

Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Faculty Diversity: Recruitment, Retention, and Planning for New Leadership
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>> Maureen Johnson: Hello, and welcome to the Faculty Diversity: Recruitment, Retention, and Planning for New Leadership webinar, hosted by the National Training Directors Council. The council is excited for today's presenters to discuss their experiences with faculty diversity.

My name is Maureen Johnson, and I'm the program specialist here at AUCD. We'd like to thank you all for joining us today.

Before we begin, I would like to address a few logistical details. First, we'll provide an introduction of our speakers. Following their presentation, there will be time for questions. Because of the number of participants, your audio will be muted throughout the call.

However, you can submit questions at any point through the presentation -- you can submit questions at any point during the presentation via the webinar chat box on your console.

You may send the chat to the whole audience or the presenters only. The entire webinar is being recorded and will be available on the webinars event page on the AUCD website. There will be a short evaluation survey at the close of the webinar. We invite you to provide feedback on this webinar and suggestions for future topics. So, please join me in welcoming our presenters today.

We have Dr. Bruce Keisling, the executive director of the University of Tennessee's Center for Developmental Disabilities. He holds the Shainberg Professorship in Developmental Pediatrics in the College of Medicine.

We have Dr. Christine Begay Vining. She is a bilingual Navajo speech-language pathologist at the University of New Mexico at the Center for Development and Disabilities.

We have Derrick K. Willis, director of Iowa's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Center for Disabilities and Development.

I will hand it over to Bruce to begin our presentation.

>> Dr. Keisling: Thanks, Maureen, and it's our pleasure to be here with everybody today. I think it's the goal for Christine, Derrick and I to present some ideas and some experiences that we have had at our own centers looking at recruitment, retention, and leadership opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds, and the hope is to really create a dialogue where we

might share and exchange some ideas, talk about obstacles, and learn from each other over the course of this hour.

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Thanks. I think it's helpful in terms of thinking about our centers in the context of how we find ourselves. For myself here in Tennessee, our center operates within a medical school, and in particular, a department of pediatrics. So, traditionally, we come up through the medical model. We do a lot of clinic care, so oftentimes, people with disabilities are identified as patients, and that's kind of that historical context from which we are a part of that I have to be mindful of when kind of navigating my own systems at my university and trying to espouse the change that I want to see for my center and the people I work with.

The slide that you have got in front of you here talks a little bit about the diversity as it exists in Memphis and Shelby County, Tennessee, and really, I see one of my missions as the director of the center is to work toward making my center more representative of the communities that we serve, and so one good place to start there is really just to understand the background of the people around your center, and you can see there on the slide that our county is majority African-American, and certainly the city of Memphis is as well. We have a high percentage of children within the pediatric population that are African-American, and it's one of the poorest metro areas in the United States. About double the national average of children in Memphis live in poverty, so it provides a context for the families that we serve, some of the challenges that they are going to face, and kind of their backgrounds and experiences as different from others in our center and in our medical school.

We also have a growing Latinx population in Shelby County. It's been measured as the third fastest growth rate of any state in the nation. It's predominantly made up of Mexican immigrants, and about 18% of those folks end up finding themselves in our metropolitan area on the west side of the state. So, these are all areas that I find important to focus on in terms of having an intentional plan toward bringing folks in from these backgrounds and experiences to be a part of our center, to inform our training, to support our mission, and to be a part of us.

So, there have been a couple of different ways that we have looked at trying to meet that mission. Some of that has to do with just looking for additional sources of funding to support us in those endeavors, and what I have found over the last couple of years is there generally are opportunities for small grants that afford centers the opportunity to kick start new initiatives that can help broaden opportunity for diversity of experience and collaboration and recruitment of people at your center. A couple of examples that we have pursued and been successful in applying over the last couple of years include a partnership planning grant with ACL, and that was for LeMoyne-Owen College, an HBCU here in Memphis. Being a medical school, we predominantly work with graduate-level students. So, bringing in younger students who may have less experience in disability and have a broader kind of palette of what they might be interested in as a career choice was a way of joining with LeMoyne-Owen in that regard.

It was also an interesting note, thinking about partnering with smaller schools, whether it's an HBCU or community college, we realize they oftentimes don't have the experiences that we do with grant writing and supports within a university to go after that type of funding. So we ended up I think spending more time working directly with their business and finance people as well to put together a successful application and in that process learned how important it was to try to help build their own institution so that they themselves could become more effective at securing funding and building programs on their own as well.

