

# Strategies for Advancing the Careers of Women of Color in Academic Medicine

## Part 1 – Institutional Strategies



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# Background

- Women of Color (WOC)
  - Referring to women with marginalized racial identities
  - Not a monolithic term – individual challenges and needs may differ, and those differences must be recognized and addressed
  - Barriers to career advancement often intersect at gender and race

# Distinction between WOC and URM

- **Women of Color** – a term used to reflect a sense of solidarity among women with multiple, layered identities that intersect with each other, derived from shared experiences, history, social relations, and structures of power (unearned privilege conferred systematically).
  - Referring to women with marginalized racial identities
  - Not a monolithic term – individual challenges and needs may differ, and those differences must be recognized and addressed
  - Barriers to career advancement often intersect at gender and race
- **Underrepresented in Medicine** - refers to racial and ethnic populations that are underrepresented in the medical profession relative to their numbers in the general population.

# Background (...)

- WOC are underrepresented at higher ranks and leadership in academic medicine
- Important to understand the relationships between an individual's multiple identities
- Limited attention is given to WOC and their specific challenge
- **Double jeopardy** (between race and gender)
  - Women of color's experiences of discrimination are additive, or compounded, such that they face double the challenges as individuals who are stigmatized on only one identity dimension

# Background (...)

- WOC have very particular problems in the workplace
- **Intersectionality** - an analytical approach for understanding the ways multiple identities that individuals embody (i.e., gender, class, race, immigration status, ethnicity) overlap and combine with one another to contribute to unique experiences of disadvantaged and privileged.
- Gendered Racism:
  - WOC regularly endure comments about their professionalism, authority, competency, and scholarly expertise by their white male coworkers



# Background (...)

- WOC are a historically marginalized group
  - Historically marginalized: “Individuals, groups, and communities that have historically and systematically been denied access to services, resources, and power relationships across economic, political, and cultural dimensions as a result of systemic, durable, and persistent racism, discrimination, and other forms of oppression”



# Background (...)

- What got us here?
  - Decades of “benign neglect”, both conscious and unconscious bias, lack of role models, sponsorship and mentorship, etc.
- What will change things?
  - Concerted action from both institutions and individuals, based on a strategic plan designed to remedy the current situation.

# Minority Tax

- Definition:

“The extra, financially uncompensated duties and responsibilities that minorities are asked to perform to increase diversity at their institutions, such as serving on a search committee that would otherwise be all White.”

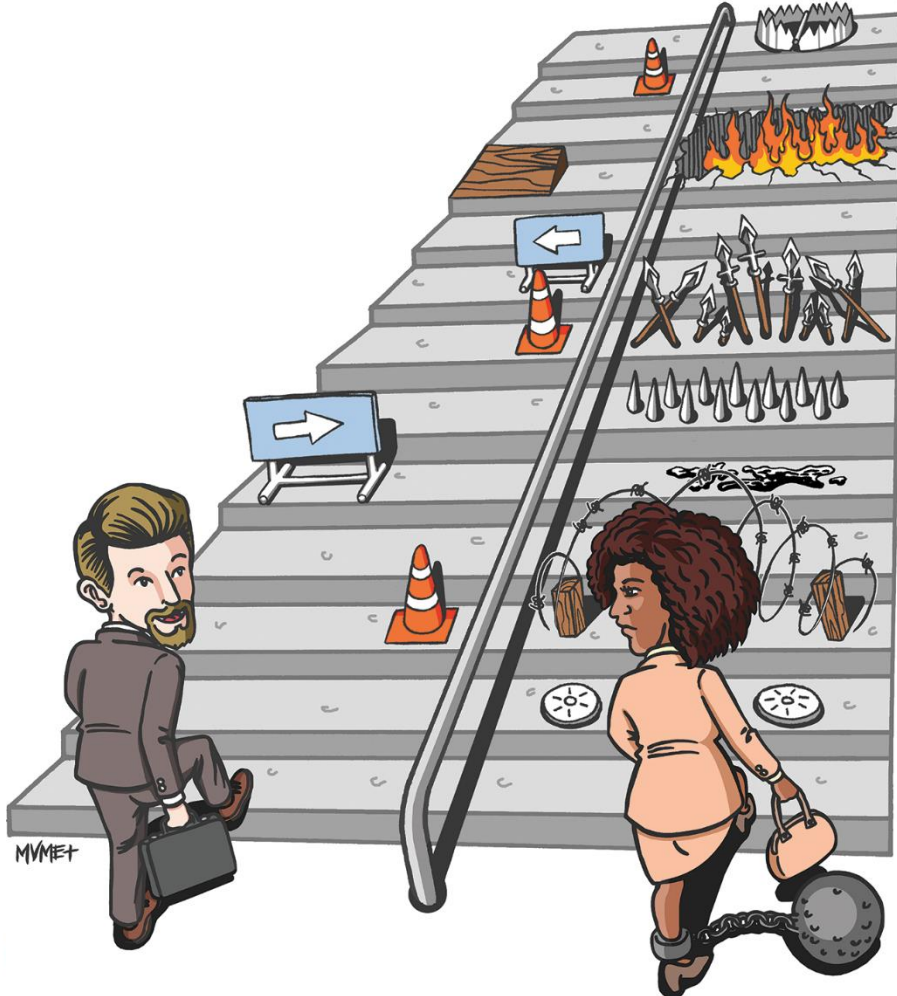
- These institutional strategies should not be placed upon WOC or POC to advance unless they will be both recognized and compensated (i.e., increased pay, extra time, titles, etc.)
- There must be formal recognized policy, re-training, and education to ensure that those old practices are not continued so that marginalized groups may finally benefit and stop performing uncompensated labor

