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Recruiting a Critically Diverse and Inclusively Excellent Faculty through STRIDE Peer Education

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Introduction

This paper shares the University of Maryland, Baltimore County's (UMBC) adaptation of the work of the University of Michigan's peer education Committee on **S**trategies and **T**actics for **R**ecruiting to **I**mprove **D**iversity and **E**xcellence (STRIDE) to advance our efforts to recruit a more diverse and inclusively excellent faculty. In UMBC's iteration of STRIDE, six highly respected faculty fellows facilitate conversations and activities with search committees and departments to help them identify and implement actions to reduce implicit bias throughout the lifecycle of faculty searches. This paper details the institutional context of UMBC STRIDE's creation, describes our four-part recruitment-focused conversation series, and reflects on our progress and lessons learned. Through this review of STRIDE's peer education activities and approaches, we hope to support the efforts of other institutions to design and implement their own recruitment practices to foster faculty diversity and inclusion.

Framing the Institutional Context

UMBC is a mid-sized institution that the Carnegie Foundation classifies as Doctoral University - Higher Research Activity. In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education designated UMBC as a Minority Serving Institution (MSI). We are renowned as a model for inclusive excellence in higher education as a result of our success in preparing students from underrepresented backgrounds for the STEM workforce. Like most institutions, however, we struggle to recruit a more diverse faculty, especially those from underrepresented minority (URM) groups. Indeed, as of fall 2017, Black faculty represent only 7%, and Hispanic faculty only 5%, of our tenure-track faculty, while our student body is 17% Black and 7% Hispanic. We have made significant progress, however, in promoting gender diversity in STEM. In 2003, we received a $3.2-million National Science Foundation (NSF) ADVANCE Institutional Transformation (IT) grant to recruit, retain, and advance women tenure-track faculty in STEM. Under our ADVANCE program, we developed and implemented such policy and programmatic initiatives as a comprehensive Family Support Plan, the Eminent Scholar Mentoring Program for junior faculty, the ADVANCE Leadership Cohort program for tenured faculty, Diversity Hiring Recruitment Plans for faculty searches, and Implicit Bias Awareness trainings. These initiatives significantly improved the climate for women faculty in STEM and have resulted in a 77% increase in the number of tenure-track women STEM faculty (2003=30; 2017=53). Most notably, the number of women STEM full professors has increased by 200% (2003=5; 2017=15). Since institutionalizing the program in 2011, the ADVANCE Executive Committee, which includes 10 tenured women STEM faculty and 2 tenured men STEM faculty, provides advice and counsel to the Provost on all activities, programming, and interventions.

Building on the successes of our ADVANCE Program, in 2011, we launched a campus-wide Faculty Diversity Initiative to recruit, retain, and advance URM faculty. These efforts are led by the Committee on the Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement of URM faculty (URM Executive Committee), which recommends to the Provost the policies and initiatives we should implement to promote the ethnic and racial diversity of our faculty. Working in partnership with

the Provost, the URM Executive Committee expanded many of our programs from ADVANCE, initially for URM faculty, and then for all UMBC faculty. For example, all new assistant professors receive $3,000 in their start-up to participate in the Eminent Scholar Mentoring Program, and Diversity Hiring Recruitment Plans are now a requirement for the authorization of all faculty searches.

The URM Executive Committee has also established its own initiatives. In 2011, this committee piloted the UMBC Postdoctoral Fellowship for Faculty Diversity based on the program at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. This 2-year fellowship, open to any field represented at UMBC, prepares promising scholars committed to diversity in academia for the professoriate. Fellows receive a $48,000 stipend, funding for research and travel, mentorship to develop their independent research and teaching agendas, and they participate in professional development activities. Thus far, we have converted 50% of fellows (N=8) to tenure-track positions at UMBC, and just welcomed our largest cohort of 7 new fellows in July 2017. Expanding upon the successes of this fellowship, our College of Natural & Mathematical Sciences (CNMS) adapted a version of this fellowship for the life sciences. In this program, fellows, who often have already completed some postdoctoral work, are hired as research assistant professors. These fellows are also provided the same benefits as the original fellowship but are allotted additional funding for laboratory needs. Our faculty mentors also receive a stipend for providing the fellows with laboratory space and guidance on research and teaching. Our first round of applications has resulted in a new preprofessoriate fellow in our department of biological sciences and also has led to hiring a URM assistant professor. Overall, both fellowships have proven successful in introducing UMBC to scholars who might otherwise not have us on their radar and vice versa. These programs have also increased departmental investment in actively recruiting a more diverse and inclusively excellent faculty.

