

Evaluating Contributions to Diversity for Graduate Admissions and Financial Support: Guidelines for Science and Engineering Disciplines

In September 2007, The Regents of the University of California affirmed the statement of the Academic Senate that diversity is fundamental to UC's mission, quality and service to the State. The Regents identified graduate diversity as one of four critical areas for addressing diversity to maintain academic excellence.

In July 2005, the University of California Academic Personnel Manual policy governing faculty appointment and advancement (APM 210) was amended so that faculty contributions to diversity would receive recognition and reward in the academic personnel process. An excerpt from the policy states:

The University of California is committed to excellence and equity in every facet of its mission. Teaching, research, professional and public service contributions that promote diversity and equal opportunity are to be encouraged and given recognition in the evaluation of the applicant's qualifications. These contributions to diversity and equal opportunity can take a variety of forms including efforts to advance equitable access to education, public service that addresses the needs of California's diverse population, or research in a scholar's area of expertise that highlights inequalities. (APM 210-1-d)
<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/senate/committees/ucaad/apm210.pdf>

In order to create a pool of qualified scholars for faculty appointments, the recognition of contributions to diversity set forth in the APM must be reflected in criteria for graduate admissions and financial support.

In its 2006 report, "Beyond Bias and Barriers," the National Academy of Sciences stated that the United States must aggressively pursue the innovative capacity of all of its people – women and men, minority and non-minority – in order to maintain scientific and engineering leadership amid increasing economic and educational globalization. Removing the barriers that prevent full participation of women and minorities in science and engineering is critical to developing a scientific workforce with the values, culture and perspectives to provide solutions to pressing national and international problems.

University policy states that an applicant's race or gender may not be considered in selection for student or faculty appointments. However, to attract excellent graduate students who will contribute to the University's diversity imperative, departments may give special consideration to the following factors in selecting graduate students for admission and financial support:

- applicants who have engaged in service efforts or programs to increase participation in science or engineering for groups historically under-represented in higher education; for example:
 - participation as undergraduates in academic preparation, outreach, tutoring or other programs designed to remove barriers facing women, minorities, veterans, people with disabilities and other individuals who are members of group historically excluded from higher education;

- participation in programs designed to address diversity and equity in higher education such as the Society of Women in Physical Sciences, SACNAS or other equivalent programs in all disciplines;
- a demonstrated record of mentoring other students from groups under-represented in their field or historically under-represented in higher education;
- applicants who have the potential to contribute to their graduate program through their understanding of the barriers facing women, domestic minorities, students with disabilities, and other members of groups underrepresented in higher education careers, as evidenced by life experiences and educational background; for example:
 - attendance at a minority serving institution;
 - experience with issues facing students with disabilities;
 - ability to articulate the barriers facing women in science and engineering;
- applicants who display drive and motivation to persist and succeed in their careers in spite of barriers in a field that disproportionately disadvantage them;
- applicants with the potential to bring to their research the creative critical discourse that comes from their non-traditional educational background or experience as a member of a group under-represented in higher education;
- applicants who, in addition to their primary field of interest, have the potential to make research contributions to understanding the barriers facing women and domestic minorities in science and other academic disciplines; for example:
 - studying patterns of participation and advancement of women and minorities in fields where they are underrepresented;
 - studying socio-cultural issues confronting underrepresented students in college preparation curricula;
 - evaluating programs, curricula and teaching strategies designed to enhance participation of underrepresented students in higher education;
- applicants who have the communication skills and cross-cultural abilities to maximize effective collaboration with a diverse cross-section of the academic community;
- applicants who have research interests in subjects that will contribute to diversity and equal opportunity in science and engineering; for example,
 - research that addresses health disparities, educational access and achievement, political engagement, economic justice, social mobility, civil and human rights (e.g., mechanical engineering of prosthetics; bioengineering research for at risk populations).