Leveraging BIPOC Faculty Counterspaces: Lessons for Organizational Change from Aspire's IThrive Collective

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Despite decades of effort to increase the diversity of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) faculty in the United States, the faculty has not grown significantly more diverse and still fails to represent the composition of the US labor force (National Science Foundation [NSF], 2019). A diverse STEM faculty contributes a wider variety of perspectives to public discourse, knowledge, and innovation; enhances the learning environment for all STEM students; and helps public institutions better serve their communities (National Academies, 2007). The vision of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Eddie Bernice Johnson (EBJ) INCLUDES program is to catalyze the STEM enterprise to collaboratively result in a STEM workforce that reflects the diversity of the U.S. population (NSF, n.d.). The NSF EBJ INCLUDES Aspire Alliance (Aspire) develops the capacity of faculty and other institutional leaders to adopt inclusive practices and develop institutional policies and practices that create the environmental conditions where diverse and inclusive faculty thrive (Aspire Alliance [Aspire], n.d.a). The goal is that institutions of higher learning will, in turn, revise their disciplinary cultures and attract, retain, and advance students and faculty from underrepresented groups (URG) in STEM.

One of the pillars of Aspire is the Institutional Change (IChange) Network, which brings together senior leaders and institutional change agents in a community of transformation (Aspire, n.d.b). The IChange Network supports institutional leaders in a data-informed, people-focused self-assessment and action-planning process to address organizational structures, policies, and practices that maintain inequities in academia. The goals of IChange are to support institutions to look, act, and feel differently. Institutions look different as institutional leadership and STEM faculty are diverse at all levels of the institution. Institutions act differently as policies, practices, and decision-making are equity-oriented to reduce or remove barriers to participation for URG STEM faculty and faculty aspirants through faculty recruitment, hiring, and retention; cultivate, value, and reward inclusivity in all STEM faculty interactions with students and colleagues; and hire or advance institutional leaders from STEM URG backgrounds. Institutions feel different as URG faculty feel welcome, included, supported, and valued due to institutional cultures that actively provide support for, appreciate, and reward diversity and inclusivity.

In the aspirational design of the IChange Network, participating institutions were asked to develop change teams that included diverse stakeholders, including STEM faculty from groups historically marginalized and/or underrepresented within the academy and disciplines at large. With this intention of inclusive practice, the project evolved from calling for the participation of minoritized faculty in IChange teams to calling attention to the often-unrecognized labor of minoritized faculty in higher education settings. IChange continuously improved "team formation guidance" to take into account the tensions of centering URG voices while not burdening them with the responsibility for change. The guidance included explicit encouragement for institutional leaders to balance the workloads of engaged faculty and to compensate people for consultative work. This practice of recognizing and valuing the voices and the work of URG faculty is an important shift away from burdening people from underrepresented groups with fixing the institution.

While this effort to include, value, compensate, and support the voices of underrepresented faculty within the work of IChange was important, it ignored the risks posed to minoritized faculty for communicating their perceptions, experiences, and opinions about change. Often in higher education, those who offer critiques to advance equity, inclusion, and diversity become labeled the problem (Ahmed, 2008). As a result, there is a lack of safety for URG faculty as individuals to provide critiques of academia more broadly and institutional systems specifically. One possible solution to reduce these risks is to provide avenues for collective, rather than individual, voice through a "counterspace," or site of collective resistance that can interrupt power systems and dynamics (Case & Hunter, 2012; Keels, 2020).

To provide critical mass and counterspace for URG STEM faculty voices, IChange developed the IThrive Collective. IThrive enhances the professional success of URG STEM faculty by promoting connection, collaboration, and community among Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) faculty across IChange Network institutions, informing how ICN institutions should value and facilitate BIPOC-centered faculty success, and providing guidance to IChange Network leaders on how to best support BIPOC faculty and leaders (Aspire, n.d.c). These reinforcing activities have the potential to change how institutions look, act, and feel by centering equity and the voices of BIPOC constituents in structure, policy, practice, and decision-making.

Counterspaces, especially in STEM, can serve as sites of resistance and community for marginalized and minoritized groups and allow individuals to work collectively to define alternative standards of success, collaboration, and support (Case & Hunter, 2012; Keels, 2020; Ong et al., 2018; Solórzano et al., 2000). BIPOC faculty have long been calling for changes in how universities operate to increase inclusion and equity for themselves and their community. These calls for change have only increased as national attention on issues of racial justice has been renewed in response to nationwide protests in the wake of George Floyd's murder in 2020 and as the COVID-19 pandemic has further revealed the extent to which universities have relied on the unrewarded service labor of BIPOC faculty to support students and communities. Despite these ongoing calls for change, individual institutions continue to be slow to change in substantial ways.