# History of the Term: “WOC”

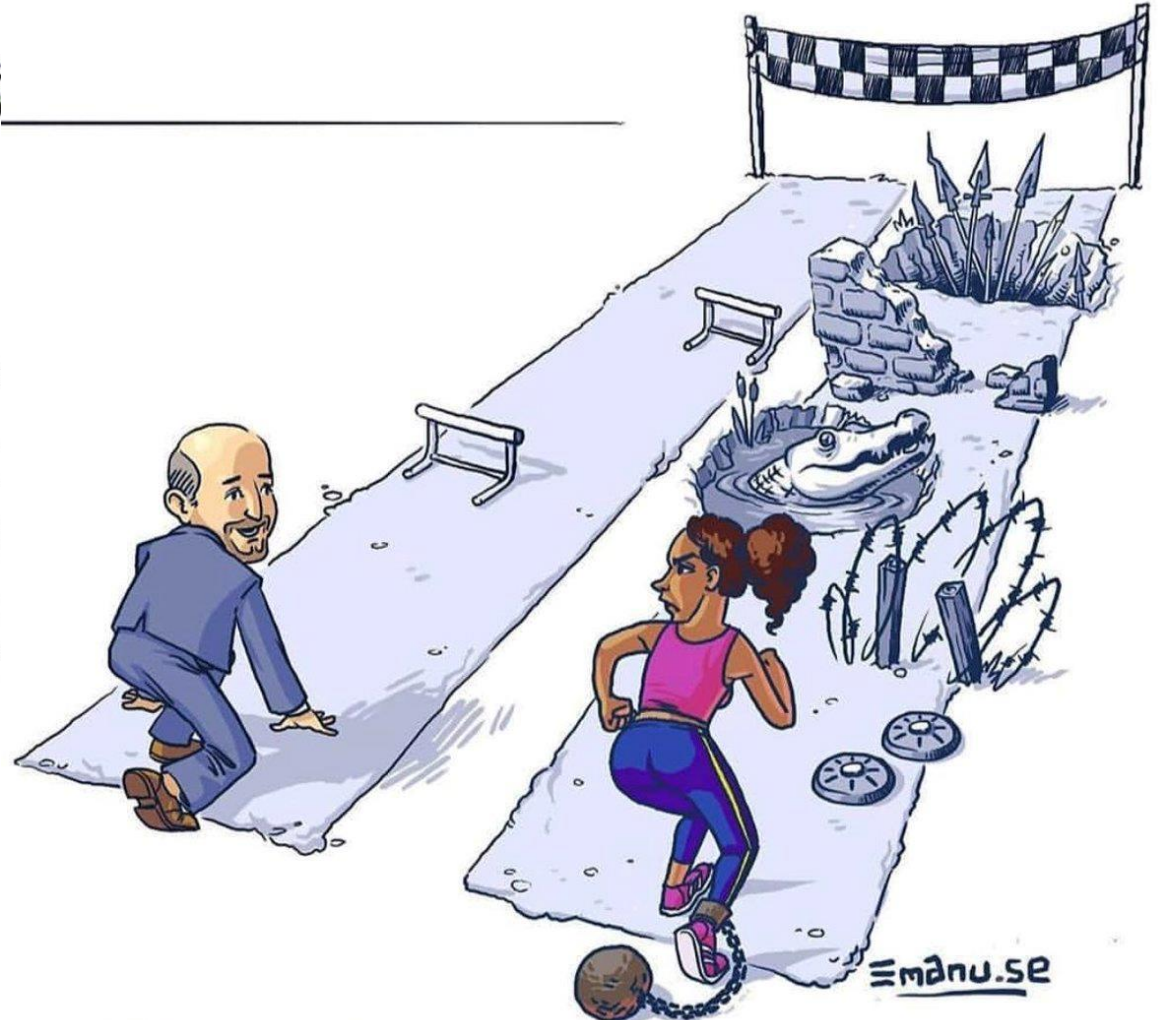
- The political term “women of color” surfaced in the violence against women movement in the late 1970s to unify all women experiencing multiple layers of marginalization with race and ethnicity as a common issue.
- Loretta J. Scott gives a history of the term here:  
<https://youtu.be/82vl34mi4Iw>
  - *Note:* There is no universal definition for WOC, and criticism has highlighted issues surrounding the inclusivity of the term, however, it is being used to describe women with multiple marginalized identities.
- Combahee River Collective:
  - <https://combaheerivercollective.weebly.com/the-combahee-river-collective-statement.html>

