

Increasing Racial Diversity in the Teacher Workforce: One University's Approach

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In 2014, for the first time in U.S. public schools, the percentage of Hispanic, African American, Asian, and other students of color exceeded the percentage of white students, creating a majority-minority system that reflects the mosaic of cultures, experiences, languages, and religions that characterize our nation (See Table 1).¹ In stark contrast, an overwhelming number of their teachers—84 percent — are white.² In fact, more than 40 percent of public schools in the U.S. do not have a single teacher of color.³ This student-teacher diversity gap, also referred to as the demographic gap, has drawn increased attention from educators and parents over the past three decades.⁴ Yet it remains pronounced, requiring intentional action from critical stakeholders, including federal and state policymakers, school system officials, and faculty and administrators in schools, colleges, and departments of education in partnership with colleagues throughout the university.

In this article, we describe the extent of the diversity gap nationally and in the state of Maryland, where our campus—the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)—is located.⁵ We further describe how the framework that emerged from UMBC's Meyerhoff Scholars Program has

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been applied to our Sherman STEM Teacher Scholars Program, designed to increase the diversity of UMBC's teacher candidates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) certification areas. Finally, we discuss plans to expand our use of the framework to increase the diversity of teacher candidates across all certification areas offered at the university. We offer our experiences, not as prescriptive, but as illustrative of the role that institutions of higher education can play to assist states in closing their demographic gaps and creating more equitable public schools.

TABLE 1.
RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF U.S. PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

Race	Number (in millions)
White	24.7
Latino	13.1
African American	7.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.6
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.5
Two or More Races	1.5

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, *Fast Facts: Educational Institutions*.

DIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS: A NATIONAL SNAPSHOT

Research to date highlights the symbolic and tangible benefits of a diverse teaching force. For example, quantitative studies have shown positive associations between same-race teachers and diverse students' attendance, academic achievement, and mathematics course selection.⁶ Qualitative research further suggests that students of color perceive teachers that share their cultural backgrounds as more accessible and caring, and their instructional practices as more engaging.⁷ Importantly, teachers of color are more likely to remain in high needs schools longer than white teachers, thereby adding needed stability and professional capital to these schools and their predominantly non-white student populations.⁸ While such studies do not support the simplistic notion that only culturally diverse teachers can be effective in culturally diverse classrooms, they highlight the unique role that teachers of color play in improving educational experiences and outcomes for students of color.

Despite these benefits, the demographic gap between students and teachers is present in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, most notably in large states with heterogeneous populations such as Illinois and California.⁹ While the gap is present across all populations of color (see Figure 1), it differs geographically due to variations in ethnic concentration. According to the National Collaborative on Diversity in the Teaching Force, the West and Northeast have the highest percentage of Latino teachers; the Southeast has the highest percentage of African American teachers; the West the highest percentage of Asian American teachers; and the central and western states the highest percentage of American Indian/Alaska Native teachers.¹⁰ Of note, ethnically diverse teachers are particularly underrepresented in the STEM fields and are overwhelmingly female.¹¹

Quantitative studies have shown positive associations between same-race teachers and diverse students' attendance and academic achievement.

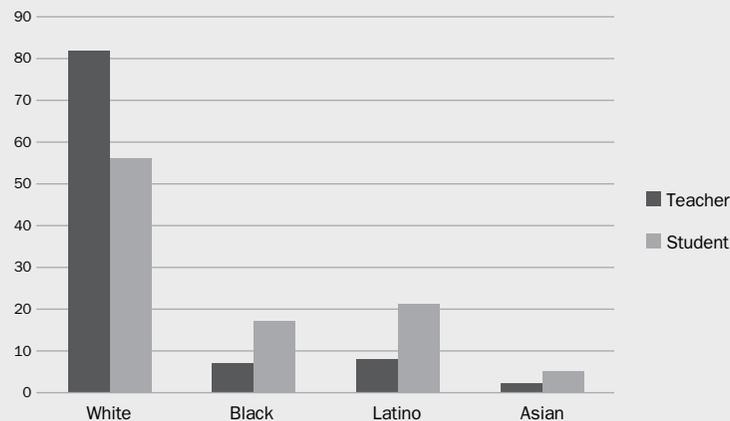
The diversity gap has decreased slightly over the past 25 years. In 1986, teachers of color made up nine percent of the teaching force. By 2011, the proportion had increased to 16 percent. The increase was primarily driven by a growth in the percentage of Latino teachers, whose representation grew from two percent of all teachers in 1986 to six percent in 2011. Teachers characterized racially as "other" also increased from less than one percent in 1986 to four percent in 2011. By contrast, African American teachers remained at between six and seven percent of public school teachers over the same time period.¹²