There are multiple possible reasons for this resistance to change: external pressures on organizations to adhere to field-wide notions of prestige, quality, and success (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), as well as organizational members' discomfort with change (Nadia et al., 2020) and/or racialized structures (Ray, 2019) within these organizations. It is possible that one or all of these reasons could account for the differences between how BIPOC faculty envision the future of academia and how institutions attempt to change to support those faculty. This paper explores the differences in visions for institutional transformation to meet URG STEM faculty needs between a counterspace community (the IThrive Collective) and an institutional transformation community (the IChange Network) and makes recommendations for how those

leading institutional transformation projects might incorporate counterspaces to better meet their diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

Review of Literature

The literature on BIPOC faculty has documented longstanding patterns of marginalization, discrimination, and unrewarded labor in the academy, despite ongoing efforts to increase the diversity of the professoriate generally and in STEM specifically (Griffin, 2020). Despite the changing demographics of undergraduate and graduate student populations, the professoriate in the United States fails to reflect the diversity of the students they educate and the populations they serve. Faculty of color are more likely to hold non-tenure-track positions as lecturers, instructors, and other non-ranked positions, hold only 20% of full-time faculty positions across the academy, and only 15% of the department head and chair roles (Taylor et al., 2020).

The contributions of BIPOC faculty to institutions of higher education are plentiful. These contributions often include a deep commitment to teaching and student learning, including adopting inclusive and engaging pedagogies, and educating a larger proportion of students through their role as instructors and lecturers (Griffin, 2020). BIPOC faculty often play a critical role in supporting and mentoring BIPOC and other students, helping institutions retain and graduate these student populations at a level far beyond their white colleagues, both due to their intentional relationship development activities and through being possibility models for students from a variety of backgrounds (Griffin, 2020). In the research domain, BIPOC faculty are often on the front lines of designing and executing research that centers the experiences of marginalized communities, explores innovative topics and/or alternative perspectives, and engages communities to ensure that the knowledge produced is truly serving external communities (Griffin, 2020).

Alongside these crucial contributions, BIPOC faculty encounter a variety of institutional and relational challenges at historically white institutions that stem from systemic racialized patterns within the academy (White-Lewis et al., 2022). An overall challenge is climate for BIPOC faculty, including experiences of microaggressions, stereotyping, and harassment, and even failure to be seen as faculty by fellow professors, students, staff, and parents, leading to stress that affects faculty productivity and thriving (Fries-Britt et al., 2011; Griffin, 2020). Within these chilly climates, BIPOC faculty often experience challenges to their academic competence and authority in teaching and research activities, isolation as being one of the only or few people of their identities in their departments or colleges, inequitable distributions of teaching and service assignments, and no or only perfunctory mentoring (Bavishi et al., 2010; Ford, 2011; Griffin et al., 2013; Griffin, 2020; Jackson, 2004; Porter, 2007). These dynamics serve as the backdrop for tenure and promotion decisions that often result in some BIPOC faculty's evaluation as not being ready, not completing the right kinds of work in terms of service or research, and ultimately not advancing in their careers (Griffin et al., 2013; Griffin, 2020).

Given these clear barriers to success that are persistent across most historically white institutions of higher education and the continued demands to ensure a vital, diverse, and thriving STEM workforce of the future, it would behoove institutions of higher education to engage in organizational change to enhance the climate and ultimate institutional experience of BIPOC faculty (Doyle & George, 2008). Despite long term investments from a variety of federal funding agencies, private donors, state legislatures, and other critical investors in higher education, institutional change, especially in service of equity, remains difficult to facilitate and make happen (Holck, 2016).

Institutions of higher education as organizations face a variety of competing pressures that could serve as levers for or against change in support of BIPOC faculty. One motivation for change is institutions' dependency on external resources (such as the funding sources listed above) which demand a change in activity, focus, or priority in exchange for funding to sustain mission-critical activities (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1976). Federal grant programs such as NSF ADVANCE and NSF AGEP have been critical drivers of change for the pathways into and through the professoriate. The legal and legislative context, including federal and state law, judicial case law, and other sources of regulations, continue to add complexity to efforts to advance equity as some states seek to restrain affirmative action, the content of educational programming as it relates to race and racism, and bolster protections of free speech at the expense of BIPOC student wellness and safety (Fischer, 2019; Flaherty, 2021). In addition to these external pressures is the perennial focus on perceived competitiveness and prestige, which often results in institutions of higher education putting increasing emphasis on research productivity at the expense of other core mission activities (DiMaggio & Powell, 1993; O'Meara, 2007; O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2011).

These external pressures to change, however, must be mediated within the internal tensions surrounding change for institutions of higher education and the perceptions and desires of the faculty, students, and staff that make up universities. The ability and long-term effects of executing diversity initiatives in large organizations like institutions of higher education have been a subject of much debate over the world. Internally, organizations must attend to the role, understanding, and leadership style of both formal and informal leaders of change (Adserias et al., 2017; Doyle and George, 2008; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2009), frameworks for moving organizations to enhanced inclusivity (Garcia et al., 2001; Jackson & Holvino, 1988; Minors, 1996) and the role of engaging employees' (i.e., faculty and staff) voices in the change process (Green, 2018; Keels, 2020; MacGillivray & Golden, 2007; Van Aken et al., 1994).

In terms of leadership of change, Tatli and Özbilgin (2009) suggest that when evaluating the effectiveness of senior-level leaders' positioning for change, one should consider the leader's *situatedness, relationality, and praxis.* Situatedness involves their position of power to facilitate change, while relationality involves their interaction with other key stakeholders. Praxis is a more non-linear aspect that points to the intersection of reflection and action, and knowledge and practice. Adserias et al. (2017) reviewed several case studies and outlined several leadership styles successful senior leaders have employed to create change within institutions. Some of the leadership styles in their analysis included reciprocal empowerment (Chun and Evans, 2009); political framing (Kezar, 2008); transformational leadership (Anderson, 2008); and strategic diversity leadership (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2013). To achieve and measure diversity integration, Doyle and George (2008) propose that organizations would not only devote financial resources to such efforts, but senior leaders must also play active roles in supporting the initiative.