The URM Executive Committee has also looked for ways to use data analytics to assess UMBC's progress in diversifying our faculty. One of the primary means of doing so has been our acquisition of Interfolio's Faculty Search software, which has moved our faculty search process online. Interfolio's Faculty Search allows us to electronically receive and review applications. In the application review process, the software includes features that strengthen transparency and reduce implicit bias. Most important, Interfolio's Faculty Search's EEO questionnaire, voluntarily completed by applicants, provides us with data analytics to track and monitor the gender, ethnic, racial, and disability diversity of our applicant pool at all stages during a search.

Finally, the URM Executive Committee has encouraged the growth of our Community-Based Faculty Groups, the Women in Science in Engineering group, the Black Faculty Committee, the Latino Hispanic Faculty Association, the Asian & Asian American Faculty and Staff Council, the College of Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences Women's Faculty Network, and the LGBTQ Faculty & Staff Association. These informal grassroots networks serve to build community and support their members through mentoring, information sharing, policy development, and collaborative research and teaching. Each group also plays a vital role in the recruitment process by meeting informally over coffee with candidates during on-campus interviews.

Why a Peer Education Model

Notwithstanding the work of our ADVANCE Program and Faculty Diversity Initiatives, our URM Executive Committee and other constituencies argued that additional interventions were needed to ensure that all of our peers actively engaged in this work. Indeed, these groups contended that our URM faculty, including women in STEM and administrators, are the primary actors undertaking the majority of our work in our top/bottom change model. They correctly pointed out that an entire cross section of our faculty, mostly those from majority groups, were not actively engaged in this work. Their absence was most apparent in the faculty recruitment process. We knew that we needed a novel approach to engage and empower this subsection of our faculty peers so that they, too, were actively invested in creating more diverse and inclusive recruitment processes.

To find a solution, we first looked to best-practice literature and models at other institutions for guidance. After identifying potential models, we next participated in campus visits to learn more about these specific interventions. During a visit to the University of Michigan in spring 2013, we learned about their Committee on Strategies and Tactics for Recruiting to Improve Diversity and Excellence (STRIDE). Developed during their 2001 NSF ADVANCE IT grant, this initiative involves highly respected faculty who conduct Faculty Recruitment Workshops for their faculty peers involved in search processes. Through this peer education model, the STRIDE fellows share the negative impact of implicit bias in the search process, and they offer advice and best practices for search committees to increase the diversity of the applicant pool and, ultimately, the likelihood of hiring more diverse faculty. After learning about the University of Michigan STRIDE, we believed that peer education was a missing component from our programmatic initiatives. Indeed, our current efforts largely relied on the Deans to conduct implicit bias workshops or the Coordinator for Faculty Diversity to meet with search committees. Because our tactics were too top down, we were enthusiastic about the possibility of implementing a less hierarchical, peer-education model that allowed our faculty to provide collective support and advice. Consequently, we decided to pilot our own STRIDE Committee and began by inviting two Michigan STRIDE fellows to our campus to facilitate a training of administrators and a group of faculty leaders. Afterwards, in fall 2014, the URM Executive Committee nominated the Coordinator for Faculty Diversity Initiatives and ADVANCE as the Director of STRIDE, and we began to identify and select the members of the inaugural STRIDE Committee.