EXPLANATIONS FOR THE DIVERSITY GAP

Explanations for the diversity gap are complex and overlapping. Some focus on the limited pool of candidates. Boser notes that while the on-time high school graduation rate for white students is 78 percent, it is 57 and 58 percent for African American and Latino students, respectively.¹³ Lower rates of educational attainment reduce the pool of prospective teacher candidates of color. Expanded career options for people of color, resulting from civil rights gains, also have further reduced

teacher diversity. After World War II, for instance, 79 percent of African American female college graduates worked as teachers; however, by the mid-1980s, that figure had fallen to 23 percent.¹⁴ Other career fields were becoming available. Between 1975 and 1982, the number of bachelor's degrees in education awarded to students of color decreased by 50 percent, nearly twice the rate of decline for whites, while the number of bachelor's degrees in business and other fields of study awarded to students of color increased dramatically.¹⁵ Meanwhile, others argue that a lack of sufficient role models and an abundance of negative school experiences that reduce their interest in the profession are the reasons students of color are less likely to select majors and careers in education.¹⁶

FIG. 1
TEACHERS IN THE UNITED STATES BY RACE, 2012 (TEACHER) AND 2008 (STUDENT)



Source: National Center for Educational Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, "Number and percentage distribution of teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools, by selected teacher characteristics," Selected years, 1987-88 through 2011-12.

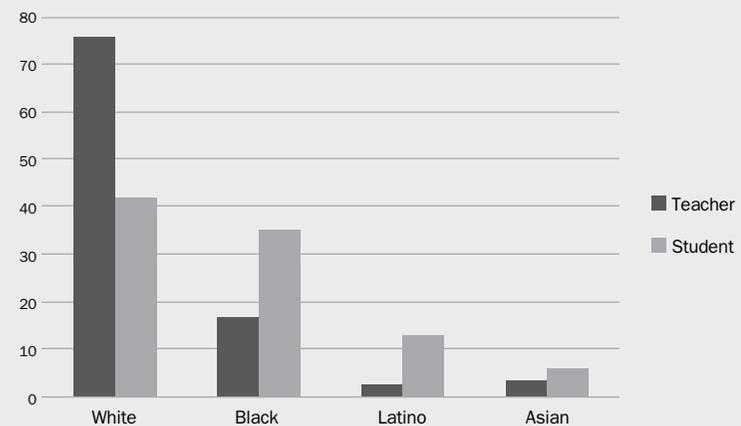
Additional explanations for the diversity gap focus on barriers to entering the teaching field. Specifically, PRAXIS I and PRAXIS II tests are used in 34 states to gain entrance into education programs, a licensure to teach, or both.¹⁷ PRAXIS I is a reading, math, and writing skills test, while PRAXIS II assessments measure knowledge of specific K-12 subjects, as well as general and subject-specific teaching skills and knowledge. There are ethnic differences in passing rates on both exams. On PRAXIS I, Gitomer and colleagues found that average passing rates were 82 percent for whites, 76 percent for Asians, 69 percent for Latinos,

and 46 percent for African Americans; for PRAXIS II, those passing rates were whites (91 percent), African Americans (69 percent), and Latinos (59 percent).¹⁸ Moreover, Pflaum and Abramson suggested that after certification, teachers of color face greater challenges and frustrations on the job market than white teachers.¹⁹ In the following section, we explore how these factors converge to influence the diversity gap in Maryland.