Another one that we acquired through ACL was a diversity fellowship grant through -- with the University of Memphis's Institute on Disability. U of M is a larger institution in our community, and they certainly have more infrastructure than an HBCU might. But it was an

opportunity to bring a person of color at the graduate level who also had a lived experience with a disability within our center for the course of a year.

And that really ended up being a nice partnership that impacted that individual in terms of their professional trajectory, as well as informing, I think, a lot of individuals in our center and our students who hadn't had an opportunity to work with a graduate student, who themselves had a visible disability.

And, finally, I think an important one to think about is the opportunity that exists in our cases as LENDs and UCEDDs with every five years reimagining how you would like to reappropriate funds with the explicit idea of creating diversity and opportunities for leadership within your center. All of the LENDs that are on the line today will be reapplying in December and January, with the next five-year cycle of funding.

The question is have you begun having discussions about what the budget might look like and how do you allocate funds towards the ends that we are talking about today. The old adage is if you want to know about an organization's values, take a look at their budget. So, what is your budget telling me as a reader of it, how important diversity is, leadership opportunity and inclusion?

We reappropriated our UCEDD budget during the past cycle to expand community engagement in services with the Latino community, and putting that in writing and allocating funds for it helps make it come into fruition.

Another way to kind of think about ways of broadening diversity for me was to look at partnerships within my own university, that there are institutions and organizations and units within the university that share some of those same goals and aims as I would have as a center director with regards to recruitment and retention and promotion of people from diverse backgrounds.

And so spending time and intentionally meeting with individuals and getting to know them at human resources, at the Office of Equity and Diversity, at your Disability Office, I think are really critical. I have made some really nice professional, collegial relationships with those individuals, and the idea being that you want to do that long before you implement your plan, get to know them, get to know what their values are and their interests, and, again, make your goals transparent to these folks. I think the more that you can share them, the more they will have them in mind too when other opportunities arise that they then think of your center or they think of your particular unit as an opportunity for a win-win situation for you both.

So, existing resources, looking at those on campus. For me, it's also looking at opportunities to share power and responsibility that, no matter where you might fall in the organization, you know, always realize, at some point, your time with the organization will end. Look towards what that transition is going to look like, and, you know, how do I work myself out of a job one day, and who needs to fill those roles, and how would that best fit with the university?

So, I have looked at our organizational chart, and I have explored ways to change positions and roles and titles and responsibilities, and HR is a great help in that regard, again, looking for opportunities for promotion for people.

We often lose a great generation of individuals who might stay with us from one to three or four years but then move on for other opportunities. Sometimes, that's simply because there aren't growth opportunities that exist at our centers, opportunities for employment or shared responsibility with regards to power.

And then, finally, no matter where you sit at your campus and your university, ask a lot of questions and investigate what I call preconceived institutional conventions. Universities like ours carry a lot of traditions with them, but oftentimes they are not policies, and I'll give you an example.

When I first became the executive director at our center, it was a tradition that was spoken of with such regularity, I assumed it was fact, and the tradition was that only faculty could be PIs of grants, and what came to be, when I pushed that and investigated it more deeply, was, in fact, the policy is anyone could be a PI as long as they were staff. That then opened a wide array of individuals who could be PIs of grants, many of whom wrote the grants, and many of whom did 80% plus of the work and knew the programs inside and out. And so it was an opportunity for me to relinquish some programs that had fallen to myself as a faculty position, when, in fact, there were the right people in place. That gave them the opportunity to be recognized. That gave them the opportunity to develop new skills with regards to finance and budgeting, and it gave them a higher status within the university, and it was a nice experience for me to help mentor that for them as well.

Next slide.

So, in terms of our approach with regards to hiring and retention and promotion, looking back at 2018 as another benchmark, we have been able to shift the center to now having a majority minority. That is, the majority of employees at the center are African-American, more closely modeling the communities in which we live, and you can see the percent changes there.

We now have two native Spanish-speaking faculty in two different academic disciplines. We have had a full-time faculty member in the family discipline for about 20 years, and that's been transformative for us, both as employees and as students, but we have added additional family members.

And I have used positions like our associate director position and our training director position for intentional recruitment and promotion of individuals that I believe would bring greater diversity and greater sensibilities with regards to disability within our center.

Finally, I would also ask folks to think about the people in your center that you work with that you might consider your truth-sayers, that oftentimes it's helpful to have one or two people who can take a step back, who can see what you're doing and what you intend to do and can give you some honest appraisal about how you're doing with regard to that. Oftentimes, we might communicate and think that we are being heard, but what's actually being heard might be different, or our intentions with regard to some of our activities may not ring home to the audience that it's being delivered to, so, finding people who you can be honest with about your goals and your aims and getting feedback about how that's going.