# Hostile Obstacle Course

**CAREER ACHIEVEMENTS**



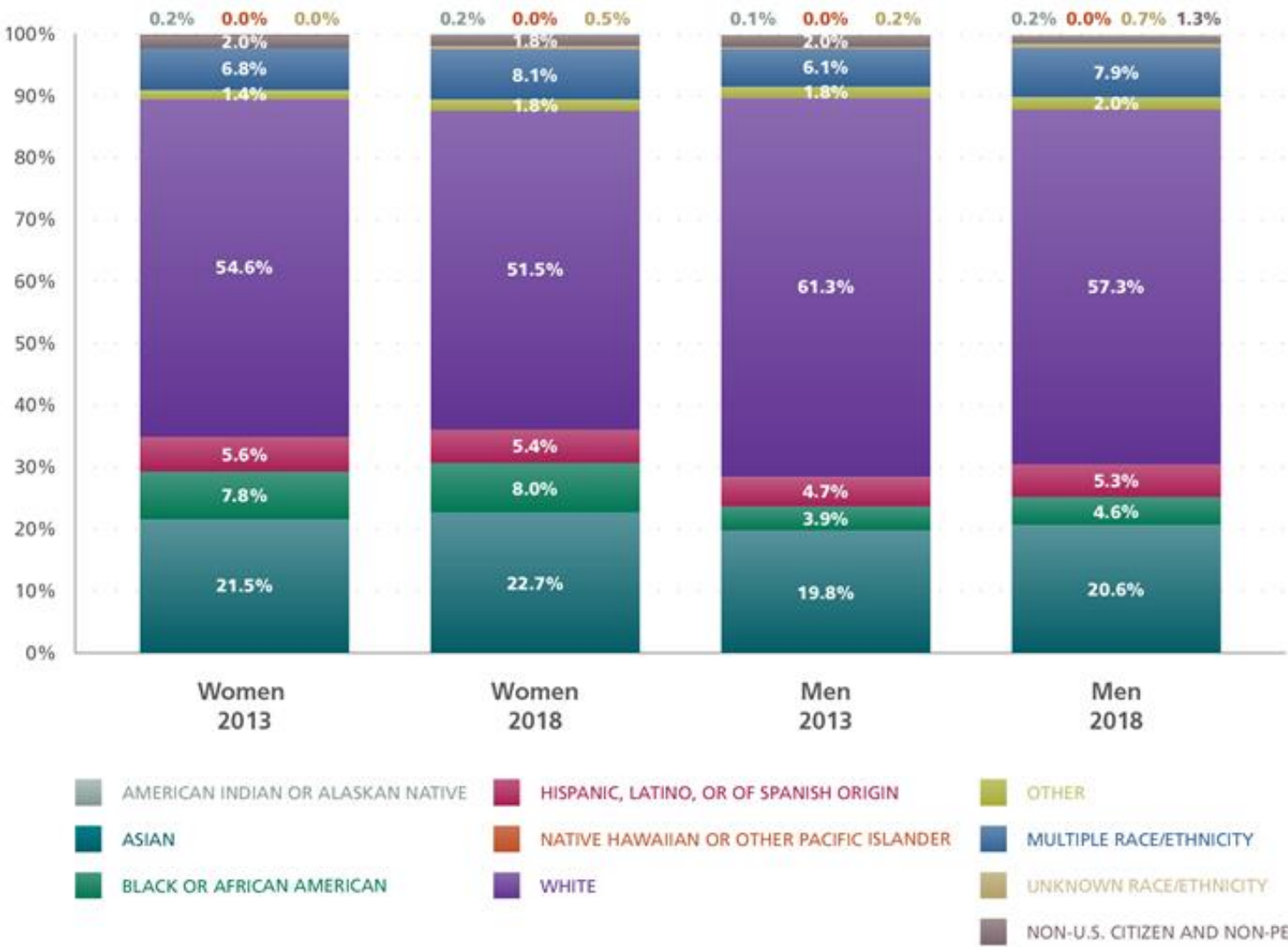
**RETENTION**



“What’s the matter?  
It’s the same distance!”