MARYLAND SNAPSHOT

Maryland is a "teacher import" state, meaning it must hire educators from outside the state to fill vacancies in its pre-K-12 classrooms.²⁰ Maryland also has a significant diversity gap between teachers and students (see Figure 2). In 2011, for example, the majority of Maryland's 58,000 teachers (76.3 percent) were white, while just 16.6 percent were African American, 3.3 percent Asian, and 2.2 percent Latino. The majority of the state's 854,000 students, however, were children and youth of color (57.5 percent). While white students constituted the largest single group (42.5 percent), more than a third of students (35.4 percent) were African American, 12.1 percent were Latino, and 5.9 percent Asian.²¹

FIG. 2.
TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN MARYLAND BY RACE, 2012



Source: Maryland State Department of Education. Maryland Teacher Staffing Report, 2012-14.

Behind these numbers is a very dynamic process of racial and ethnic change in Maryland's public schools. Over the past decade, the percentage of African American teachers declined more than 4.5 percentage points,

while the percentage of Latino teachers increased by about one percent and Asian teachers by two percent.²² The state also has seen changes in its student population. Since 2000, white student enrollment has declined by 10.5 percentage points and black student enrollment by one point. By contrast, the percentage of Asian students has increased by one point and

the percentage of Latino students by 7.3 points.²³

Similar to the national picture, factors explaining the diversity gap in Maryland are complex and overlapping. For Asians and Latinos, rapid changes in immigration have resulted in student population increases that have outpaced promising increases in teacher certifications. Consequently, Asian and, in particular, Latino teachers remain significantly underrepresented in

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the state's public schools. At the same time, African American teachers also are underrepresented. As many retire, they are not being replaced at a rate to sustain or increase their representation. This is, in part, the result of the relatively small number of African American teacher education graduates from both Traditionally White Institutions (TWIs) and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).²⁴

In the past, the state's HBCUs produced the majority of Maryland's African American teachers, but these institutions have seen sharp declines in the numbers of students graduating from their teacher education programs (see Table 2). TWIs in the state have not filled the resulting gap (see Table 3). In fact, the percentage of racially and ethnically diverse graduates of education programs in the state has decreased from 29.3 percent in 2008 to approximately 19 percent in 2013.²⁶ The persistent demographic disparities in the state and nation underscore the need for a purposeful and sustained response from institutions of higher education. Our institution's experience with the Meyerhoff Scholars Program not only demonstrates what can be achieved through such action but also provides a framework for strengthening teacher diversity.

TABLE 2.
NEWLY ELIGIBLE CANDIDATES FROM MARYLAND APPROVED TEACHER
CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS BY INSTITUTION

Maryland Institutions of Higher Education²⁵

Institution	Maryland Approved Program Graduates, 1999 – 2000	Maryland Approved Program Graduates, 2010 – 2011
Total	2,550	2,555
>Bowie State University*	73	47
>Coppin State University*	61	16
>Frostburg State University	165	172
Goucher College	41	32
Hood College	44	44
Johns Hopkins University	159	137
Loyola University Maryland	99	68
Maryland Institute College of Art	10	30
McDaniel College	107	62
(Western Maryland College)		
Morgan State University*	56	14
Mt. St. Mary's University	43	59
Notre Dame University of Maryland (College of Notre Dame)	276	334
Peabody Institute,	7	7
Johns Hopkins University		
St. Mary's College of Maryland	40	34
>Salisbury University	254	233
Stevenson University (Villa Julie College)	10	68
>Towson University	503	676
>University of Maryland Baltimore County	101	95
>University of Maryland College Park	386	379
>University of Maryland Eastern Shore*	82	21
>University of Maryland University College	–	7
Washington College	20	13
Washington Adventist University (Columbia Union College)	13	7

> Institutions of higher education that are part of the University System of Maryland.

*Historically Black Colleges and Universities – HBCUs

Sources: Maryland State Department of Education, *Maryland Teacher Staffing Report, 2012-14*; and Keller, *Study of Teacher Capacity Report*.