Frameworks for assessing the multicultural competency of an organization have been evolving for the last forty years. An example of an early stage-based framework to achieve multicultural organizational development (MCOD) was proposed by Jackson and Holvino (1988). Using this research as a foundation, Minors (1996) developed a six-stage anti-racist organizational development framework. The six stages are: excluding organization, passive club, token acceptance, symbolic equity, substantial equity, and inclusive organization. Later Garcia et al. (2001) proposed a three-stage framework. The first stage is characterized by largely homogeneous students, faculty, and staff with minimal attention to campus climate issues; modest incorporation of diversity scholarship in the curriculum; and a sporadic diversity plan. In the second stage, institutions exhibit increasing diversity of students, faculty, and staff; as well as additional attention to climate issues. The third stage includes regularly published audits of campus climate; increased expertise in faculty and regular opportunities for faculty development; an overarching institutional plan for integrating diversity into the educational mission and policies. Within their framework, Garcia noted that different areas of an institution may exhibit characteristics of different stages. These models frame a variety of ways institutional leaders can attend to the status of their organization, and move towards more total inclusion for faculty, staff, and students.

The final pillar institutional leaders must attend to when considering organizational change for inclusion is how to engage, hear the voices, and provide support to their faculty and staff. According to Van Aken et al. (1994), the challenge facing American organizations today is how

to meaningfully engage 100% percent of the workforce in continuous improvement efforts in a coordinated and systematic fashion. They proposed that affinity groups (a.k.a. employee resource groups, ERGs) can help in this regard by helping to solidify and positively influence informal associations and organizational culture. Affinity group members work to pursue goals that help recruit and retain others like themselves as they also engage in improving their communities (MacGillivray & Golden, 2007). Affinity groups also provide social and professional support for members such as mentoring and visibility with senior leaders (Kravitz, 2008; McGrath & Sparks, 2005). Furthermore, Green (2018) noted in her study that affinity groups facilitate learning and development activities to support their membership.

Keels' (2020) research on student counterspaces expands the imagined possibilities of affinity groups to move beyond being safe or supportive spaces to being spaces of "radical growth" (Introduction, para. 3), or an opportunity to see oneself differently than dominant narratives, structures, or systems would allow. BIPOC faculty in a counterspace benefit by being able to meet with other faculty who have been similarly marginalized, tokenized, or otherwise oppressed by academic institutions and society at large and collectively strategize the best ways to support each other, and to envision (and co-create) more equitable educational structures and opportunities.

Design and Procedures

This exploratory study examines the differences between how IThrive Collective counterspace members and IChange Network organizational transformation members envisioned institutional transformation for improved inclusion and success of URG faculty. At the heart of the study is the research question: **What insights can a counterspace offer to institutional transformation efforts?** To inform this answer, we will explore the following sub-questions:

1. What policy and practice changes are recommended to institutions by a counterspace community of support?
2. What are the differences between BIPOC and Ally faculty perspectives on how institutions should change to increase equity and inclusion?
3. What are the differences between the recommended policy and practice changes of a counterspace community of support and the planned changes of institutional leaders?

Data Collection

We collected data from participants (n = 207) in a yearlong IThrive Collective counterspace conversation series consisting of five gatherings (summer 2021, fall 2021, winter 2021, spring 2022, summer 2022). Participants self-selected to join an Ally/Other or a BIPOC counterspace group conversation, with the participants roughly equally split in large group conversations (summer 2021, summer 2022) and generally more BIPOC participants in small group conversations (fall 2021, winter 2021, and spring 2021). Using digital collaboration tools (Google Jamboards, Padlets, and Google Forms) and structured reflection questions, participants were asked to share reflections on the current state and desired future state of how their institutions "look," "act," and "feel" for BIPOC faculty. These conversations produced ample digital artifacts that formed the foundation of this study.

In addition to the conversation and artifact-generating activities within the IThrive Collective, we collected final action plans from each institution in the IChange. To date, we have collected 41 final action plans from institutional members of the IChange Network to capture institutions' planned activities to improve the inclusivity and diversity of their STEM faculty.

Analysis

A codebook was developed a priori to data collection using Griffin's (2020) institutional model for faculty diversity. Codes covered five main categories of possible activity: institutional context or the overarching commitment and investment the campus has made in promoting diversity and inclusion; faculty recruitment, or short- and long-term efforts to bring faculty from diverse backgrounds to campus; faculty hiring, or the process by which faculty are made job offers and welcomed and incorporated into campus communities; and, faculty retention, or efforts focused on promoting faculty success and satisfaction that keep them at the institution. For each part of the model, the codebook distinguished between practices: processes or activities that are a change to current ways of doing business but are not codified as required; and policies: standardized required approaches, mindsets, or processes set at the institutional level. Following each participant session, we coded the comments left by participants in the digital collaboration tools using the constant comparative method (Bogden & Biklen, 1998).