# How the hostile obstacle course shows up in the data

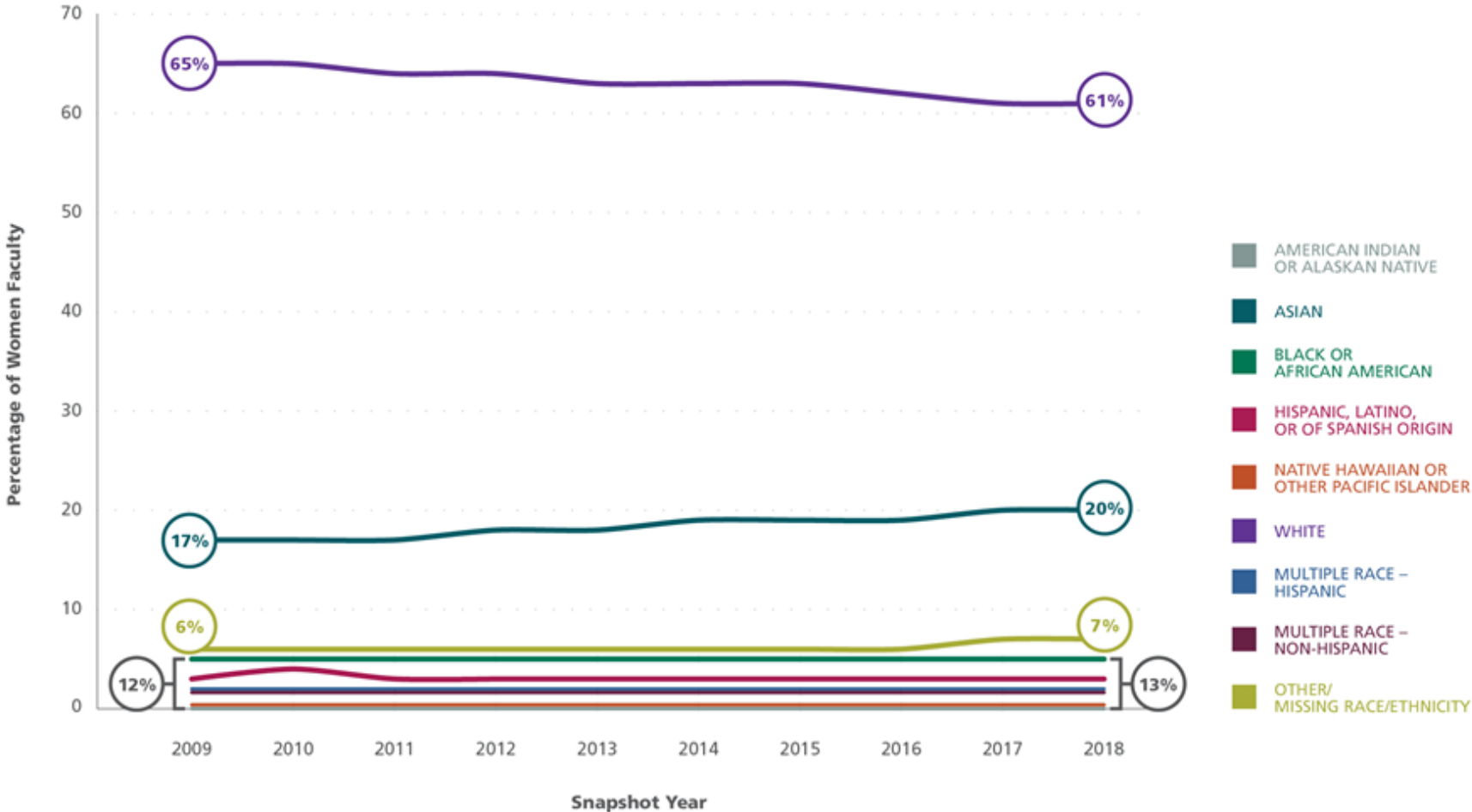


**While the racial and ethnic diversity of the graduate pool increased, women graduates were slightly more diverse than men graduates in both 2013-2014 and 2018-2019.**

Source: State of Women in Academic Medicine, AAMC, 2020



# How the hostile obstacle course shows up in the data



The proportion of women from an underrepresented-in-medicine race and/or ethnic group was 12% in 2009 and 13% in 2018.

Source: State of Women in Academic Medicine, AAMC, 2020

# How the hostile obstacle course shows up in the data

The greatest proportions of URiM women faculty were at the assistant professor and instructor ranks.

Source: State of Women in Academic Medicine, AAMC, 2020



- AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE
- ASIAN
- BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN
- HISPANIC, LATINO, OR OF SPANISH ORIGIN
- NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER
- WHITE
- MULTIPLE RACE - HISPANIC
- MULTIPLE RACE - NON-HISPANIC
- OTHER RACE/ETHNICITY
- MISSING RACE/ETHNICITY



# **Pause for Activity**

If you are using this toolkit with a discussion group, pause here to conduct [Worksheet Topic 1: Introductions and Icebreaker](#)



# Goals and Advancement

- Goals:
  - Raise awareness of the factors affecting the careers of WOC in academic medicine.
  - Offer recommendations that may assist WOC faculty in navigating their careers and obtaining the support needed to advance.
- Objectives:
  - Identify the primary factors affecting the careers of WOC in academic medicine.
  - Recommend strategies institutions can implement/enhance to change the status quo for WOC in academic medicine.
- Acknowledgement of the issues impacting WOC must come from institutional policies and corrective actions

# Institutional Policies and Actions

- Policies and actions that institutions can and should promote that will result in the advancement of the careers of WOC:
  1. Implement regular unconscious bias training for leaders, faculty members, and staff involved in faculty and leadership recruitment, career development, and advancement.
  2. Offer visiting professorships to WOC, particularly for named lectures and topics in addition to DEI and gender.
  3. Provide mentorship to WOC.
  4. Provide sponsorship to WOC.
  5. Enrich candidate pools with WOC.

# Institutional Policies and Actions (...)

- Policies and actions that institutions can and should promote that will result in the advancement of the careers of WOC:
  1. Engage in outreach efforts to identify WOC (ideally, prior to a vacancy)
  2. Create/Access a database of WOC.
  3. Require all search committees to involve a designated “diversity ambassador” throughout the search process to monitor for equity.
  4. Offer specific career development and leadership opportunities to WOC.
  5. Have “zero tolerance” for conscious bias and discrimination against WOC with measurable accountability.