So, for us, we started with an idea of an end in mind, keeping in mind that it's a journey, not a destination, but really talking about, and this kind of ties into planning with your grant and your cycles, what do you see as the goals for yourself? Where would you like to get to, and what timeline would be involved? Who do you need to bring on board and engage within and outside of the center to bring that to fruition, looking for opportunities, and realizing sometimes they come from unusual places and novel people? And if you find that your center has been stuck in a rut for a long time with regards to diversifying the faculty and the center, then maybe it is time to look at new ways of doing things and new people to do them with.

And, again, it's never too early to think about succession planning, and for me, part of that is divesting the responsibility and the power that I might have in my position to people that I work with, and you can do that at any level of the organization. You can do that with senior students. You can do that with early career professionals, finding ways of helping people grow where they see it also as an asset to them and an acknowledgement of their worth and utility in the system.

So, you know, we can use a variety of metrics to try to measure how we are doing with regards to diversity and recruitment and retention. NIRS is one place to look, certainly. I like to use annual performance evaluations as well, and in those, I really try to spend some time with our employees looking at their own professional development, what they aspire to, how

they see themselves in the system, how much do they feel like they are in partnership with other members of our center, and sometimes realizing that it's a joy and it's an honor to have people leave our center and maybe become less diverse as a result, because they are going on to bigger and better and bolder things. I look at development with regard to education, and are they taking advantage of all of the benefits they have within our center and our university to grow themselves as a professional and as a change agent as much as possible?

And then, finally, getting feedback from all constituents, as many folks as you can, from as many different perspectives as you can, and having that kind of input that you need to make sure that you're meeting your goals.

So, some things that I think about in terms of where we are headed, I would like to see our center spend more time with communities of color and people with disabilities in their communities proper. That's certainly a goal that I have for us, to be out in the community more, pandemic notwithstanding.

We also have some serious work to do with regards to employment of people with disabilities at our center. That historically has not been a trend, and it hasn't really been something that has been worked on in an intentional manner, and I really want for my community and I want for my students and I want for my university colleagues to recognize and think of us as a place where people with disabilities work in tandem with faculty from all different backgrounds.

I would also like to work to increase having more students with lived disability experience at our center. That's just a metric that, in my opinion, has been pretty low for a long period of time. So, we have made gains in some areas, and we have got a long way to go in others.

And then some other areas, including more family members, as employees and consultants at our center, more self-advocates, and people from diverse communities and our community advisory council, and a better needs assessment with regards to engaging our communities of color in our next cycle of funding as a UCEDD, certainly.

So, those were some of my thoughts, just to kind of add to the exchange today. I think Chris will be speaking next as well, but thanks for your time.

>> Dr. Vining: Thanks, Bruce. I would like to start with the culture context which we work with in New Mexico. I think having a LEND program in New Mexico is important because of the unique needs in our state. Our state is the 5th largest in size, and we have over 121,000 square miles, and so the communities that we serve are out in rural areas, and so when we are talking about communities, I think these are the communities that I think about and how we can reach them and have them access our resources and services.

New Mexico is also the second largest -- or the second most diverse state in the country, which is really different from where I also work, with regard to the LEND program in Vermont. They are the whitest state in the United States, and so having these two different contrasting LEND programs in which I'm collaborating with, it's really interesting to have these different perspectives.

In New Mexico, we have a large Hispanic Latino population. Almost half of our population is Latino and Hispanic, and then about 36% are white, American Indian 11%, and then 2.6% African-American, and then other Asian and Pacific Islander groups. About a third of our population speak a language other than English, so this is a really important aspect of the work that we do here in New Mexico.

Our university system is on indigenous ancestral land, and it is considered a Hispanic survey institution, so the multicultural focus of our university is pretty significant.

And as we look at service delivery and how we implement our programs, I think it's important to -- at least, for me, as faculty on the LEND program, I think about the populations that are underserved, and in a needs assessment conducted recently by the New Mexico early childhood department indicated that there was a significant need to improve existing early

childhood infrastructure to accommodate programming across tribal communities and rural communities. They noted that there is a need to have strong support for the integration of education and housing systems across the State's infrastructure, and many noted that the programming needed to be consistent with the ways in which tribal communities view well-being for children, youth and families, and that there are concerns about potential language and cultural loss in serving children across the state.