Coding was conducted in two teams. The digital artifacts (Google Jamboards (n = 10), Padlets (n = 6), and Google Forms (n = 2)) were converted into Excel spreadsheet lists of comments and responses organized by type of engagement activity. The first two authors coded each comment and suggestion to identify the type of action (policy or practice) and the portion of the institutional model for faculty diversity it was targeting, such as institutional context, recruitment, hiring, and retention. The third author and a research assistant coded the institutional action plans (n = 41) using Dedoose qualitative software and coded using the same framing (policy or practice; element of institutional model for faculty diversity).

Both coding teams sought alignment in code application by coding a sample document and comparing code applications. In addition, teams discussed where discrepancies occurred to better align code applications. Each team also spot-checked codes within and across the artifacts and action plans to ensure consistency.

Researcher Positionality

The authors on this team hold a variety of perspectives that reflect the priorities and principles of the IThrive Network. The first author is a Black man who works in STEM graduate pathway programs at a research university in the Midwest. The second author is a Black woman senior leader in a college of engineering in the northeast. The third author is a white woman employee of a university association working on multi-institutional STEM transformation programs. The research team has designed and facilitated the IThrive Collective and IChange Network, and our analysis has been informed by acting as scholar-practitioners within the work.

Results

Preliminary results show an emerging framework to disaggregate impressions of faculty from dominant and underrepresented groups regarding the university ecosystem and its capacity to advance a diverse and inclusive community. BIPOC faculty identified characteristics such as supportive, collegial relations with other faculty, absence of alienation, opportunities for professional development, validation of research contributions, and acknowledgment of invisible labor. Other findings from our inquiry about the value of the BIPOC faculty-centered counterspace include an increased sense of belonging, a willingness for organizational engagement, and enthusiasm to construct meaningful communication mechanisms with academic leaders. In comparison, institutional action plans focused significantly on improving the retention area, with practice activities focused on improving training.

Conversations About How Institutions Currently Behave and How They Can Be Improved

Our focus group in summer 2021 focused primarily on capturing the different points of view of BIPOC and Ally/other identified faculty and administrators on how institutions of higher education needed to change or transform to better support BIPOC faculty. In small groups, participants discussed key dimensions of institutions of higher education - including how they "look," "feel," and "act." These terms were loosely defined, and participants considered both the current state and what the improved state would look like. Figures 1-6 describe our findings from that session. The y-axis represents the number of responses for each category type: Perceptions of Institutional Culture, Retention Practices, Practice Challenges, Diversity Assessment, Recruitment Practices, Hiring Practices, Policy Challenges, and Retention Policies.

Figures 1 and 2 explain the comparison between BIPOC and Ally replies to how the institutions "look" in their

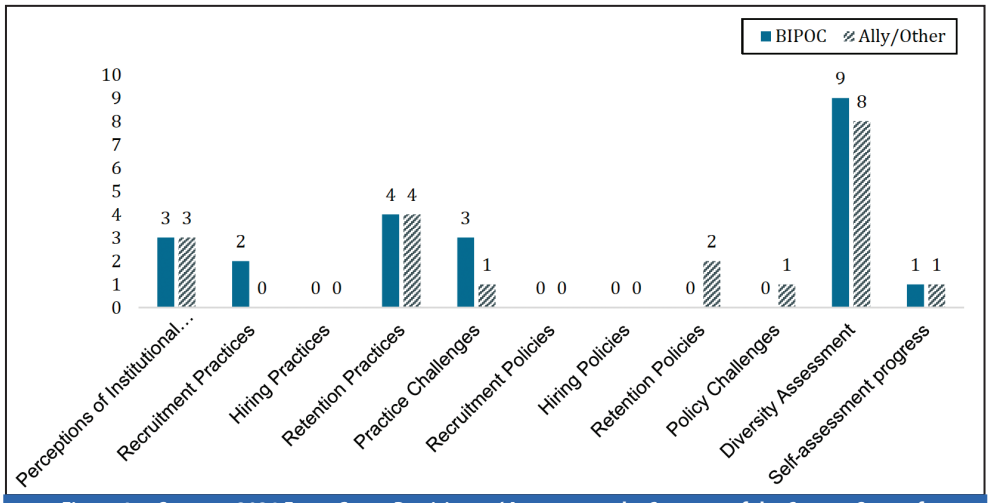

Figure 1. Summer 2021 Focus Group Participants' Assessments by Category of the Current State of Their Institutions (Look)

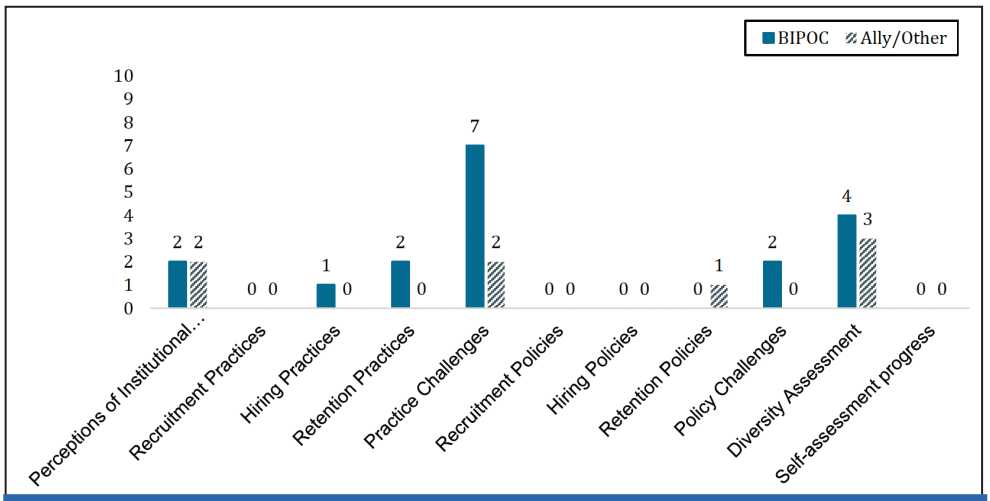

Figure 2. Summer 2021 Focus Group Participants' Recommendations by Category for the Improved State of Their Institutions (Look)