# Institutional Policies and Actions (...)

- Policies and actions that institutions can and should promote that will result in the advancement of the careers of WOC:
  1. Define and understand intersectionality, identity formation theory, the distinction between WOC and URM, etc. (GWIMS Equity Toolkit can help.)
  2. Develop Advisory Committee.
  3. Add leadership roles on Organizational Chart.
  4. Encourage allyship.
  5. DEI chair or leader that is compensated for their effort.
  6. Audit and monitor the composition of your c-suite recruitment and selection.

# Unconscious Bias Training

- Should be required for all search committee members prior to the start of a search, either online or in-person—conducted by the institution’s Office of Diversity, Women in Science and Medicine, or Faculty Affairs.
  - **Online:** AAMC E-Learning Seminar: What You Don’t Know: The Science of Unconscious Bias and What to Do About in the Search and Recruitment Process
  - **In-person:** Please contact AAMC staff to arrange an unconscious bias training session. (Diana Lautenberger: [dlautenberger@aamc.org](mailto:dlautenberger@aamc.org))

# Offer visiting professorships to WOC

- Establish a Visiting Professorship Program to invite prominent or emerging WOC scholars to the medical institution, involving a broad range of specialties.
- If a Visiting Professorship Program already exists, ensure regular inclusion of WOC as visiting professors
  - Consideration for prestigious lectureships and topics that are not just DEI or gender-related
  - Solicit recommendations for speakers and/or topics from WOC



# Offer visiting professorships to WOC (...)

- Visiting Professorships should entail a one- or two-day visit (either in person or remotely) during which the WOC scholar is able to:
  - Provide at least one (1) presentation if 1 day
    - At least two (2) presentations for a two-day visitation
  - Meet with the Department Chair or Division Chief as well as a representative group of faculty and trainees
  - Be invited to a social gathering e.g., dinner or lunch with faculty and trainees which facilitates networking

# Offer visiting professorships to WOC (...)

- Visiting Professorships should entail a one- or two-day visit (either in person or remotely) during which the WOC scholar is able to:
  - Provide competitive, equivalent honorarium to all visiting scholars
  - In addition to the honorarium, travel and hotel costs should be covered by the hosting institution or reimbursed to the visiting scholar
  - Promote *widely* to encourage a good turnout
  - Consider visits as a recruitment opportunity
  - Offer opportunities to Assistant Professors for career development

# Provide Sponsorship to WOC

- While mentorship is important, a primary barrier to WOC advancement is *sponsorship*:
  - Despite successful mentoring and coaching programs, WOC continue to be underrepresented at higher ranks and leadership in academic medicine
  - Sponsorship has been effective in boosting the careers of women (including WOC) in corporate, governmental, non-profit, and other agencies



# Provide Sponsorship to WOC (...)

- While mentorship is important, a primary barrier to WOC advancement is *sponsorship*:
  - Sponsors have the position, power, and duty to advocate publicly for the advancement of WOC in their organization by focusing on their nascent (often unrecognized or under-recognized) talents, skills, and expertise
  - Both titular and situational leaders of diverse affinities and backgrounds can serve as sponsors for WOC

# Provide Mentorship to WOC

- Mentoring helps to create a workplace desirable for WOC
  - Provide a diverse pool of mentors for WOC
  - Establish a formal mentorship program for WOC with assigned mentors, at least initially.
    - See GWIMS Mentor and Mentee Toolkits for guidance.
  - Reassign mentors as needed. It can be difficult to leave a fraught relationship, especially as the mentee.
  - Encourage WOC to seek out additional mentors, especially external ones, who may be affiliated with professional societies

# Provide Mentorship to WOC (...)

- Mentoring helps to create a workplace desirable for WOC
  - Define the roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees.
  - Train mentors and mentees to raise awareness and understanding of mentorship. issues specific to WOC.
  - Monitor outcomes of mentoring relationships through focus groups.
- Reference: [A Mentor: Key to Career Success](#)



# Enrich candidate pools with WOC

- Developing a recruitment strategy that promotes workplace diversity is an effective way to improve attitudes about employees who represent different races and cultures.
- The recruitment of a more diverse pool of qualified applicants is a common method to reduce workplace bias.
  - Engage in proactive outreach, such as contacting diverse talented, and qualified WOC to apply for faculty and leadership positions.
  - Invite members of affinity groups and respective offices of faculty affairs, graduate medical education, diversity, and inclusion, or women in science and medicine to meet candidates during the interview process
    - Note: Be mindful of the minority tax



# Enrich candidate pools with WOC (...)

- The recruitment of a more diverse pool of qualified applicants is a common method to reduce workplace bias.
  - Inquire about the search committee's track record in producing diverse candidates in finalist pools.
  - Create opportunities for WOC candidates to meet faculty with similar demographics across all academic ranks.
  - Identify databases and professional societies with WOC members, such as the National Institutes of Health Women of Color Research Network.