So, this is a recent needs assessment that was conducted with our agencies that work with very young children, and what it says is that there is a significant need to take into consideration tribal perspectives, and the way that we train the workforce, the way that we develop programs and the way that we build capacity, and so as we are thinking about health disparities in these communities, and as we think about improving and training professionals, we have to think about what do we -- how do we equip them, how do we support them so that they are effective in meeting the needs of the communities, especially in my perspective here is tribal communities. And I think in our LEND program, we have focused quite a bit on cultural competency and trying to raise awareness around some of the needs with regard to linguistic needs and cultural needs of the communities we serve.

And LEND is an interdisciplinary training program, and so we have many different disciplines, and our training comes from many different disciplines as well as our faculty, and it's important to consider some of the objectives that the LEND has. One is to advance the knowledge and skills of all child health professionals to improve health care service delivery for children with developmental disabilities.

And then second is to provide high-quality interdisciplinary education that emphasizes the integration of services from state and local agencies and organizations, private providers and communities, and provide health professionals with skills that foster community-based partnerships.

So, these are all aspects of what we hope to achieve, and there's a lot of focus on families, communities, going into the communities and looking at the needs and the strengths and resources from their perspective, and I think that this is where it's really challenging, because a lot of the -- our content tends to come from western perspectives, the way we see intervention, the way we see disability, the way we see how children should be supported.

They are from western perspectives, and so there's like this mismatch, and we are sending our trainees into these communities not fully understanding what they are going into. And so this is a part of the challenge for us in LEND, is to try to expand their knowledge and their skills to be able to work with families, no matter what community they come from, and so the curriculum in LEND is to provide didactic seminars with experiential learning, leadership training, and looking at their individual leadership style, mentoring clinical experiences, providing clinical and applied research through capstone projects or their own research projects, and then family and training matches. And this is where we provide an opportunity for them to match up with families that may be -- that has a child with a disability, but also they may come from different cultural groups, and then also hands-on training and public policy.

So, these are some ways that we try to increase their leadership skills and their knowledge about neurodevelopmental disabilities.

And I think part of my effort has been to collaborate with faculty. Dr. Acosta, Sylvia Acosta, who is a clinical psychologist, is one who I work with to implement some of the seminars, and then this past year, Debra Sugar, who is a social worker, also joined our team to provide some information about white privilege. And so we covered different topics around how disparities, social determinants, bias, microaggressions, conducting assessments and implementing class standards.

So, these are just some samples of topics that we engage in. And we cover family-centered care, and the idea is to incorporate these concepts throughout the year, not just during the one seminar. We try to embed it in everything that we do, and our trainings are pretty diverse. This year, we have about 22, I believe. Some are family members, parents, and self-advocates, and then we have had in recent years more diverse trainees coming from African-American backgrounds, Hispanic, Native American, Asian backgrounds, and also representing rural communities, so that's been great.

And then we have faculty, 12 faculty this year representing nursing and occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychology, social work, special education, speech-language pathology. So, we have a pretty diverse group who mentor students, and they develop the curricula for leadership education, and they also provide continuing education for professionals in the field.

So, as I describe our trainees and faculty, I see that there's a real value for having the diverse workforce, in terms of gender, race and ethnicity, ability, faith, age, geographic representation, and other characteristics, and I believe that diversity leads us to greater innovation, teamwork and growth.

So, when I talk about some of the barriers in New Mexico, I think our university has had a significant multicultural focus, but I think for American Indians, the faculty have been sort of centralized to the College of Education and the law school and very little in other areas, so this is something that I would like to change in the future, to have young leaders who are coming up to be able to have a faculty position if they choose in the health sciences department and be able to gain increased numbers of graduate clinicians in all departments, speech pathology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other areas. This is definitely where we are needing to grow, especially for American Indian graduate students.

So as a faculty member of the LEND program, I'm pretty much in the minority, not only in the university but also across the nation, and I think this is something that I would like to change or have to kind of look ahead and think about how do we grow faculty members in speech pathology, in our LEND programs, in our UCEDDs, and so this is I think one of the challenges that we face, is to be able to think about recruiting and retaining diverse students, staff, and professionals and faculty in these allied professions. And but I think it is difficult. If we are trying to prepare the next generation of clinicians, policy makers, faculty and researchers without adequately having a plan for recruitment or retention of students, staff and faculty from diverse backgrounds in place, it is challenging. So, this is something that we continually need to work at and strive to change.