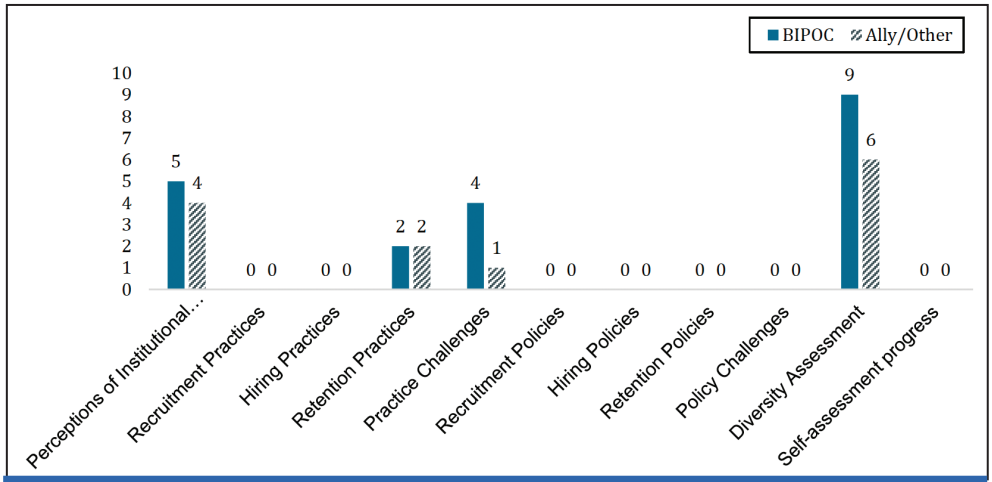

Figure 3. Summer Focus Group Participants' Assessments by Category of the Current State of Their Institutions (Feel)

current state (figure 1) and improved state (figure 2). In Figure 1, there appears to be alignment between the two groups on perceptions of institutional culture and retention practices and divergence on retention policies, policy challenges, and recruitment practices. For example, BIPOC respondents mention the need for transparent accountability structures that make inequalities and subsequent improvements more visible (practice challenges, figure 1). In contrast, Ally respondents mention that policy challenges are an issue, e.g., leadership report structure. In Figure 2, there appears to be alignment between the two groups on perceptions of institutional culture and divergence on retention practices, retention policies, hiring practices, and policy challenges. BIPOC respondents are calling for similar services for faculty and staff that are offered to students (retention practice).

Figures 3 and 4 explain the comparison between BIPOC and Ally replies to how the institutions "feel" in their current state (figure 3) and improved state (figure 4). In figure 3, there appears to be alignment between the two groups on retention practices and divergence on practice challenges. In figure 4, there appears to be modest alignment between the two groups in several areas in similar areas including retention practices and practice challenges and divergence on retention challenges. BIPOC faculty empathize with desired changes within the practice challenges domain more than their Ally counterparts, mentioning issues related to lower rates of psychological and professional safety.

Figures 5 and 6 explain the comparison between BIPOC and Ally replies to how the institutions "act" in their current state (figure 5) and improved state (figure 6). In figure 5, there appears to be alignment between the two groups on perceptions of institutional culture, practice challenges and diversity assessment as well as divergence on retention practices and retention policies. In figure 6, there appears to be alignment between the two groups on recruitment practices, hiring practices, policy challenges as well as divergence on diversity assessments and retention practices. BIPOC respondents advocate for more training of faculty and admins in equity-minded use of data to make better retention practices.

Conversations about Institutions Currently Center URG Voices

Our focus group in the summer of 2022 focused particularly on trying to understand how BIPOC and Ally/Other identified groups understood the value placed on BIPOC voices in the institutional change process, and how institutions supported the development of and engagement in affinity groups. Through a polling activity (All: n = 57; BIPOC group: n = 28; Ally/Other group: n = 29),