# Enrich candidate pools with WOC (...)

- The recruitment of a more diverse pool of qualified applicants is a common method to reduce workplace bias.
  - Advertise at venues that attract WOC scholars such as society job boards.
  - Use proactive language in job announcements,
    - Example: “Our institution is committed to building a culturally diverse faculty and strongly encourages applications from women of color and other underrepresented candidates.”



# Engage in Outreach Efforts to Identify and Promote WOC

- WOC often experience isolation and discrimination
- Faculty groups focused on WOC, but open to all, add to the awareness of the challenges that WOC face/serve as a support structure for WOC:
  - Sponsor events highlighting the value that WOC may bring to the organization
  - Seek out WOC to participate in faculty governance, leadership roles, and awards



# Engage in Outreach Efforts to Identify and Promote WOC (...)

- WOC often experience isolation and discrimination
- Faculty groups focused on WOC, but open to all, add to the awareness of the challenges that WOC face/serve as a support structure for WOC:
  - Leaders' performance evaluations should be tied (in part) to their effectiveness in engaging and promoting WOC
  - Recognize the value of the work and research of WOC, especially in DEI and health inequities



# Create & Access a Database of WOC

- A national database of academic medicine faculty WOC does not exist
  - AAMC could develop a WOC listserv, and or be a central hub that houses links to access existing specialty/subspecialty WOC databases
- Options for individuals and organizations to connect to WOC include:
  - Individual institutional faculty roster
  - GWIMS chapter directory
  - National specialty organizations subcommittees or group caucuses

# Create & Access a Database of WOC (...)

- Options for individuals and organizations to connect to WOC include:
  - NIH Women of Color Research Network, Association for Women in Science
  - Local minority professional networks
  - Career development programs for women e.g. ELAM
  - Create a “Professional Women of Color in Medicine Network” to engage and build a community of scholars and women of color in academic medicine.
  - Create an Appendix with a list of diverse organizations)

# Designated Diversity Ambassador

- Designated diversity ambassadors should serve on recruitment & promotion committees, to provide continuity and guidance during the entire search/promotion process to ensure
  1. WOC candidates are in the pool
  2. Bias is minimal.
- Designated diversity ambassadors can be any person regardless of protected class status and should not be defaulted to WOC only (i.e., race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc.).





# Career Development and Leadership Opportunities for WOC

- WOC are often overlooked when leadership opportunities arise
- Develop policies and procedures to identify suitable WOC for internal and external career development programs tailored to their needs
  - AAMC Mid-Career Minority Faculty Seminar requires the institution to invest money in programs and funds in recruitment packages
- Advocate for and develop a roster of suitable WOC nominees for such opportunities as well as awards
- Leaders' performance evaluations should be tied (in part) to their effectiveness in developing the careers of WOC

# Addressing Bias at the Institutional Level

- Counter-Stereotyping training offers individuals to develop new associations applied to WOC. Incorporate positive imagery and ascribe positive qualities toward WOC.
- Using interviews or focus groups, assess the extent to which bias is pervasive in your institution, including but limited to:
  - Hiring
  - Promotion
  - Tenure
  - Compensation

# Addressing Bias at the Institutional Level (...)

1. Acknowledge that bias exists and identify how it appears in the recruitment and selection process (esp. in LORs).
2. Dispel stereotypes.
3. Require mandatory unconscious bias training at all levels.
4. Empower everyone to call out bias.
5. Conduct internal research to identify areas of possible bias.
6. Identify key metrics for tracking the results of interventions.
7. Make changes on an ongoing basis that will curb the effects of subconscious prejudices.

