

Diversity in Faculty Hiring

provost@slu.edu

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Dear Faculty Colleagues,

Following Dr. Jonathan Smith's [recent message](#) regarding our efforts to confront and combat the racial disparities affecting our communities and our nation, I write to share initial plans for increasing diversity amongst our faculty members.

We will increase our focus on, and commitment to, hiring candidates that enhance the **racial and ethnic diversity of the faculty**, as well as retaining faculty members who enhance the diversity of the faculty. Our location in the city of St. Louis, a community with a large marginalized Black and brown population that is deeply affected by these injustices, and our Catholic, Jesuit mission demand that we make every effort to combat these disparities.

President Pestello and I have been challenged by our current faculty to double the number of Black and brown faculty members. We graciously accept that challenge and are instituting a process to meet that goal.

Recently, I spoke with the deans of our schools and colleges to outline a process by which we will ensure a diverse pool of candidates when filling each open faculty position. The process includes 2 checkpoints to monitor the search's progress. Dr. Smith will lead a group of faculty and staff to oversee this monitoring process. Working with Dr. Smith, if the applicable dean, department chair or I determine that the pool of candidates for any given search is not sufficiently diverse, we will pull the plug on that search and request that the search start over.

As Dr. Smith mentioned, when we begin this process we will offer Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training along the way to departments, divisions, and schools/colleges. This training, which will be led by Dr. Smith, will help all of us to directly confront our explicit and implicit biases, develop tools to assess and build our capacity for this work, and to recognize the critical importance, power and strength in employing and educating a diverse population on our campus. This is a top priority for Dr. Pestello, me, and the entire leadership team at the University.

As we prioritize enhancing the racial and ethnic diversity of our faculty, we do so understanding that this will be done in a manner that also keeps in mind enhancing faculty diversity in other areas.

Our mission as a Catholic, Jesuit university calls us to be people for and with others. Fr. Arturo Sosa, S.J., superior general of the Society of Jesus, reminds us to embrace the "call for our times and rise up to the challenges of defending the weak, the poor and the excluded in every walk of life." This is a mission which seeks for opportunities of reconciliation and the redress of injustice so that we might witness a future filled with hope. Confronting racial disparities that have been institutionalized in our hiring practices is a necessary step that will establish a more diverse faculty which will, in turn, better prepare our students to respond to the "call of our times."

Thank you and God bless,

Michael Lewis, Ph.D.
Interim Provost