TABLE 3.

**CANDIDATES FROM MARYLAND APPROVED PROGRAMS
BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2012-13²⁷**

Number and Percentage of Racial/Ethnic Groups per Institution

Institution	Black	Hispanic ⁺
>Bowie State University*	28(76%)	2(5%)
>Coppin State University*	6(100%)	0
>Frostburg State University	7(5%)	1(1%)
Goucher College	7(16%)	2(5%)
Hood College	1(2%)	2(4%)
Johns Hopkins University	9(10%)	1(1%)
Loyola University Maryland	0	4(4%)
Maryland Institute College of Art	1(8%)	0
McDaniel College	2(4%)	0
Morgan State University*	25(96%)	0
Mt. St. Mary's University	4(6%)	2(3%)
Notre Dame University of Maryland	56(22%)	18(7%)
Peabody Institute, JHU	0	0
St. Mary's College of Maryland	0	1(3%)
>Salisbury University	7(30%)	0
Stevenson University	2(4%)	0
>Towson University	25(4%)	31(5%)
>Univ. of Maryland Baltimore County ²⁸	7(6%)	1(.8%)
>Univ. of Maryland College Park	8(3%)	23(7%)
>Univ. of Maryland Eastern Shore*	7(15%)	0
>Univ. of Maryland University College	4(10%)	0
Washington College	0	0
Total Population** (2,202)	206(9%)	88(4%)

Asian ⁺⁺	White	2 ⁺	Unknown
0	6(16%)	1(3%)	0
0	0	0	0
1(1%)	142(91%)	4(3%)	1(1%)
1(2%)	29(67%)	1(2%)	3(7%)
0	54(95%)	0	0
10(11%)	67(72%)	1(1%)	5(5%)
2(2%)	86(90%)	0	4(4%)
2(17%)	6(50%)	1(8%)	2(17%)
1(2%)	54(95%)	0	0
1(4%)	0	0	0
0	53(83%)	1(2%)	4(6%)
11(4%)	165(66%)	0	0
0	9(100%)	0	0
0	29(97%)	0	0
0	16(70%)	0	0
0	48(94%)	1(2%)	0
17(3%)	532(81%)	0	53(8%)
9(8%)	75(63%)	0	28(23%)
40(13%)	224(71%)	10(3%)	10(3%)
0	16(35%)	0	23(50%)
0	29(71%)	2(5%)	6(15%)
0	12(100%)	0	0
95(4%)	1652(75%)	22(1%)	139(6%)

> Institutions of higher education that are part of the University System of Maryland.

*Historically Black Colleges and Universities – HBCUs; **Less than 100 percent due to rounding

+Hispanic and Native American combined; ++Asian and Hawaiian combined

Source: P12 Longitudinal Data System Dashboard at <https://wcp.k12ids.memsc.org/public>

A FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

The Meyerhoff Scholars Program

UMBC, a public university of approximately 14,000 students, including more than 50 percent who are students of color, is nationally recognized for its commitment to diversity.²⁹ This commitment is embodied in the extensive programming established to ensure the success of its multicultural student body. Perhaps best known is the Meyerhoff Scholars program, which has become a national model for inclusive excellence in the STEM disciplines. The program was developed in 1988 in response to low levels of performance and persistence among students of color

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in STEM degree programs. Named after philanthropists Robert and Jane Meyerhoff, the program consists of 12 key components:

1. recruitment of highly qualified students;

2. a summer bridge program;
3. comprehensive, merit scholarship support;
4. active faculty involvement;
5. strong programmatic values, including high achievement, and academic and professional preparation;
6. substantive research experiences for students;
7. intensive academic advising;
8. active involvement of the entire campus;
9. linking students with mentors;
10. a strong sense of community among the students;
11. communication with students' families; and
12. continuous evaluation and documentation of program outcomes.³⁰

Nearly 30 years since its inception, the Meyerhoff Scholars program has graduated 939 students from underrepresented groups. Ninety-one percent (854 students) have gone on to graduate and professional degree programs. The Meyerhoff Scholars program is currently being replicated by other universities seeking to increase the numbers of students of color and low-income students graduating in STEM disciplines.³¹ Moreover, its key components have provided a framework for other programs seeking to increase student diversity across UMBC departments. One example is the Sherman STEM Teacher Scholars Program.