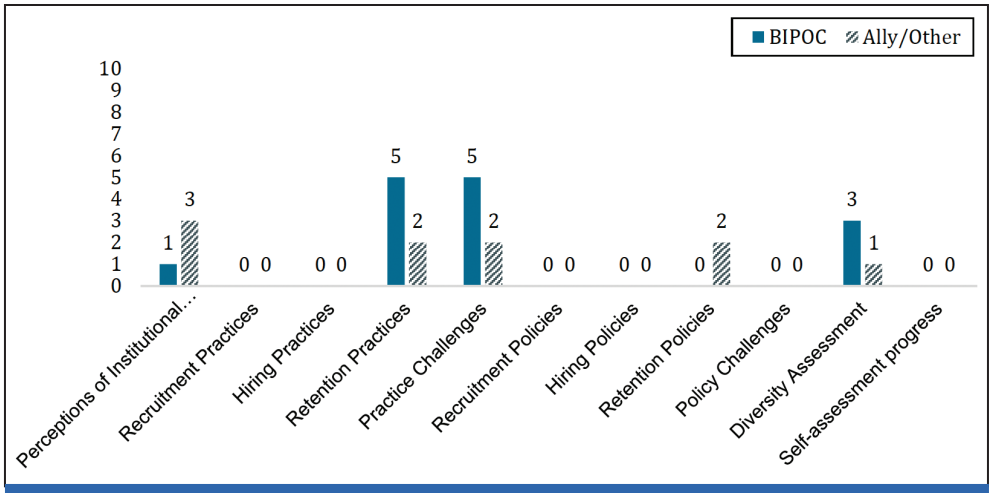

Figure 4. Summer Focus Group Participants' Recommendations by Category for the Improved State of Their Institutions (Feel)

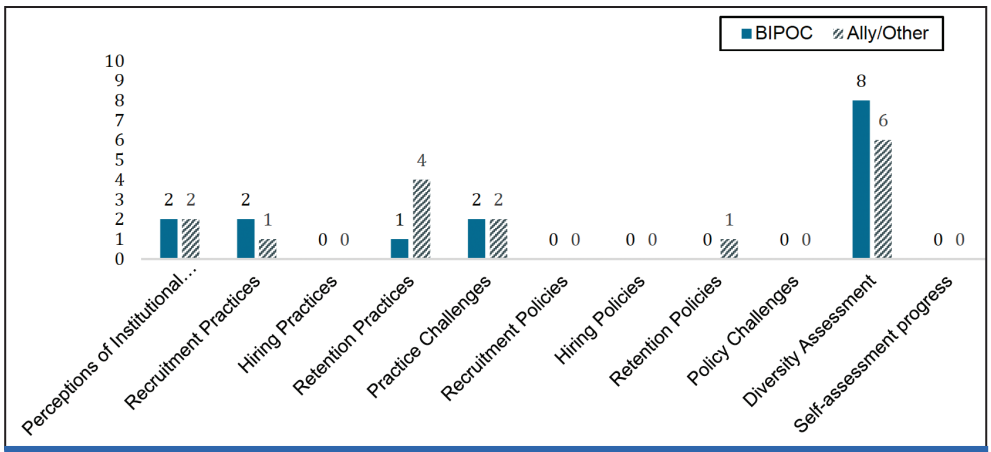

Figure 5. Summer 2021 Focus Group Participants' Assessments by Category of the Current State of Their Institutions (Act)

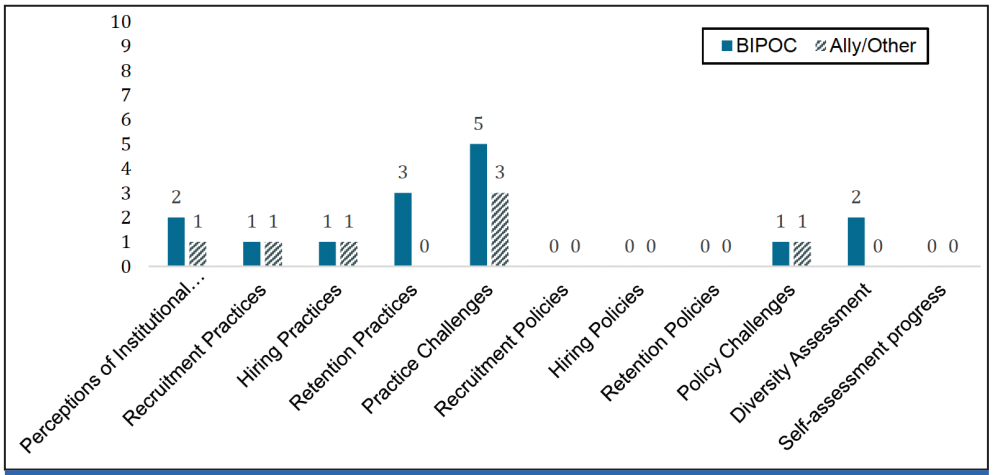

Figure 6. Summer 2021 Focus Group Participants' Recommendations by Category for the Improved State of Their Institutions (Act)

almost 46% of focus group participants (including 58.6% Ally/other and 32.1% BIPOC) expressed that while their institutions will often ask for input from BIPOC faculty and administrators on change activities, most of the time leaders at the institution do not feel that input is appropriate or actionable. Table 1 displays these responses.

Often participants reported BIPOC faculty voices were heard as a result of protests and demands following a campus bias incident (31.6%), though Ally/Other identified faculty were more likely to cite this as a source of input (41.4% of Ally/Other respondents; 21.4% of BIPOC respondents). In addition, many faculty and administrators (26.3%) in the group felt that trust from BIPOC faculty towards their institutional leaders is low, resulting in hesitation by leaders to solicit BIPOC input, with a slightly higher proportion of Ally/Other participants (31%) reporting this than BIPOC participants (21.4%). Finally, 26.3% of respondents identified their current state contexts as being challenging and changing how they engaged in soliciting input from BIPOC faculty (37.9% Ally/Other; 14.3% BIPOC). Surprisingly, 17.9 % of BIPOC participants (mostly administrators) felt their institutions had a strong record of engaging BIPOC voices and making their faculty feel heard.