The experience of minority faculty in primarily white universities is challenging also. In my collaboration with the Vermont program, as I have mentioned, it's a largely white university. I think there hasn't been very much representation for American Indians in the health sciences there, and I think this has been related to the lack of trust between the American Indian people and the university in the past. So, in this context, it is hard to grow scholars and faculty and staff, and it's difficult to recruit minority faculty into these positions, and also, and this may be happening in other places as well. For example, it's been reported that minority faculty at universities and colleges in eight midwestern states show that faculty of color experience exclusion, isolation, alienation and racism in predominantly white universities. Minority students also feel isolated and unwelcome in some of these settings. So there's definitely things that we need to continue working on.

As we talk about recruitment and retention, we need to recognize that recruitment is only the first step. Recruiting minority and female candidates for faculty positions and keeping them on board and nurturing their growth within the organization are both important. Creating an

environment where they can grow and thrive is not always possible because of barriers imposed by universities.

So, in terms of recruitment, I feel very fortunate that the New Mexico LEND program, that we have a director who is very supportive, and our faculty and staff are very supportive of one another. And so in this climate, it's definitely a good place to be able to do some of the things that we want to do, and as we look at our curriculum, you know, there's freedom in thinking about new ideas, new ways of doing things, but I also feel like there's a cap in terms of who can write grants, who can research, who can engage communities with regard to research, and so we definitely need to open those doors so that we can engage communities and be able to conduct research in a way that leads to solutions, in a way that they see fit.

I think in our faculty or LEND program, there's hardly ever any turnover in faculty, so, you know, it can go for many, many years with the same faculty, and I think for me, if it wasn't for the previous SLP representative, if it wasn't for her leaving, I don't think I would have had this opportunity to be a faculty member, and so that's just something I think to think about, is as you are looking at your faculty, to think about how do you diversify.

But I also understand how challenging that can be when you have faculty members that have been there for many, many years.

I think retention just requires a lot of support and a lot of opportunity to grow, and I feel like the director really has to value cultural competency, diversity and equity, and that makes a big difference, because if they can value it and appreciate it, you know, they are able to allow you to attend professional workshops, where you can continue to grow, and they can support you to go to IRB meetings, especially if they are out on the reservation.

One of the best programs that I have been able to go to is [off mic] Goode's workshop on leadership and cultural competency. I think that's one of the best programs that I have been able to go to, and it required director support to do that. Networking with other universities is really helpful.

So, in closing, just some recommendations. As I mentioned earlier, one of the best programs that I have been able to connect with is the Vermont LEND program, and the way that they have been able to transform their LEND program in a very white state, they have been able to diversify their program, and some of the things that Mercedes and Mary Alice Favro have been able to do is that they have been able to engage in organizational self-assessments. Every three years, they look at their program and how they need to change, what service for trainees looks like, and they promote cultural competency topics in graduate courses that they took, and there are two courses. There are three credit classes taught online, and I would like to see something like that for our program, where we teach these types of classes in our university. So, it draws people, students from underrepresented programs to participate.

Another thing that they do is they collaborate with racially diverse faculty from other LEND programs. This is one way that I was able to get connected with them. In a program like theirs, they don't have American Indian representatives, and so they are able to reach out and say we would like you to help us with this part of looking at cultural perspectives of health and disability and looking at self-determination with an American-Indian focus.

So, Dr. Joshua Allison-Burbank and I are able to provide this type of support. So, this is really helpful to grow a program, and some other things I do is provide cross cultural mentoring. Every week, as faculty and staff and trainees meet, and they talk about issues related to bias, racism, privilege, disparities, and I think that's really important, to be able to talk to your trainees and be able to be supportive.

They conduct weekly mentoring sessions with their trainees, and they focus on working with cultural brokers and interpreters, and that's something that we need to continue working on in

our program, because we have a large bilingual population in our state, and I think when we look at all of the topics in our seminars, it's like how do you make room for all of this, but I think that, like I said, Vermont LEND has been able to do this and bring in people and parents, trainees from underrepresented groups to participate in their programs, self-advocates. And so it can be done.

And I'm going to end here to give Derrick some time, but thank you for this opportunity to share some information around cultural competency and faculty and recruitment retention.

>> Derrick Willis: Thank you, Chris, and thank you, Bruce, as well, and also thank you, Eileen, for the invitation. I guess it's kind of hard to go last, because I could basically say ditto [laughter] and really just the things that I have heard and the things and the strategies that have been mentioned before, the things that I have on my notes to talk about. So, unlike Bruce and unlike Chris, I am in the state of Iowa, and as Chris mentioned, her work in Vermont, being one of the whitest states, I would classify Iowa as right behind Vermont [laughter], right? I have been here at this campus for three years. I have been the executive director for two years, and prior to that, I was at the University of Missouri, serving at that institution, with the UCEDD there, actually running an urban impact center.

