



PROPOSED STRATEGIES FOR RETAINING THE NUMBER OF BLACK PROFESSIONALS AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

| Short to Medium-Term Ongoing Strategies

Given that the study focused on why academics are moving, we are not proposing strategies for recruitment. Certain of the following strategies have been suggested by the participants themselves, certain of the strategies are in place at certain universities, some have been used in other contexts, for example in the African-American context of higher education. The recommendations also follow the suggestions made by Harleston and Ngara (2000).

As has been indicated, there are several efforts underway within higher education institutions to increase and retain the number of black professionals. These strategies will require the active support and involvement of four major sectors within South Africa. These are **National Government, higher education institutions, the private corporate sector and the donor sector**. These sectors will need to work cooperatively and in alliances to provide resources, opportunities and support to retain black professionals in higher education positions. The Government should take steps to affirm publicly and enthusiastically the singular importance of higher education and higher education institutions and academic staff in the growth, development and further transformation of South Africa. There is a strong perception among academic and professional staff at various higher education institutions that the Government does not appear to show confidence in or support for higher education. The participants of this study mentioned this, particularly in relation to salaries. Academics spoke to the fact that their salaries did not in anyway compare to civil servants. There were concrete suggestions that academics' salaries be placed on the same scale as the salaries

of directors and other higher level civil servants. National Treasury in its annual budget needs to provide funds to implement the requirements of the Equity Act and to fund national level initiatives to create an enabling environment for the pool of academic staff from the designated groups. It was felt that money could be given to individual institutions and not only to organisations such as the National Research Foundation (NRF).

Harleston and Ngara (2000) refer to models of best practice in an attempt to retain black faculty. When asked how the situation could be addressed, some of the participants of this study voiced some of the suggestions made by Harleston and Ngara as well as others.

1. Constantly and consistently championing the policies of employment equity and diversity. These policies need to be supported publicly by senior management such as vice-chancellors. A vice-chancellor responsible for equity issues should be appointed.
2. Providing funds for the development of programmes designed to support the development of an enabling and inclusive non-racial and non-sexist culture on campuses. The success of all programmes would need to be monitored and evaluated. These funds could possibly be accessed from the Skills Development Fund.
3. Setting up mentoring and support programmes for black academics. Certain universities have embarked on this initiative. The universities should also work closely with the National Research Foundation (NRF) which has initiated various development and support programmes.
4. Providing training in diversity management to all university managers, in other words, heads of departments, Deans, and so forth.
5. Providing all staff, black and white, with access to diversity training, which could include value clarification workshops, gender sensitivity training, and so forth.
6. Providing monetary and other incentives to encourage black academic staff to remain at the institution, such as funding to attend conferences and time to complete doctorates.

Harleston and Ngara (2000) found that no institution was engaged in all of the above activities. However, many of these activities were

found at each institution. This finding is supported by the current research.

| Long-Term Strategies

Longer term strategies, which Harleston and Ngara (2000) identify as developmental strategies, intervention strategies and opportunistic strategies, are also proposed.

Developmental strategies in terms of retention of academics include providing role models, and other incentives, such as ongoing training in educational administration courses.

Intervention strategies focus on programmes that are designed to work with individual academics to encourage and support their pursuit of an academic career. The following recommendations outline activities in support of this strategy:

1. Provide funding for the completion of doctorates and money to start small research projects. These types of scholarships are available and are administered by the National Research Foundation. Individual and groups of black academics should be assisted in accessing these funding opportunities.
2. Establish a national programme of administrative internships that would permit black academic staff to receive fellowships to work with, and under the mentoring and supervision of, senior administrators to gain and strengthen administrative skills in a supportive environment. A very useful model to consult is the American Council on Education's Administrative Fellowship Program. (Harleston & Ngara 2000).
3. Establish formal partnerships with a range of sectors. The nature of these partnerships could be worked out in a way that benefits all the stakeholders.

| Opportunistic Strategies

Such strategies, as suggested by Harleston and Ngara (2000) involve modifying current procedures, developing novel alternative procedures and establishing new alliances or cooperative relationships that permit institutions to tap into existing talent. The

following recommendations outline activities in support of this strategy:

Establish a formal Staff Development and Retention Programme with the following components:

1. Mentoring of new academic staff by pairing them and senior academic staff, who are paid to work with new academic staff.
2. Providing frequent feedback to new academic staff about their progress in teaching, scholarship and service.
3. Providing funds to new academic staff for research and attending at professional meetings.
4. Adjusting teaching loads so that new academic staff have the time and opportunity to develop and initiate their own research agenda.
5. Monitoring progress of new academic staff. This would include monitoring how they are “fitting in”.

Viewed together, these activities reflect diverse efforts aimed at changing the culture of the institutions, providing mentoring and other kinds of support for black academics, and creating new employment opportunities. These activities are essential and important first steps and deserve to be supported. But they need to be complemented by the development of long-term programmatic strategies that will also expand the pool of underrepresented academics and administrators, deepen and broaden access by black academics and have a pay-off at the national level (Harleston & Ngara, 2000).

Finally, building and supporting leadership who are committed to transformation needs to be a priority of the various institutions of higher learning.

It is also important that these strategies encourage black and white academics to work closely together. A culture of inclusively and understanding needs to be built. The strategies should not be implemented in a way that causes white academics to feel excluded. Luhabe refers to this as building *emotional capital*, which effectively means building trusting relationships between black and white academics on both a personal and institutional level.