Overall, the patterns of institutional engagement most commonly cited among participants speak to a pattern of disengagement, miscommunication, and distrust - with predominantly white institutional leaders feeling unsure of how to appropriately solicit and actionize feedback from their BIPOC faculty. BIPOC administrators who are in a position of central leadership may feel more confident than white administrators about the trust building and communication pathways they are eliciting due to their lived experiences informing the intentional design in incorporating BIPOC faculty voices.

In addition to mapping how focus group participants understood how their institutions engaged and valued the voices of BIPOC faculty, we also wanted to explore how they engaged and valued affinity spaces as sites of professional and personal well-being and organizational value. We found that both Ally/Other and BIPOC participants expressed knowledge of their institutions' advertisement of the opportunities related to institutional employee resource groups, national affinity groups, disciplinary affinity groups, and cultural affinity groups to their BIPOC faculty counterparts, but our BIPOC participants expressed higher awareness of the funding and reward opportunities toward their participation. We suggest this may point to an asymmetrical distribution of communication and perceived institutional value regarding these opportunities in key areas such as faculty review activities and budgetary support for faculty participation.

Description of Institutional Activity	Ally/Other		BIPOC		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
We often ask, but leaders often don't see the potential solutions as feasible or the feedback as appropriate.	17	58.60%	9	32.10%	26	45.60%
We don't ask, but our faculty and students regularly share demands, particularly after racial or gender bias/harassment events.	12	41.40%	6	21.40%	18	31.60%
Minoritized/BIPOC faculty trust in administration and leadership is low. We don't feel we can ask because the trust is not there.	9	31.00%	6	21.40%	15	26.30%
Our state's legal context makes these conversations more challenging. We cannot start these conversations in the same ways we used to or how we would like to now.	11	37.90%	4	14.30%	15	26.30%
Our numbers of minoritized/BIPOC faculty are too low to engage in a systematic way.	6	20.70%	6	21.40%	12	21.10%
We monitor social media to collect insight from places where minoritized/BIPOC faculty may be sharing their opinions.	4	13.80%	4	14.30%	8	14.00%
We have established a strong track record of dialogue – minoritized/BIPOC faculty know we take their voices seriously.	0	0.00%	5	17.90%	8	14.00%
Our administration is fairly diverse, so we already have the perspectives of minoritized/BIPOC faculty informing data analysis and decision-making.	4	13.80%	3	10.70%	7	12.30%
Total Respondents	*29*	*50.90%*	*28*	*49.10%*	*57*	*100.00%*

Note: Participants were able to select all applicable statements.

Table 1. IChange Network Leaders and Faculty Perceptions of Patterns of Institutional Engagement with BIPOC Faculty and Student Voices on Improving the Campus Community

Understanding Institutional Action Plans – What Leaders Plan to Do

Analysis of institutional action plans revealed patterns in what institutional leaders identified as key next actions as a result of engaging in the IChange Network action planning process. Figure 7 displays these results aggregated by cohort and category of action. By far the greatest number of planned actions were to advance retention practices (n = 78). These included developing or improving faculty/postdoc professional development (e.g., grant writing workshops, teaching and learning, securing tenure) (n = 19), altering academic leadership training/professional development programs or offering more programming (n = 12), and studying, developing, and improving training programs to expand and/or improve faculty mentoring (n = 10). Other planned retention practice actions included creating affinity groups or communities of practice on DEI for URG faculty and/or graduate students (n = 7), increasing the number of URG in faculty leadership/ PD programs (n = 7), matching faculty with mentors to support day-to-day operations after new faculty orientation (n = 7), and seeking to change annual performance or tenure review expectations for faculty to include service labor often expected of URG faculty (n = 6). In addition, plans included retention practices such as diversifying faculty recognition practices through targeting URG for recognition or adjusting criteria (n = 5), creating or reorganizing roles for centralized administrators or committees focused on DEI and the recruitment, hiring, and retention of URG faculty (n = 3), and funding campus events centered around DEI topics (n = 2).

The second most common planned actions were recruitment policies (n = 21). These included requiring training for the search chair and/or search committee members (n = 8), requiring diversity, equity, and/or inclusion statements from candidates, or that statements be assessed at certain points in the interview process (n = 4), and evaluating centralized administrators based on the number of URG candidates invited for phone and campus interviews (n = 4). Additional recruitment policies planned included requiring search committees to have a different configuration to promote DEI (n = 3), requiring inclusive language in job descriptions (n = 1), and developing candidate identity requirements for the pool at phone interviews and/or campus interview stages (n = 1).

The third most common planned actions were recruitment practices (n=20). These included creating pipeline programs to recruit URG doctoral candidates to apply to STEM faculty roles (n = 5), hiring "opportunity hires" and the spouses of "opportunity hires" (n = 4), and offering committee members DEI training (n = 3). Other recruitment practices planned included funding postdoctoral positions to incentivize URG candidates to stay at the institution following graduation by transitioning to a faculty role (n = 2), encouraging committees to use a diversity rubric (or similar practices; e.g., Rooney Rule) to rank candidates more equitably (n = 2), focusing on promoting/hiring URG Deans or administrators to oversee the hiring of URG faculty (n = 2), creating a committee focusing on creating positions for URG faculty (n = 1), and constructing positions and training for recruiting URG faculty (n = 1).

