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New Study: Revolving Door Undermines Efforts to Increase Faculty Racial/Ethnic Diversity

Report Shows Only Slight Increases in Underrepresented Minority Faculty, Higher Turnover Rates, at California Independent Colleges and Universities

SAN FRANCISCO — A new report released today revealed that colleges and universities are struggling to diversify because underrepresented minority faculty are leaving almost as fast as they can be hired. The report, “The Revolving Door for Underrepresented Minority Faculty in Higher Education”, was released today as part of The James Irvine Foundation Campus Diversity Initiative, coordinated by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and Claremont Graduate University (CGU). The report analyzed faculty hiring and retention data at 27 private colleges and universities in California between 2000 and 2004.

The report showed that underrepresented minority faculty — faculty who are African American, Latino/a and Native American/Alaska Native — increased from seven percent to nine percent during this period. This increase was limited in large part due to a high turnover rate among these faculty. The report showed that nearly three of every five newly hired underrepresented minority faculty were simply replacing other underrepresented minority faculty that had left the institutions.

The study further noted that colleges and universities are squandering an opportunity to diversify their faculty, given that faculty hired during large hiring waves in the 1960’s are at or near retirement age. The campuses in the study hired a full one-third of their total faculty during the study period.

“We are at risk of losing a whole generation of opportunity to diversify college and university faculty,” said the report’s lead author, José F. Moreno, Assistant Professor of Chicano and Latino Studies at California State University, Long Beach. “With the revolving door spinning minority faculty right back out, efforts to increase faculty diversity are simply not having the impact they should.”

Other report authors include Daryl G. Smith, Professor of Education at CGU; Alma R. Clayton-Pedersen, Vice President for Education & Institutional Renewal at AAC&U; Sharon Parker, Senior Research Associate at CGU; and Daniel Hiroyuki Teraguchi, Associate Director and Research Associate, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives and Director, Program for Health and Higher Education at AAC&U.

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The report included stark details on the lack of progress in faculty diversity:

- On average, the campuses in the study had a net increase of less than one African American faculty, less than one American Indian faculty, and slightly more than two Latino/a faculty.
- 58 percent of all new underrepresented minority hires simply took the place of underrepresented faculty who had left the institution.

“We hope this report will spur campus administrators and the academic community to answer important questions not yet explored in this research,” said Jim Canales, President and CEO of The James Irvine Foundation. “We need to understand what specific elements contribute to the revolving door so that we can address the unique experiences of underrepresented minority faculty.”

The report also included the following recommendations:

- Collect and review faculty hiring data annually.
- Measure the impact of the revolving door to assess whether racial/ethnic diversity is increasing.
- Collect qualitative data about why underrepresented minority faculty leave.
- Monitor the racial/ethnic diversity of the candidate pool for new faculty hires.
- Share information about hiring and retention processes.

Details on all of these recommendations can be found in the full report at www.irvine.org.

“In order to meet their diversity goals, campuses must focus as much on retention as they are on recruiting underrepresented minority faculty,” concluded report author Clayton-Pederson. “Otherwise, the revolving door will undermine even the best efforts to diversify college and university faculty.”

The James Irvine Foundation established the Campus Diversity Initiative (CDI) to help 28 independent colleges and universities in California address issues of diversity. The initiative supports a range of campus activities and institutional changes with the aim of increasing access and success of historically underrepresented students in higher education. Researchers from CGU and AAC&U designed and led the CDI Evaluation Project to assist the campuses in developing their own evaluation expertise and mechanisms. This report is the second in a series of research briefs and other reports that will be issued from the project.

To read the entire report online, visit The James Irvine Foundation Web site at www.irvine.org. To read more about the Campus Diversity Initiative, visit AAC&U’s Web site at www.aacu.org/irvinediveval.

AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,000 accredited public and private colleges and universities of every type and size. AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education at both the national and local levels and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

The James Irvine Foundation is a private, nonprofit grantmaking foundation dedicated to expanding opportunity for the people of California to participate in a vibrant, inclusive, and successful society. The Foundation’s grantmaking is organized around three program areas: Arts, Youth, and California Perspectives, which focuses on engaging new constituencies and infusing new ideas to improve public decision-making. Since 1937 the Foundation has provided more than \$900 million in grants to nonprofit organizations throughout California, and with current assets of more than \$1.5 billion, the Foundation expects to make grants of \$69 million in 2006 for the people of California.