

Diversity work should be considered in tenure and promotion decisions, MU professor says

February 2 2009

Many college campuses are striving to become more diverse in their faculty and student populations, but creating a diverse environment can be a challenging and demanding process for faculty members. In a new study, Jeni Hart, assistant professor in the College of Education at the University of Missouri, examined how placing diversity and service work in a category separate from other faculty roles, such as scholarship and teaching, can create false dichotomies.

Currently, researching and teaching are the most rewarded aspects of faculty work in terms of tenure and promotion systems at many higher education institutions. Hart found diversity work can be scholarly service: service that builds on existing knowledge and creates new knowledge, in ways that match the goals of research and scholarship.

"Diversity work is often considered to be in the service category and ultimately devalued," Hart said. "When faculty use their expertise, time and energies to increase institutional and educational opportunities for underrepresented students and faculty, they connect the different roles they undertake in academe. They use their scholarly skills of identifying problems worthy of study, their critical capacities to understand how the problem has been framed, engage in evidence presentation and elicit critical feedback - all hallmarks of the research process."

In her study, Hart examined the impact of diversity initiatives at

universities, considering how diversity work is done, sustained and understood. She found many of the diversity initiatives demand intellectual engagement and awareness of research and teaching practices, which offer opportunities for new collaboration. Faculty members often are able to conduct research and publish directly as a result of their commitment to diversity projects. Many of the diversity initiatives open disciplinary boundaries, allowing for collaboration and challenge traditional methods of teaching, research and service.

"Intellectual work is embedded into scholarly service, and thus worthy of reward in the tenure and promotion systems in higher education," Hart said. "Higher education institutions have a responsibility to their communities to produce graduates who are well-rounded in all areas, including diversity and often expect faculty members to contribute to students' diversity education."

Hart's study, "Institutional Diversity Work as Intellectual Work" was published in the book, *Doing Diversity in Higher Education: Faculty Leaders Share Challenges and Strategies*.

Source: University of Missouri-Columbia

Citation: Diversity work should be considered in tenure and promotion decisions, MU professor says (2009, February 2) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2009-02-diversity-tenure-decisions-mu-professor.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.