The Sherman Scholars program also provides opportunities for candidates to engage with culturally diverse students and families.

The Sherman STEM Teacher Scholars Program

Based on the Meyerhoff Scholars framework, the Sherman STEM Teacher Scholars (Sherman Scholars) program seeks to increase the number of talented UMBC STEM students in the pre-K–12 teacher education pipeline. Developed in 2007, the Sherman Scholars program, named after philanthropists George and Betsy Sherman, builds on UMBC's strengths in STEM and teacher preparation fields to fill critical shortages in Maryland's pre-K–12 classrooms. The program provides comprehensive support and leadership development for pre-service teacher candidates while they are at UMBC, as well as during their career induction period. The Sherman Scholars program also provides opportunities for candidates to engage with culturally diverse students and families, and to develop the skills and dispositions required to be effective in 21st century schools and classrooms. Key components of the Sherman Scholars program are: (1) the development of a community of teachers; (2) a summer bridge program to prepare students to successfully meet programmatic expectations; (3) academic, professional, and personal advising, coaching, and mentoring; and (4) classroom fellowships or summer internships in diverse academic settings under the guidance of teacher-mentors. This multi-faceted support persists after scholars graduate and enter the classroom to assist them in navigating the first few years of teaching.

Through its emphasis on service, support, and especially on community, the Sherman Scholars Program has been instrumental in helping to recruit, graduate, and retain teacher candidates in STEM areas. At its core are people taking care of each other and taking collective ownership of successes, failures, and challenges. Since its inception, nearly 40

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percent of Sherman Scholars have been students of color, which is substantially higher than the state's current percentage and nearly three times the percentage of non-Sherman teacher candidates of color graduating from UMBC (see Table 4). Thus, through its use of the Meyerhoff Scholars framework, the Sherman Scholars program has simultaneously responded to two critical needs in pre-K–12 education: highly qualified STEM edu-

cators and highly qualified teachers from under-represented populations.

TABLE 4.
ALL STUDENTS SUPPORTED BY SHERMAN SCHOLARS PROGRAM
BY RACE AND GENDER

	Female	Male	Total
Asian	14 (12%)	7 (6%)	21 (18%)
Black/African American	14 (12%)	3 (3%)	17 (15%)
Hispanic/Latino	1 (.8%)	2 (1.7%)	3 (2.5%)
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	01 (.8%)	1 (.9%)
White	47 (41%)	26 (22%)	73 (62.9%)
2+ Races	1 (.8%)	0	01 (.9%)

Note: N=116

Source: Sherman STEM Scholars Program at <http://shermanprogram.umbc.edu/>

STRENGTHENING AND DIVERSIFYING TEACHER CANDIDATES

Building on our experiences with the Sherman Scholars Program, we now seek to strengthen and diversify our teacher candidate pool across all certification areas. Through a series of three steps: (1) data collection and analysis to understand the current situation; (2) focus groups involving faculty, current students, alumni, and potential students to provide feedback on what is going well and to solicit suggestions for future recruitment and retention strategies; and (3) identifying institutional resources and fundraising opportunities that can be leveraged to provide additional supports for students, we will strive to produce highly qualified teacher candidates

We hope to ensure that all youth in our state and nation have the teachers they need and deserve.

who reflect the diversity of Maryland's pre-K–12 student population.

UMBC, with its large numbers of students of color with strong academic skills, is well positioned to achieve this goal. By recruiting these students to careers in pre-K–12 education and supporting them through teacher preparation and induction, we can contribute to their entry and retention in the public school system. At the same time, through the campus' pre-K–12 outreach programs such as Upward Bound, we will continue to strengthen the academic skills of historically underserved students in elementary, middle, and high schools in and around Baltimore so that they too have the option of becoming teachers in Maryland's public schools.

