1. Background/Introduction

While SUNY has significantly increased the diversity of its student population, and campus leadership at the highest level, we have been less successful in increasing the diversity of our faculty. Our data reveal a pronounced gap between the racial/ethnic diversity of SUNY faculty members (8.6%) as compared to the diversity of the students they instruct (28.5%, Fall 2018). This 3X gap is expected to grow if SUNY campuses do not take steps to overhaul their hiring practices and methodology.

PRODiG (“Promoting Recruitment, Opportunity, Diversity, Inclusion and Growth”) aims to increase the representation of historically underrepresented faculty at SUNY including underrepresented minority (“URM”) faculty in general, women faculty of all races in STEM fields (“WSTEM”). This is consistent with SUNY’s role in creating pathways to social and economic opportunity for all our students, as well as personal and intellectual fulfillment. Each of these underrepresented groups face persistent barriers to social and economic mobility both as students and after graduation. Increasing the representation of faculty members who understand, and have overcome, race-and gender-based barriers and biases is important to the success and well-being of our students. And where other groups are underrepresented in a field due to the persistence of barriers to social and economic mobility, efforts to address this underrepresentation will receive consideration for PRODiG funding as well.

Moreover, faculty diversity benefits the broader academy. A diverse faculty is critical to academic excellence because, as research demonstrates, diverse teams are more innovative, productive, and solve complex problems faster and better.1 Furthermore, faculty diversity is key to preparing all students to live and work in an increasingly global, diverse and interconnected world by exposing students to a wide array of ideas, experiences, cultures, and individuals.

Where faculty candidates are underrepresented in certain academic disciplines due to persistent barriers, they will be considered for PRODI-G salary support on a case-by-case basis.

For further background on PRODI-G, see this memo.

2. Project Goals

As announced in the Chancellor’s 2019 State of the University System address, PRODiG is designed to create changes in faculty recruitment and retention processes that will result in the hiring of

underrepresented faculty and provide support to campuses for the hiring and retention of up to ~1,000 underrepresented faculty members in the next decade, or roughly doubling the diversity of our full-time faculty.

National higher education policy research suggests that four factors are the primary impediments to faculty diversity: (a) narrow pipelines and pathways into academic careers for underrepresented students, (b) outdated faculty recruitment and retention practices, (c) faculty diversity myths that abound in higher education (including the view that faculty diversity is incompatible with academic excellence), and (d) the decentralized administrative culture of the academy.  

PRODiG aims to tackle these impediments with a comprehensive -- not piecemeal -- approach. PRODiG focuses on:

- identifying historical underrepresentation within the ranks of faculty;
- growing the pipeline of URM and WSTEM students into academic careers;
- insisting that campuses employ best practices empirically proven to reduce barriers to diversity in the faculty search process, and at the same time;
- creating a collective focus on broadly assessing and improving recruitment and retention processes across the campus (i.e., establishing an integrated approach whereby faculty affairs, human resources and diversity offices work together to propose solutions).

By engaging campuses in identifying the impediments that most affect their ability to hire URM and WSTEM faculty, and supporting their conclusions with data, PRODiG also seeks to expose and debunk the myths that may function as proxies for the actual challenges campuses face in hiring URM and WSTEM faculty.

The following elements target an array of barriers to faculty diversity (see diagram):

- Search committee education and certification pilot
- SUNY-wide Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (“HERC”)
- Cluster hire pilots
- Startup packages on a case-by-case basis
- Annual teaching and mentoring conferences -- one for high-achieving URM students, and one for high-achieving WSTEM students
- Graduate Stipends (one-time graduate research stipends of $5000 each to support incoming PhD students)
- Three years of salary support for full-time entry- and mid-level faculty on a case-by-case basis, based upon available historical and projected data (100% of salary up to $90k in Year 1, 50% up to $45k in Year Two, and 30% up to $27k in Year Three)
- Grants to support elements of campus plans, based upon demonstrated improvement of faculty hiring process and enhancement of pipeline-building

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The guidelines and application steps outlined below, are designed to engage campuses in a robust process of self-assessment, reflection and collaboration that results in creative, deliberate, innovative, and strategic new plans for removing barriers to diversity. Furthermore, these steps should elicit plans that leverage the unique resources, challenges and opportunities of individual campuses, as well as, the resources provided through PRODiG.

Each campus is expected to convene a dedicated, diverse PRODiG Committee broadly drawn from faculty hiring and graduate pipeline “influencers” and leadership across the campus, and provide data from the Provost Office on the impact on PRODiG. This will ensure a collective, centralized campus focus on the impediments to faculty diversity, as well as strategies for removing them across the academic units.

The steps outlined below are guides to preparation for, and implementation of, campus PRODiG proposals. Each year, all previously awarded campuses seeking subsequent PRODiG funding will be required to update, renew and build upon their initial PRODiG funding proposal and campus PRODiG Implementation Plan, with the goal of periodic (annual, at minimum) assessment and continuous improvement. The PRODiG Review Committee at SUNY System Administration will consider campus progress over past years (say 3-4 year rolling average) in achieving stated goals for subsequent funding decisions.

3. Eligibility

All state-operated SUNY campuses and community colleges are eligible for PRODiG funding. The contract colleges are invited to be part of PRODiG with funding provided by the private college or university in which they reside.