So, this is a total shift, a total change for me, and when I came here -- and it hasn't changed much, a majority of the meetings that I'm in, a majority of the professionals that I engage with and the partnerships with state agencies and community-based providers, a majority of the families are not families of color.

And so how do you recruit, how do you develop an agenda, how do you begin to attract a diverse faculty when you are in an environment like this, and it's possible. It's also challenging, but it's also possible, and I have demonstrated that through just the two years that I have been here, and I'll talk a little bit about some of my strategies.

The first thing that I think is necessary in order to go down this path is that you have to seek buy-in, and you have to seek approval from leadership, and with me being a director, I do have the authority, and I do have the ability to make some decisions as to what I want my center to be like. Before I came here, we had no faculty or staff of color, and, again, when you are working in a state like this, we have basically four communities that have a concentration of minority populations, and the state as a whole, it's only 2% African-American, 5% Hispanic, and 2%, 3% Asian, Pacific Islander, and so we basically live in a state that you don't have the ability to recruit from the state itself, and so you do have to develop relationships and partnerships, and I heard Christine talk about developing partnerships with the other states, and I'll talk a little bit about that.

So, the first thing that I did was, and I just went through this process. We had nine positions that were open within our center, some of it because people left, some of it because of new initiatives that we started. And we probably had over 60 applicants for those nine positions, and not one of them was a person of color, and so the next step for me is to begin to go back and think and look and examine, you know, how are we marketing, how are we targeting, and what are we doing that intentionally and openly asks for diverse representation, and so is it changing some language when we have positions? And it might be as simple a statement as, "People of color are encouraged to apply," or something like that. So my next step is to go back, and I would offer you to do it, examine the hiring policies and practices too as a place to begin.

Looking at developing a system and developing strategies to partner with historically black colleges and universities, looking at places where you do find a larger concentration of individuals from diverse backgrounds, and developing those relationships, and so really looking at pipelines in terms of relationships with universities, other schools within the university that might have students of color in there, and so working in that partnership as well.

And then the other thing that I think is important to do is that, as Bruce had mentioned, looking at your offices that currently exist that exist for the specific reason of looking at issues related to diversity, inclusion and equity, what I found here was that we do have a program called an ambassadors program, and so whenever any kind of academic unit, any kind of academic department is searching to recruit or has a candidate that they are interested in, I signed up to be an ambassador, so what they do is they then connect me to a person of color who might be applying to come here, and I have an evening out, a dinner with them to just talk about what is life like here in the state of Iowa, what is life like in the city that we live in, Iowa City, and just give them a sense that if they did choose this as an opportunity that they wouldn't be alone.

So, studying and finding out what kind of programs that they have that really kind of support the recruitment and retention of people of color.

The other thing that I have done here is I have worked to create an environment that is accepting. Christine talked about how you can recruit, but it's also important that you retain, and how do you make sure that you're creating these environments that are supporting and accommodating, just like we do for people with disabilities.

So, what I have done since I have been here is I have brought in a lot of diversity-type initiatives, and like Bruce, I have had one round of diversity and disability fellowship. When I was at the University of Missouri, I had two years of developing a diversity and disability fellowship, and I'm proud to say that through those two years, I had four students of color, and two of them are still working at the UCEDD that is still there, that I just left.

And then while here, I have one round, and I'm just getting ready to start the second round of a diversity and disability fellowship. The first year that I had it, we had three applicants, and I brought on two. This last round, through my relationships, through my partnerships, going to academic units that I knew that have larger numbers of students from diverse backgrounds, this year, we have 18 that applied for two diversity fellowships.

And that's just within this college here. And so -- and I chose two, but the other thing that I'm doing as well is I told the team that interviewed all of the two that I wanted to meet every one of the students, because I wanted to personally get to know them and also continue to have them on my radar when other opportunities come about.

From my diversity fellowship that I had last year, the young lady, she then went to our LEND program, and now she's an employee. We have received some FEMA dollars. Iowa was considered to be in a state of disaster, and we were awarded some dollars from FEMA to address issues related to COVID-19, and now she works on a -- in a program of mine doing social check-ins and checking on individuals with disabilities for isolation and other issues and needs for counseling, et cetera, and as a part of my team is that information and referral system that we have called Compass, and she now works for them. So, for me, it's developing that pipeline through these relationships where I am engaging in developing an environment that is becoming comfortable having students from diverse backgrounds and staff from diverse backgrounds in our work.

