduate institutions and the

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social sectors they serve—including business, government, cultural and nonprofit organizations, the public schools, and undergraduate education in a variety of institutions; and increase diversity among doctoral students. The presence of more faculty from currently underrepresented minorities, Woodrow Wilson believes, can position universities to achieve greater successes in every one of these areas. Two meetings held in 2001 with leaders in doctoral education, including representatives from a number of the organizations described in this report, underlined and reinforced both that sentiment and the urgency of the need to focus on minority doctoral recruitment and retention.

Diversity and the Ph.D. surveys selected national programs that aim to improve the numbers of U.S. doctoral candidates of color. Not every program is included; rather, this is a large representative sample. Further, the report looks at national programs, not university-based programs designed to recruit and retain students of color; the latter constitute

one area among many others related to doctoral diversity that require further research. Many other

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quality programs not covered in this report have also sought to help diversify the American Ph.D.

In its analysis, *Diversity and the Ph.D.* is not liberal or conservative but impatient. In developing findings and recommendations, we have set a course that should not divide those supporting or opposed to affirmative action programs, so long as they accept the premise that a representative Ph.D. cohort would benefit both the academy and the nation as a whole. Moreover, the report deliberately limits its number of recommendations, to make their realization possible.

This document is intended not simply to report on the past, but to create an agenda for present action and future change. The past, in this case, is our enemy. The present is our challenge.

ROBERT WEISBUCH

President, The Woodrow Wilson
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belief, with a great preponderance of liberals in some disciplines. Our answer is yes, that this is a fully legitimate concern. It simply should not substitute for the concern we are treating here. The emphasis in the No Child Left Behind Act upon identifying achievement in K-12 by racial and ethnic groups implies strong agreement on this point across ideological lines.