While the distribution of practice and policy interventions align with the stated preferences of BIPOC faculty in the IThrive counterspace, the nature of these recommendations were vastly different. Institutional leaders putting together action plans largely proposed practice improvements grounded in training and mentoring. The dialogues among BIPOC counterspace participants pointed largely to the quality of interactions between themselves and their peers, and themselves and their administrative leaders. Training might help improve some of these interactions but is likely not able to significantly affect the pervasive feeling of not being valued, seen, or rewarded for their contributions that the BIPOC counterspace conversations addressed. Training does not necessarily ensure effective application of the material shared with faculty who manage recruitment and mentoring efforts. This may speak to the need for more continuous engagement in real-time support and coaching for newly trained leaders and colleagues.

It is interesting to also note that the policy interventions identified almost entirely focused on the recruitment mechanisms, likely because this is a place where there is more central administrative control in the approval of new faculty lines. In addition, the kinds of policy interventions indicated a skepticism among the leaders at these institu-

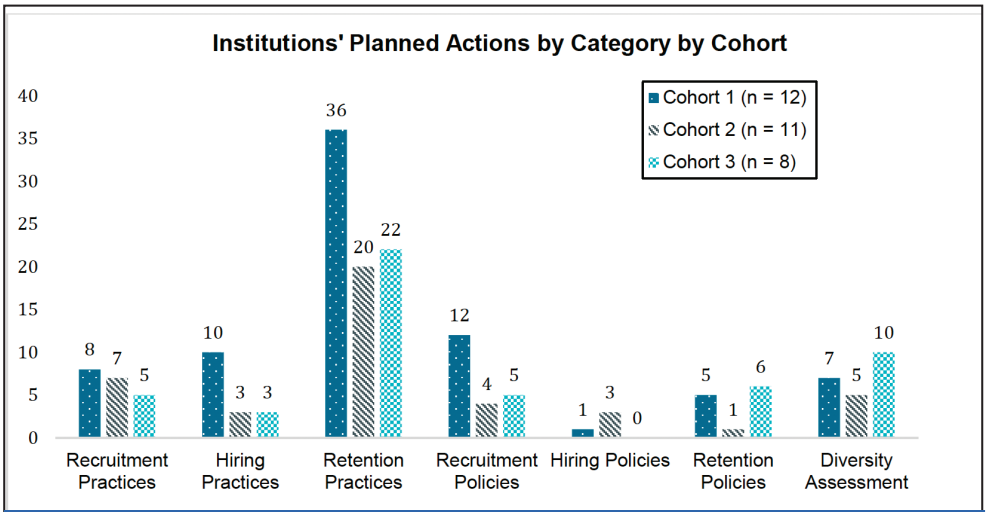

Figure 7. Number of Planned Actions by Category by IChange Network Cohort

tions that departments would make choices that value the potential contributions of BIPOC faculty candidates to the campus when left to their own devices. The need to place strong guardrail and approval systems points to a larger set of cultural issues that were not yet addressed.

Conclusions and Implications

This study aimed to understand how the perspectives of a counterspace community may diverge from those of institutional change leaders within two connected programs. While the general pattern of preferred changes from the counterspace community (IThrive Collective) aligned with those planned by leaders in the institutional transformation community (IChange Network), the deeper analysis revealed nuanced differences. While IThrive participants were asked to name areas of improvement under the banner of "look," "feel," and "act," in each category participants made suggestions related to how institutional actions affected their perceptions of feeling valued, included, and celebrated. Institutional leaders, on the other hand, tended to focus on training and education programs in attempts to improve the collegial experience. Training and education, while useful for those invested in their outcomes, may have limited impact on unwilling or indifferent colleagues. The results point to a potential source of tension between faculty who need change and leaders who are enacting change

Most importantly, the subtlety of these differences emphasizes the importance of institutional leaders in creating avenues for input from marginalized faculty when undergoing a change agenda. Institutional leaders would be well served by either helping to support emergent counterspaces on their campus or encouraging existing affinity groups to provide feedback and guidance to leaders. Institutions that successfully support and value faculty counterspaces may find their transformation efforts bolstered and their retention efforts improved. By reducing the risk for individual faculty for sharing feedback and encouraging affinity group members to develop a shared vision for their institution, the counterspace could be a continued source of learning as institutional leaders engage in continuous improvement and alignment of policy and implementation practices to enhance faculty retention and ultimately belonging among marginalized faculty.

Polling of IThrive community members reinforced, however, that asking for feedback and not using it is a risky proposition for university leaders. Failure to listen and enact suggestions from counterspace communities may further demoralize and disenfranchise faculty, reducing the likelihood of future feedback being shared. Leaders should consider why they find so many suggestions from their faculty non-actionable and work on improving communication that acknowledges requests and provides context for choices to act or not act on those suggestions.

Institutional leaders should do everything they can to improve the experiences of BIPOC and other underrepresented group faculty, as efforts to increase the overall diversity of the faculty will continue to stall as retention efforts do not keep pace with recruitment intentions. The support of and responsiveness to faculty counterspaces may prove an invaluable resource in this effort, especially as the national context for equity and inclusion work grows more fraught.

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