Identifying Fellows

During the 2014-2015 academic year, the Director of STRIDE, our Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs, and Deans worked together to identify and nominate the inaugural STRIDE fellows. We decided to have four initial fellows: two for our largest college of Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences; and one fellow, each, for our College of Natural & Mathematical Sciences and our College of Engineering & Information Technology. We also determined that our initial fellows should all be white. We based this decision on advice from the University of Michigan's STRIDE and literature that asserts that institutions disproportionately assess a cultural tax on faculty of color in the form of unrewarded and unrecognized service work, especially in the areas

of mentoring students and diversity efforts [1], [2]. This ethnic and racial composition also made sense to us given earlier arguments that, aside from administrators, it was our faculty of color who were engaged primarily in diversity work. Also, working from the University of Michigan STRIDE model, we decided to select fellows who did not have scholarly expertise in diversity and inclusion. Although this decision might seem counterintuitive, we believed it would send a powerful message to other majority faculty that regardless of our lived experiences or research portfolios, we all have a shared responsibility to engage in faculty diversity recruitment efforts. In the end, the Deans nominated four faculty who met these criteria, and all enthusiastically accepted the Provost's invitation to join the team. Our original STRIDE Committee included three men and one woman, two full professors (both men) and two associate professors (a man and a woman). Specifically, the inaugural team consisted of Dr. Susan McDonough, a medieval historian, who was past president of our LGBTQ Faculty & Staff Association, Dr. Kevin Omland, an evolutionary biologist, involved in our postdoctoral fellowship for faculty diversity, Dr. Chris Murphy, a clinical psychologist who studies family violence, who was also involved with the fellowship, and, finally, Dr. Wayne Lutters, a human-centered computing expert, who was involved with our ADVANCE program. As of fall 2017, we have two additional fellows, both of whom are international faculty, Dr. Nilanjan Banerjee, an Asian male associate professor, who is an experimental computer scientist, and Dr. Elsa Garcin, a White woman associate professor, who is a structural biologist.

Adapting STRIDE

In fall 2015, the inaugural fellows and the Director travelled to the University of Michigan to meet with their STRIDE team and view a live STRIDE workshop. This visit was key in providing the fellows with a model for conducting a peer education workshop on faculty recruitment and an in-person opportunity to ask questions to veteran STRIDE fellows, including their Director, about the success and challenges of leading such an initiative. The University of Michigan STRIDE team also provided us with a wealth of best-practice literature to start our own education process. Upon returning to UMBC, STRIDE immediately began holding biweekly meetings to familiarize ourselves with the literature and institutional context within which we were operating. In these meetings, we discussed a plethora of best-practice literature and Claude Steele's *Whistling Vivaldi* [3], Daniel Kahneman's *Thinking, Fast and Slow* [4], and Mahzarin Banaji's and Anthony Greenwald's *Blindspot: The Hidden Biases of Good People* [5]. STRIDE also reviewed numerous data reports generated from Interfolio's Faculty Search to understand the current state of the diversity of our applicant and interview pools.

We also began inviting thought leaders and advocates from across campus to behind-closed-door meetings to share their perspectives on diversity and inclusion. For example, we met with Dr. Tyson King-Meadows, former Co-Chair of the URM Executive Committee and Dr. Renetta G. Tull, the Associate Vice Provost for Strategic Initiatives and Director of UMBC's NSF-funded Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP) Program to listen to their thoughts and strategies on active recruitment. STRIDE also knew it was important to include members from our Community-Based Faculty Groups in naming the issues and shaping our work, so we hosted meetings with each group. We were also fortunate to have two colleagues,

Drs. Loren Henderson and Cedric Herring, share their scholarship on critical diversity, which argues for "the equal inclusion of people from varied backgrounds on a parity basis throughout all ranks and divisions of an organization" [6]. We also benefited from Herring's research that quantitatively demonstrates the positive relationship among the gender, ethnic, and racial diversity of faculty and departmental ranking [7]. All of these preparatory activities have equipped STRIDE with a language to help our peers understand both the benefits to diversity, and our collective vision of recruiting a critically diverse faculty.