While we recognize that many white teachers effectively work with students of color, we also believe that all children will benefit from having the opportunity to interact with teachers who embody the nation's racial and cultural diversity. Through our efforts, we hope to ensure that all youth in our state and nation have the teachers they need and deserve. 

END NOTES

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2. Feistritzer et al., *Profile of Teachers in the U.S. 2011*.
3. National Collaborative on Diversity in Teacher Education, "Assessment of Diversity in America's Teaching Force."
4. Sleeter and Thao, "Diversifying the Teaching Force," pp. 3-8.
5. The authors would like to thank Anthony Lane for his research assistance, Dr. Antoinette Mitchell for her insightful comments on an early draft of this paper, and the anonymous reviewers and editor for their invaluable feedback that further strengthened the manuscript.
6. Farkas, et al., "Cultural Resources and School Success: Gender, Ethnicity, and Poverty Groups within an Urban School District," pp. 127-42; Dee, *Teachers, Race, and Student Achievement in a Randomized Experiment*, pp. 195-210; also see Egalite, et al., "Representation in the Classroom: The Effect of Own-race Teachers on Student Achievement"; and Klopfenstein, *Beyond Test Scores: The Impact of Black Teacher Role Models on Rigorous Math Taking*, pp. 416-28.
7. Sanders, "The Effects of School, Family, and Community Support on the Academic Achievement of African American Adolescents," pp. 385-409; Wilder, "Increasing African American Teachers' Presence in American Schools," pp. 205-20.
8. Achinstein, et al., "Retaining Teachers of Color: A Pressing Problem and a Potential Strategy for 'Hard-to-Staff' Schools."
9. Boser, *Teacher Diversity Matters: A State-by-State Analysis of Teachers of Color*.
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11. Lodaya, The Paradox of Minority Teacher Recruitment; Feistritzer et al., *op cit*.
12. Feistritzer et al., *op cit*.
13. Boser, *op cit*.
14. Zumwalt and Craig, "Teachers' Characteristics: Research on the Demographic Profile," pp. 111-56.
15. Cochran-Smith and Fries, "Researching Teacher Education in Changing Times: Politics and Paradigms," pp. 69-109.
16. See for example, Gordon, "Why Students of Color Are Not Entering the Field of Teaching: Reflections from Minority Teachers," and Wilder, *op cit*.
17. At the time of this study, Praxis I was being replaced by Praxis Core.
18. Gitomer, *Teacher Quality in a Changing Policy Landscape: Improvements in the Teacher Pool*.
19. Pflaum and Abramson, "Teacher Assignment, Hiring, and Preparation: Minority Teachers in New York City," pp. 17-31.
20. Maryland State Department of Education. *Maryland Teacher Staffing Report, 2012-14*.
21. 4.1 percent of students were Native American, but no data were available regarding the percentage of Native American teachers.
22. Shah, "Complexion of Maryland Teaching Corps Fails to Reflect Student Body."
23. Maryland State Department of Education. *Report Card*.
24. We refer to Traditionally White Institutions. Other sources use the term "Predominantly White Institutions."
25. Table 2 based on data from the *Maryland Teacher Staffing Report 2012-14 and Keller, the Study of Teacher Capacity Report 2000*.
26. Maryland State Department of Education, *Maryland Teacher Staffing Report, 2012-14*.
27. Data source: P12 Longitudinal Data System Dashboard at <https://wcp.k12lds.memscd.org/public>.
28. The University of Maryland, Baltimore County is described as a Historically Diverse Institution because it was the first University in Maryland that was open to students from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds.
29. About 45 percent of UMBC students are white, 18 percent are Asian American, 16 percent are African American, six percent are Hispanic, and eight percent are from other countries.
30. Hrabowski, *Institutional Change in Higher Education: Innovation and Collaboration*.
31. Mervis, "HHMI Hopes to Replicate Program to Produce More Minority Science Ph.D.s."

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