# “Zero Tolerance” for Conscious Bias and Discrimination

1. Bias and discrimination are disruptive behaviors that limit productivity and performance.
2. Ensure diverse and inclusive environment by implementing a “zero tolerance” policy for conscious bias and discrimination. Zero tolerance looks like implementing accountability policies and transparent communication about what happens when bias or discrimination happen.
3. Coach and train leaders, faculty, staff and learners to reduce the incidence of bias.



# Unconscious Bias: Search Committees, New Hires, and Leadership Development

1. Designate one search committee member to serve as a “diversity advocate” charged with ensuring the candidate pool's inclusiveness and the search process procedures.
2. The designee should be trained on their role, and familiar with unconscious bias and its impact on the hiring and promotion of WOC applicants.



# Develop an Advisory Committee

- Many different models, missions, descriptions
- Consider committee diverse co-leadership (e.g. MD/DO with PhD/EdD)
- Develop one for your organization's needs
- Questions to ask:
  - Why do we need a committee?
  - What is the purpose?
  - What do we want it to do?
  - How will our success/impact be defined? What are the metrics?
  - What kind of representation, skills and expertise do you want on the committee?
  - What is the focus and the purview of the committee?
  - What is the process for identifying members of the committee?
  - To whom is the committee providing advice or recommendations?
  - How will membership on the committee be recognized or rewarded (annual evals, protected time)
  - Is this a standing committee or a time-limited committee and what is the selection process?



# Develop an Advisory Committee (...)

- Guiding Principles
  - Include allies on the committee
  - Have representation from groups that have privilege and power in the organization
  - Develop a clear mission for the committee
  - Have an identified leader
  - Priorities must be aligned with the strategic priorities of the institution
  - Embedded and supported by the institutional infrastructure

# Add Leadership Roles on Organizational Chart

1. Identify leadership roles on an organizational chart
2. Conduct a periodic review of the representation of WOC on this chart
3. Discuss strategic initiatives to increase the number of WOC on this chart, with a timeline for achieving specific milestones
4. Measure the outcomes of such initiatives and disseminate them within the organization
5. Critically evaluate the results and develop remediation measures to improve future metrics



# Allyship - Definitions

“A person or group that gives help to another person or group.”

- Merriam-Webster Dictionary

“Allies are people who recognize the unearned privilege they receive from society’s patterns of injustice and take responsibility for changing these patterns.”

- Anne Bishop, source: [www.becominganally.ca](http://www.becominganally.ca)

# Allyship – Definitions (...)

- Allyship may uncover subconscious biases within ourselves, it is important to acknowledge them directly and handle them responsibly to avoid reacting to those who correct allies and educate them
- Not all instances of allyship will be easy but it is important to continue to do the work, even when it challenges our own comforts
  - You cannot be comfortable within a position of oppressive authority and/or institution while it simultaneously oppresses others
  - It is continuous work; it is not a simple “one act”

# Institutions/Organizations as Allies

- Institutions can be agents of social change
- Provide opportunities for open and honest dialogue and feedback from non-dominant groups
- Develop infrastructures to address the issues raised by non-dominant groups
- Learn from the community and develop responses to the needs of that community
  - **Resource:** <http://www.umkc.edu/lgbt/docs/becoming-an-ally.pdf>

# Institutions/Organizations as Allies (...)

- Develop and seek guidance from an advisory board or committee
- Provide opportunities for individual groups (such as minority faculty groups and women faculty groups) to form allies through joint events
- Amplify voices and issues of WOC, particularly when they and other non-dominant group members are NOT in the room.
  - **Resource:** <http://www.umkc.edu/lgbt/docs/becoming-an-ally.pdf>



# Summary

- WOC continue to be underrepresented at higher ranks and leadership in academic medicine
- The problem has multifactorial roots and needs recognition, acknowledgment and innovative actions to solve
- This toolkit outlines recommended institutional actions designed to improve the situation
- Accountability and metrics, with appropriate dissemination, discussion, and plans for remediation are necessary to change the status quo

# **Pause for Activity**

If you are using this toolkit with a discussion group, pause here to conduct [Worksheet Topic 2: Making a Commitment with “SMARTIE” Goals](#)



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