

Division Training Grants - Module on Diversity/Minority Recruitment and Retention

The Division of Biology and Medicine at Brown University is fully committed to fostering, achieving, and maintaining a training environment that allows trainees from groups underrepresented in the biological and public health sciences to succeed. Increasing the diversity of our trainees not only enriches the educational experiences for all involved in their scholarship, but feeds a much needed pipeline of talent for future faculty recruitment. Within the Division, Directors of our graduate programs; Nancy L. Thompson, Associate Dean for Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies; and Edward Wing, Dean of Biology and Medicine, are all partners in this enterprise. Additional commitment and resources supporting diversity extends to the University administration through Valerie Wilson, Associate Dean of the Graduate School (for diversity), Sheila Bonde, Dean of the Graduate School, Brenda Allen, Associate Provost and Ruth Simmons, President of Brown University.

The doctoral training programs within the Division currently matriculate a total of approximately 50 students per year. Fifteen percent of our pre-doctoral students are from underrepresented minority (URM) groups. Several strategies are in place to actively recruit URM applicants to our PhD programs and to entice URM applicants receiving offers of admission to come to Brown. These are described below.

Summer Research - Early Identification Program: Talented minority students from across the country engage in an intensive nine week program of research with Brown faculty. These students have excelled academically and self identify as intending to go on to graduate school. Placement with faculty mentors is arranged via the Leadership Alliance consortium headquartered at Brown and led by Executive Director Valerie Wilson. A substantial portion of student support for students working with Division of Biology and Medicine mentors at Brown is provided by an NIH R25 grant (PI, Sharon Rounds, MD) that recently received its third competitive renewal. Several of these students apply to Brown graduate programs and are accepted, generating a functional pipeline to the doctorate.

Leadership Alliance Summer Research Conference: This national conference where EIP students present their research is regularly attended by faculty from Brown and represents an excellent opportunity for soliciting applications to our PhD programs. Program directors maintain contact with students whose research interests and backgrounds mesh well with training opportunities at Brown.

Networking and recruitment visits to minority serving and partner institutions: Brown University has longstanding ties to a number of minority serving undergraduate institutions through its membership in Leadership Alliance. In addition, separate recruitment visits are conducted annually to campuses including Tougaloo (Jackson, Mississippi), Xavier (New Orleans, LA) and others.

Faculty and administrator attendance at national research conferences attended by minority scientists including SACNAS and ABRCMS: Brown University Graduate School is an exhibitor at national meetings including SACNAS and ABRCMS where minority students will present

research prior to applying to graduate school. Associate Deans Valerie Wilson and Nancy Thompson attend these meetings to solicit interest in Brown's graduate programs.

IMSD program and associated initiatives: In 2008, the Division of Biology and Medicine was awarded a training grant through the NIGMS "Initiative to Maximize Student Diversity" (PIs Andrew Campbell and Nancy Thompson). The goal of this program, 'Advancing the Culture of PhD Learning and Scholarship in Biology and Health Science', is to double the number of URM pre-doctoral students within the Division of Biology and Medicine over the next four years. Also associated with this initiative are intensive professional development training modules designed to supplement curriculum in the sciences and compensate for uneven or missed opportunities experienced by some URM students prior to graduate school. We hope to expand the success of our graduate programs such as Pathobiology and MPP, which have been highly successful in attracting URM students, across the Division's graduate programs.

Several other specialized recruitment strategies have been implemented to aim in attracting the largest number of highly qualified minority students possible. Dean Thompson's office subscribes to the Graduate Record Exam Service's database service and set up search parameters for all students self identifying as URM and reporting a grade average of B or better and interest in attending graduate school in fields represented by our PhD programs. Emails were sent to such students inviting them to apply to Brown. For URM students who received offers of admission to our graduate programs, these students received an invitation for a second expense-paid visit to campus. This "Super Monday" event takes place the first Sunday and Monday in April and is intended to entice these students to accept Brown's offer. By visiting with those receiving offers from all graduate programs, the students meet potential colleagues, current students, faculty mentors and get a sense of the community of scholars across campus and the resources available to them.

Retention of URM students is also a high priority. Retention rates for URM students do not differ from the entire cohort of admitted students. We credit these relatively high retention rates to selectivity in admissions and a strong advising system.