



Faculty and Staff Diversity Forum, February 24, 2016

On February 24, Rackham hosted a Faculty and Staff Diversity Forum, to get the perspective of faculty and staff on similar questions that were posed to students at the December event. A follow up event was scheduled for students on February 24, but it was cancelled due to inclement weather.

The table discussions from the event are organized into common themes below. “Programs” here refers to the graduate degree programs in schools, colleges, units, and departments across the university.

Question 1: What are the issues and challenges from your position you see facing students?

Lack of Academic Preparation

- Students arrive with differing levels of academic preparation
- There is stigma around seeking academic support/tutoring
- Programs may not look at the potential of applicants, but rather their preparation

Funding and Finances

- Some students have to support family
- Students have trouble affording the cost of living in Ann Arbor
- Master’s students don’t have access to as many funding resources
- International students don’t have access to as much fellowship funding
- There are few sources of summer funding
- First-generation students may not know to apply for or ask for funding, and may be pressured to leave with a master’s to begin earning money

Recruitment

- There is not a critical mass of diverse students in programs
- Programs are struggling with recruitment and how to be effective at it
- There is a strong competition for underrepresented minorities and U-M can’t always compete financially
- It can be difficult for programs with few underrepresented minorities to help these students connect to a broader community
- Recruiting diverse faculty can be challenging



Classroom Issues

- Large proportion of undergraduates are White and come from privileged backgrounds
- There tends to be bias against GSIs who are non-native English speakers
- There are incivilities against underrepresented minority GSIs

Communications from Rackham

- There is uncertainty about the requirement of looking at GRE scores in admissions decisions
- There is uncertainty about Rackham Merit Fellowship (RMF) eligibility requirements
- Some programs have problems communicating with Rackham

Participation

- Faculty, especially senior faculty, tend not to participate in training and activities around diversity
- Some students don't feel like they should be/are allowed to be in the conversation about diversity, equity and inclusion
- Underrepresented minority students have to spend a lot of time participating in these discussions

Climate

- The climate in some programs feels unwelcoming to students
- Faculty may be unapproachable or contribute negatively to climate
- Underrepresented minority faculty tend to be overburdened with demands on their time based on this identity, and this extra work isn't valued
- When women are underrepresented in programs they, first-gens and low socioeconomic status students feel marginalized
- Gender inequality for women faculty and students
- Sexual misconduct policy has discouraged interaction among faculty and students of the opposite sex

Inclusion

- There are parallels for the exclusion of underrepresented minority students and international students
- Master's students may struggle to find community and connections in the short time they are on campus, and they may not be as adequately supported/prioritized as Ph.D. students
- There is inadequate support for transgender students on campus
- Finding community can be difficult in programs with small cohorts

Updated: November 17, 2017

Source: rackham.umich.edu/downloads/rackham-diversity-forum-02242016.pdf

Rackham Graduate School, University of Michigan
915 E. Washington Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109 USA
Phone: (734) 764-4400, Fax: (734) 615-3832



Cultural Differences

- Navigating the U.S. educational system can be problematic
- International students are not adequately supported
- Faculty and staff need support in how to help international students
- Group work may disadvantage international students

Lack of Knowledge of Resources

- Students aren't aware that Rackham offers resources and support

Question 2: What are your ideas to leverage Rackham as a partner or collaborate to address these issues?

Mentoring

- Support student understanding of what is expected of them, and communicate these expectations with faculty
- Provide resources and training for faculty to be better mentors and how to mentor diverse groups of students
- Increase the reach and scope of the MORE mentoring workshops
- Support students in their future roles as junior faculty
- Require RMF faculty/student pairs to participate in mentoring activities
- Incorporate mentoring information at new faculty orientation

Academic Preparation

- Offer programs/support for students prior to starting in the fall to help bridge gaps in preparation
- Provide funds for tutoring
- Offer staged information sessions throughout a student's graduate career

Funding and Finances

- Advertise available funds to support students (and broaden access to current funds)
- Offer more of these types of funds (e.g., emergency funds, summer funding, Center for the Education of Women funds)
- Increase travel funds (or amount of)
- Advocate for affordable housing
- Support students in learning about finances



- Offer diversity training for faculty, particularly for those in roles/committees (e.g., admissions committee)
- Provide incentives for faculty to participate in training instead of punishing them for not participating
- Encourage all faculty to attend training activities, as some senior faculty may engage less in these activities
- Offer training to staff so they may better support graduate students
- Rackham could play a supportive role in training efforts, as U-M units are being overtapped (e.g., Intergroup Relations, Spectrum Center)
- Offer “layered” training vs. one size fits all since everyone isn’t at the same level

Diversity Definition and Values

- It is important for us to communicate our institutional values around diversity
- Be clear that diversity is broadly defined, i.e., not limited to race/ethnicity and gender

Orientation

- Rackham should partner with schools and colleges to share information at orientation activities
- Introduce Rackham early on as an extra resource for students

Recruitment

- Rackham should provide more support in sharing best practices
- Rackham should provide more guidance about recruitment grants

Rackham’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Efforts

- Rackham needs to bring faculty, staff, and students together in diversity, equity, and inclusion discussions and efforts
- Rackham should go out to schools and colleges and learn what they are doing with diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Rackham needs to share information with programs about what it is doing

Student Involvement

- Rackham should suggest that programs involve students in admissions committees and provide guidelines about how to do this successfully (and other ways to involve students in department/program-level decision-making)
- Have student Rackham liaisons with departments

Updated: November 17, 2017

Source: rackham.umich.edu/downloads/rackham-diversity-forum-02242016.pdf

Rackham Graduate School, University of Michigan
915 E. Washington Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109 USA
Phone: (734) 764-4400, Fax: (734) 615-3832



- Bring students together to work on climate

Other Rackham Activities

- Rackham should examine the Faculty Allies structure and define the role more clearly and possibly tie RMF funding to the program
- Rackham can help connect students to a broader community outside of their program
- Offer more RMFs
- Support students pursuing non-academic careers
- Improve Rackham/department communication and partnerships
- Share best practices among departments (successes as well as failures)

University-wide Needs

- We need a system to report incidents on campus (e.g., microaggressions) and/or a person to go to discuss problems
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts/service should be recognized in faculty yearly reviews
- Successful mentoring should also be recognized in faculty yearly reviews