I have also hosted two rounds of international fellows. I had two students. The first round was from -- students from Tanzania, and the second round was from an area called Lake Victoria area in Tanzania as well. But just bringing individuals from diverse backgrounds, bring individuals from an international perspective, creating an environment where people see the value of having diverse perspectives at the table then gives you an opportunity to advance the practices that you know are necessary in order to create that agenda that says, hey, we need to change the way we are looking and doing business.

So, for me, pipeline programs have been one. I believe that that's the way -- the best way to do it in communities that I reside in, really kind of creating that opportunity that gives them

experience, that the students of color and the faculty of color experiences an opportunity, but also, it gives others the opportunity to engage and to work with them and to see that there's a value in that.

The other thing that I do is when I see a position, I have hired a self-advocate. We had a student that had come through us who was a self-advocate in our LEND program, a young man from Uganda, and my faculty -- my staff came to me and said we want to continue to work with him, and we think that he can help us out with self-advocacy work, and so I went to our staff, and I said we have never done this before, and I said, well, just because we have never done it before, that doesn't mean that we can't do it, so figure it out. And we actually figured it out. He's working for us. We had to look at his benefits and make sure that what we were offering him was not going to impact any other areas of his life, but now he's a member of our team, and he's working with us on advancing some self-advocacy movements and initiatives.

So, in the two years that I have been here, just through my pipeline programs, number one, I have the ability to create a position and create opportunities, like Bruce said, re-looking at our budget, re-looking at our mission and our focus and really kind of reaching out, doing community conversations to see are we being responsive to the needs that people are seeing here in our community, in our state, and so really trying to, you know, establish partnerships.

I don't have the ability -- I'm in a hospital environment. I don't have the ability. I'm not in an academic unit, so I don't have the ability to offer faculty, you know, on a tenured track or a position, and so my -- the way that I do it now is I look for faculty in academic departments that could align with the work that we are doing and seeing how we can partner with them.

So, developing those relationships, developing those pipeline programs, and really reaching out to others across the campus, and as Christine said, I am also in the process of developing a four-state consortium, working with the UCEDD director Mark Shriver at the University of Nebraska, Carrie at the University of Kansas, the University of Missouri, and we are looking at tried to develop a Midwest consortium, so we can share resources, and we can also share when we have opportunities. Missouri is a little bit more diverse than when I was there, the African-American population in the greater Kansas City area was around 11-13%. So having those pipelines, partnerships and relationships allows me to advance the work that I do here.

I see that we have about nine minutes. I wanted to set aside some time for questions as well, so I'll stop here and see if there's any questions for us.

>> Maureen Johnson: I do see one question from Whitney. Are you thinking about HBCUs or travel colleges for others near your region, or are you open to a more extensive recruitment region? And this question is for any panelist.

>> Derrick Willis: Yeah, HBCUs are always a good partnership, a good relationship. I know when I was at the University of Missouri, we had an HBCU at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, so really, again, as Bruce had mentioned, starting and developing those relationships as well.

But I'm also looking at beyond just the HBCUs as well, for my perspective.

>> Dr. Keisling: Same with me, Derrick. You know, we have approached HBCUs. We have approached the broader catchment classification of minority serving institutions, and I think the pandemic has created an interesting paradigm for all of us. As we look at the little boxes, we have been able to get students engaged with us more broadly across the state, and from that have kind of backed up now into faculty that supervise them at their home institution.

So, in some ways, I'm hopeful that this will get many of us thinking about new ways to engage people at a distance and maybe start to employ and recruit them from a distance.

I find I get the best return on investment really with not having a full-time faculty person but paying a small portion of someone who could do something great with regards to disability, who is from a different background and may have a home institution located elsewhere. And I

think it's very similar to what is being done in Vermont as well, that notion of extending the outreach beyond the geography.

>> Derrick Willis: Yeah. And Maureen, could you -- I don't know if it has to focus on me, but I don't see anybody else's screen on the screen.

Now I just see Christine.

>> Eileen McGrath: You need the gallery view.

>> Derrick Willis: [Laughter].

>> Maureen Johnson: Can you see everyone now?

>> Derrick Willis: Just you.

>> Maureen Johnson: I'm on gallery view.

>> Derrick Willis: I see everybody in the little boxes, but when we weren't sharing presentations, I could see pretty much everybody.

>> Maureen Johnson: Let me...