Focused Conversation Model

One of the earliest challenges STRIDE faced was deciding on the appropriate way for us to engage with our faculty peers on these issues. At first, we considered following the University of Michigan STRIDE format, which consisted of a traditional workshop in which STRIDE fellows share information about implicit bias and best practices for its mitigation in the recruitment process. All of the fellows were comfortable with this approach, especially because we all attended a live training and had the materials. Although this was the easy solution, STRIDE knew that given the specific context and needs of UMBC, this approach would be lacking. Moreover, the Deans were already offering required implicit bias workshops. We were also concerned that while a workshop format might educate and raise awareness, our colleagues might need additional help applying this knowledge to their own searches. Still worse, we worried that a traditional workshop with lecturing and one-way communication might lead to more resistance because faculty might perceive they are under attack [8]. Additionally, we decided that a single event would not suffice because there are so many stages in a faculty search -- from selecting search committee members, developing a job advertisement and formulating an active recruitment strategy to creating shared evaluation criteria, reviewing and deliberating applications, and the interview and selection process.

After taking time to discuss and consider various formats and approaches, we ultimately decided to host a series of events that focused on four specific stages in a search: 1) Planning for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence in Your Search; 2) Creating Shared Evaluation Criteria; 3) Best Practices for Inclusive Excellence in the Application Review Process; and 4) Best Practices for Inclusive Excellence in the Interview and Selection Process. We also identified the Focused Conversation Model as the best mechanism for framing our engagement with our peers because of its participatory and problem-based mode of inquiry. This model has four main components:

> 1) The Objective Level: questions about facts and external reality;
> 2) The Reflective Level: questions to call forth immediate personal reaction to the data, an internal response, sometimes emotions or feelings, hidden images and associations with the facts;
> 3) The Interpretive Level: questions to draw out meaning, values, significance, and implications;
> 4) The Decisional Level: questions to elicit resolution, bring the conversation to a close, and enable the group to make a resolve about the future

[9].

In STRIDE's operationalization of the Focused Conversation Model in each of our topical events we always 1) develop activities around specific problems, artifacts, scenarios, and/or data from our institution (objective level); 2) encourage participation in discussions, reaction, and sharing of personal experiences from activities (reflective level); 3) facilitate conversations about how we can together work through problems using best practice literature or experience (interpretive level); and 4) collectively develop takeaways, solutions, and new approaches that can be implemented (decisional level). As of fall 2017, we have facilitated each focused conversation at least twice. After each conversation, we rely on feedback from our peers, new literature, conversations in departmental consultations, or developments on campus to revise and refresh our content. In the remainder of this paper, STRIDE details the activities from each Focused Conversation.

Planning for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence in Your Search

The first focused conversation in our recruitment series is Planning for Diversity and Inclusive Excellence in Your Search. STRIDE offers this conversation each May and September because some searches begin over the summer, while others start in the fall. This conversation focuses on two components of the Diversity Hiring Recruitment Plan, an active recruitment strategy, and a draft position advertisement. Given that UMBC requires all search committees to craft and submit a Diversity Hiring Recruitment Plan for approval prior to authorization to advertise, STRIDE believed this was the most appropriate place to begin our work. At the beginning of the session, we facilitate an activity on creating an active recruitment strategy with the goal of assembling the most diverse pool of talent for the search. In this activity, our peers, organized in small groups, are given the scenario of being members of a search committee for an interdisciplinary position. They are tasked with developing at least three novel recruitment tactics that are active and involve direct outreach that they believe might produce a more diverse applicant pool. This activity has led to faculty identifying such novel ways to connect with applicants as attending new conferences, developing relationships doctoral programs at other institutions and also emerging scholars, and using social media as a recruitment tool.