How about now?

>> Eileen McGrath: So, I have a question, and it could -- either Bruce, Chris, Derrick or all of you, would you describe one of your biggest challenges in recruiting a diverse faculty member or diverse faculty members? What were the issues? Were you able to resolve it, the challenge? Were you able to remedy the situation? What were the variables? Just, you know, I know that a number of LEND programs have talked about difficulty recruiting qualified faculty.

I don't know if that's one of the issues that you have had, but that's one of the challenges some LEND programs are facing.

>> Dr. Keisling: I'm happy to jump in. For my university, they make a clear distinction between faculty and staff. That's one of the, you know, one of the challenges there.

In terms of hiring for staff, I haven't really encountered any obstacles. I can recruit from the communities pretty readily, and I have a little bit more autonomy to do that. Faculty becomes more difficult at a medical school, with regards to how people are classified, with regards to their educational background. That's been more of a challenge.

Historically, that was relegated in my college only to physicians, up until the last several years. We have been able to get psychologists now faculty status within the College of Medicine, and so that broadens it a little bit more.

Aside from that, the challenge that you mentioned, I mean, it's really legitimate. Beyond just general diversity, recruiting people to Memphis can be a challenge as well, in terms of just bringing in skills and talent.

What I have tried to pivot to with funding cycles now is really going out and looking for people, wherever they might be, that can bring what we need as a center more broadly, and is there a way to engage and employ them in terms of part of their time, where they are a part of our curriculum and training, and they are a part of our development of projects and plans -- and they may not reside with us, and they certainly aren't full-time with us -- ultimately, then, after the pandemic, getting them to have more physical presence for periods of time if possible. So, if I can't get somebody lock, stock, and barrel, what can I get in terms of part of a person's time, attention, expertise and background.

>> Derrick Willis: That's similar for me as well. Being in a hospital environment, I'm not housed in an academic department, and so I can't offer the faculty appointment. I can't offer the tenured track that a lot of faculty will want, and its recruiting mechanisms for individuals as well. So, my approach is to, as Bruce said, to identify existing faculty, see where our initiatives and our priorities align, and try to buy out some of their time and set aside money to make sure that I can, and as we are writing grants, doing more joint writing and doing more collaborations

and partnerships that allow us to benefit from some of the faculty, particularly the faculty of color who already exist on this campus as well.

>> Christine Begay Vining: I think, Eileen, our situation is similar, and I think the other issue is related to the workload. A lot of faculty may be also doing clinical work, and so that takes away from the research that they may be expected to do, and I think every center and every LEND program are probably unique, depending on where they are housed, and so I think at our university, it's kind of challenging to get faculty from diverse backgrounds, because they may have a degree that's not necessarily a "medical-related" degree, and that makes it challenging then to get into a faculty position and get research related to that.

And I think -- I think one of the big challenges for us, especially with regard to American Indians, is that there's not enough to draw from, you know. There's not a great deal of pool to draw from. Across the United States, there are only three SLPs -- three Navajo SLPs that have doctorate level degrees, and so it's just not -- there's just not a lot of, you know, individuals with doctorate degrees.

And then if you look at the master's level degrees, like I said earlier, there's very few represented across the allied professions. And so I think it really speaks to the need to recruit and draw in young students at an early age and get them interested in the help sciences and the health professions so that, you know, you can kind of create a pipeline.

And so those are I think some of the obstacles, is growing the workforce and being able to create these positions that they can grow into and have experience and have the knowledge to know about research, grant writing, teaching and all of these things we expect faculty to do, to be able to equip them early on, and I think that, you know, that they are competing. It's really competitive to get into a faculty position, so I think that's the other piece, is you may have a great deal of knowledge about populations and certain, you know, some of the areas in which people live, but then again, you know, if you don't have the adequate research skills, you know, you probably will not be considered for a faculty position.

So those are, I think, some of the challenges in getting faculty to become more diverse across universities.

>> Maureen Johnson: So, we have reached the end of the hour. I want to thank all of our panelists for joining us today, and thank you, too, for attending the webinar. This webinar has been recorded and will be available on AUCD's website shortly. So, please take a few minutes to complete our event survey. The link is in the chat box, and I want to tell everyone I hope you have a great weekend.

>> Eileen McGrath: Thank you, Maureen. Thank you, Bruce, Chris, and Derrick.

>> Derrick Willis: Thank you.

>> Eileen McGrath: Thank you for participating today.

>> Derrick Willis: No problem.

>> Thank you very much.

>> It was really informative. Thanks.