Our second activity focuses on developing the position advertisement. Our intent here is to strategize how to deliberately construct advertisements that are inclusive and welcoming and move beyond boilerplate affirmative action statements. To do so, we provide colleagues with a selection of past job advertisements from UMBC, sometimes from other institutions, and ask them to assess their strengths and weaknesses. We also provide a list of inclusive language models we have collected from other institutions. Through this activity, we reframe the job advertisement as an invitation to potential applicants who may not be familiar with UMBC. Together, we consider alternative and new approaches to describing the criteria for the position, our student body, department, institution, research opportunities, and even surrounding Baltimore/D.C. metro area that might attract a more diverse applicant pool. This activity has proved beneficial because it allows participants to see examples from other departments and begin to apply such practices to their own advertisements. In this activity, we also consider the benefits of requesting a statement of commitment to inclusive excellence in higher education from applicants. Like teaching and research statements, this inclusive excellence statement allows committees to solicit information from the applicants that they can then use to evaluate

their dedication to this institutional goal, again putting diversity and inclusive excellence at the center of the search.

Creating Shared Evaluation Criteria

We offer our second focused conversation, Creating Shared Evaluation Criteria, later in the fall. This conversation has one main activity that again uses current job advertisements, but this time from outside institutions. STRIDE intentionally selects advertisements from institutions that are hiring in similar areas, use inclusive language, and also request a statement on commitment to inclusive excellence in higher education. Using outside advertisements also reminds us of the other institutions we are competing with for talent. For the activity, we ask each small group to develop some initial criteria to evaluate applications. Here, we collectively discover the importance of linking the evaluation criteria to the requirements asked for in the job advertisement. We also directly confront the difficulty a search committee faces in reaching consensus about what constitutes excellence in research, teaching, and inclusion. A significant portion of this conversation is also devoted to modeling how to create metrics to assess the inclusive excellence statement, which is a new application requirement for most of our searches. We offer the following general guidelines, which can be tailored to the needs of departments: 1) an awareness of challenges underrepresented groups face in higher education and their consequences; and 2) a track record or a plan for contributing to our institution's mission of inclusive excellence. The key takeaway from these activities is that search committee members and departments should develop their own specific vision for critical diversity and inclusive excellence, and that they make time to frequently discuss and agree upon criteria prior to the review of applications.

Best Practices for Inclusive Excellence in the Application Review Process

Our third conversation, Best Practices for Inclusive Excellence in the Application Review Process, occurs in the middle of the semester. Developing this conversation was the most difficult because we were most comfortable with the traditional implicit bias workshop approach that shares findings from the literature on the impact of time pressures and cognitive shortcuts [10], and implicit biases in CV reviews [11], [12], [13], letters of recommendation [14], [15] etc. Again, this approach was not going to serve our overarching goals of discussing these topics in an affirmative, active, and engaging manner. We ultimately decided that a play would be the best way to address implicit bias in the application review process. As inspiration, we drew upon the University of Michigan's Center for Research on Teaching and Learning (CRLT) Players' spring 2016 performance of "Navigating Departmental Politics" at our campus. In this play, the CRLT Players acted out the ways in which implicit biases and power dynamics can derail the work of a search committee, followed by audience debrief and discussion. Our STRIDE believed in developing its own play because we could act out occurrences of implicit bias and power dynamics we have seen at our institution, while also seeding the performance with examples from the literature.

Our play has two acts. In Act I, our fellows assume the characters of search committee members conducting individual reviews of applications before the search committee meeting to choose the on-campus interviews. The fictional individual reviews are based directly on what we, as faculty,

have experienced on search committees or read about in the literature. Following Act I, we facilitate a debrief and use the following three questions as a guide: 1) What went well in the individual reviews?; 2) Where did implicit (or even explicit) bias creep into the individual review process?; and 3) What could we do to improve the dynamics of these individual reviews? To ensure that this conversation develops organically and harnesses the collective wisdom in the room, we also encourage our colleagues to pose additional questions and share their own knowledge, experiences, and insights.

In Act II, STRIDE performs a fictional search committee meeting to select the top five candidates for on-campus interviews. The search committee meeting in Act II is directly influenced by the individual reviews from Act I, and also includes the new characters of the search committee chair, department chair, and a junior faculty member. Adding these additional characters allows us theatrically to explore the power differentials between faculty, along with implicit biases, and to illustrate just how complicated an unstructured process can become. At the conclusion of Act II, we again moderate a conversation guided by three questions: 1) How did the individual reviews impact the dynamics of the group review?; 2) What is your impression of the overall dynamics of that meeting?; and 3) What are some suggestions for improving this process? In the discussion, we again provide space for our colleagues to raise other questions and to take the lead on "unpacking" these skits. Our performances of this focused conversation have resulted in enriching discussions with our colleagues, and not only have they raised awareness around issues in application review on our own campus, individual and collective, but they also have provided an arena for us to brainstorm actions that we can implement to mitigate the impact of bias in this part of the search process.

Best Practices for Inclusive Excellence in the Interview and Selection Process

Our final focused conversation is on Best Practices for Inclusive Excellence in the Interview and Selection Process. We offer this conversation at the end of the fall semester and again at the beginning of each spring semester because of differences in the timeline of each search. In this session, we rethink our interview processes and protocols to reduce bias and foster inclusivity. We begin this session by asking participants to remember welcoming and unwelcoming practices they experienced from their own faculty job search. STRIDE fellows likewise share their own personal experiences from their interviews. After this icebreaker, our next activity involves groups of peers reading through three interview scenarios, which are seeded with good practices and problematic practices. Through this activity, we are able to evaluate interview protocols and to consider new ways that committees and departments can structure interviews that are welcoming and inclusive; moreover, this activity helps in formulating evaluation criteria and feedback mechanisms to aid in the selection and offer process. We also share a list of illegal questions and reinforce the importance of information that search committees need to know versus information they would like to know. The main takeaways from this conversation are for search committees to cultivate mindfulness around the interview experience and to recognize that they are in the position of selling not only the position, but also UMBC and our larger community. Regardless of whether we make an offer to a candidate, we want them to have a good experience at UMBC. As a result of participating in this focused conversation, search committees have revised their own interview protocols to include more input from candidates, more inclusive interview activities, strategic interview questions, defined roles for those faculty

involved in the interviews, and also transparent and timely metrics for the evaluation, selection, and offer process.

Progress and Lessons Learned

As our STRIDE team enters its third year of activities, we now have an opportunity to reflect and take stock of our progress and the lessons learned. Overall, we believe that our focused conversation approach, with its action-oriented activities, has engaged a larger cross section of our majority faculty in our diversity recruitment efforts. These focused conversations have also led to more targeted work with individual search committees and departments. After focused conversations, STRIDE has received invitations to meet one-on-one for specific consultations that have produced active recruitment strategies, job advertisements, evaluation criteria, and interview protocols. Indeed, this academic year alone, STRIDE has consulted with 13 departments and/or search committees.

We do, however, acknowledge the challenges of undertaking this work. Although our initiative has been an overall success, we have also had to navigate resistance and skepticism among some of our peers. We strongly believe that these contentious dialogues, while demanding, are also rewarding because they challenge STRIDE to learn more and consider other approaches to working with our peers. One of the ways we try to overcome these challenges is always to meet our peers wherever they are, whether they are ready to take action or simply to participate in an initial discussion. Relatedly, we recognize that change is incremental and that any movement in the right direction is meaningful. Witnessing such changes and improvements in our peers' demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusive excellence in the recruitment process, especially a reduction in their initial skepticism, is rewarding. Overall, incorporating STRIDE into our institution's range of programmatic initiatives to recruit, retain, and advance a diverse and inclusively excellent faculty has allowed us to distribute more equitably the service work of diversity and inclusion, and to engage and empower more of our faculty peers. We ultimately hope that this paper functions as a form of interinstitutional peer education that inspires our colleagues to adapt and expand UMBC' STRIDE approach to advance their diversity-and-inclusion-related recruitment efforts.

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