4. Timeline

- 2019 Request for Proposals published February 2019
- University Faculty Senate PRODiG Workshop (March 1-2, 2019, Binghamton University)
- Campus proposals due by 5pm ET on July 15, 2019
- PRODiG Funding Announcement -- August 2019
- Implementation of Campus Plans begins no later than September 2019
- Rolling Approvals of PRODiG hires starting with AY2020
- Annual PRODiG Implementation Reports due in March of each year
- 2020 Request for Proposals published February 2020

5. Elements of Proposal

   A. Background/Context

Describe the history and context of your SUNY campus’s current faculty diversity, specifically URM and WSTEM faculty, and the diversity of the student pipeline into doctoral programs, where relevant. This should be as specific as possible, not only to the campus, but to programs and specialty areas within the faculty. Further describe initiatives to develop pipelines to academic
careers among students, specifically URM and WSTEM students. How is your campus uniquely challenged, or uniquely well-positioned with respect to diversity within the faculty and the student pipeline into doctoral programs? How has your campus traditionally approached issues of diversity and inclusion? Provide some context for the empirical data you will provide. What background should the review committee have about your campus as it reviews your proposal?

Additionally, campuses should assess the diversity of the available labor pool of candidates and the historical hiring and retention rates of underrepresented candidates in relation to overall hiring and retention rates.

B. Hiring Plan

Hiring plans submitted for PRODiG funding should align with campus Strategic Diversity & Inclusion Plans.

Campuses may consider the utility of cluster hiring in creating their plans. Moreover, cluster hiring plans will be evaluated for how well they incorporate best practices for cluster hiring to enhance faculty diversity, supported by documentation.

C. Faculty Hiring Self-Assessment

What are your campus’s primary impediments to hiring URM and WSTEM faculty? Support your conclusions with empirical data.

Campuses should provide the following faculty diversity data, where available:

1. A summary of the last 5 years of faculty hiring (by decanal unit, department, STEM disciplines, other relevant categories), broken down by demographics (race/ethnicity/gender/etc.)

2. Demographic analysis of faculty retention
   a. What was the outcome of the faculty hires? What is the retention rate of each cohort? If they left the campus, what was the reason given, if any?
   b. How successful was the campus in retaining the faculty members that were hired?

3. Demographic Step Analysis of faculty hiring over the past year (example of a step analysis)
   a. Diversity of the available labor pool
   b. Diversity of faculty applicant pools (compared to the diversity of the available labor pool)
   c. Demographic data on individual(s) selected for Round 1 interviews (define)
   d. Demographic data on individual(s) selected for Round 2 interviews (define)
   e. Demographic data on individual(s) selected for Round 3 interviews (if applicable)
   f. Demographic data on individual(s) given an offer
   g. Demographic data on individual(s) who accepted the offer
4. Visio Flowchart (or similar representation) of campus’s faculty search/hiring, mentoring, and retention process, highlighting when/where steps are taken to reduce barriers to diversity (example).

D. Pipeline Building Plan

Given the variety of institutions in our comprehensive SUNY system, campuses are expected to submit pipeline building plans (1) consistent with their unique challenges and opportunities to contribute to, and build, pipelines to academic careers for URM and WSTEM undergraduates and graduate students, and (2) emphasizing early talent identification and development (i.e., “recruit like a coach”).

Campuses will draw upon institutional data, and their individual campus PRODiG Plan, to itemize (by department) the number of URM and WSTEM graduate student they expect to matriculate in 2019-20.

1. Graduate Student Stipends

These one-time, “top-up” stipends of $5000 each to support incoming PhD students will be awarded to the graduate school for support of URM and WSTEM graduate students with the goal supporting a diverse pool of candidates in pursuit of academic careers.

E. Pipeline Self-Assessment

Campus should identify, illustrate and evaluate effectiveness of pipelines into academic careers for URM and WSTEM students at all stages.

F. Campus Implementation Plan

The CIP is the document that pulls together all of the above. It should express the campus strategies for overcoming barriers to faculty diversity and expanding pipelines and pathways into academic careers for URM and WSTEM students, consistent with the self-assessments.

1) How does the campus plan to building pipelines, bridges and pathways to academic careers for URM students and WSTEM disciplines?
2) How does the campus plan to enhance efforts to reduce barriers to diversity in faculty, hiring, mentoring and retention?
3) How do the academic and other units work together to achieve these goals?
4) If numerical goals are contemplated, what basis will the campus use to determine any participation goals?
5) If an historical imbalance of URM and WSTEM faculty representation is found to exist, how does the campus plan to remedy the imbalance?

6. Time and Place of Submission
Each campus seeking PRODiG funding must upload a single proposal to PRODiG@suny.edu no later than 5pm ET, July 15, 2019, and address all inquiries to PRODiG@suny.edu

7. Evaluation Criteria

Successful proposals will clearly outline how the campus will leverage PRODiG resources (described in Section 2, Project Goals) to reduce impediments to faculty diversity in the faculty search/hiring process, and expand the pipeline of talented URM and WSTEM students into academic careers.

Successful proposals will, at a minimum, demonstrate the following:

- Alignment with the campus strategic diversity and inclusion plan;
- Proposal emerged from a cross-campus, collective conversation among diverse influencers and leaders about barriers to faculty diversity and robust pathways for talented, underrepresented students into doctoral programs;
- Adoption or demonstrated use of creative and innovative approaches to faculty recruitment, retention, and pipeline building;
- Thoughtful, probing assessment of the challenges and opportunities for increasing faculty diversity, increasing student pipelines and pathways into academic careers, and remedying historical underrepresentation in faculty hiring that is empirically supported by institutional data; and
- Composition of the campus PRODiG Committee reflects diversity of perspectives and representation.

Proposals will include a work plan indicating the techniques and methodologies planned to meet program objectives. Campuses should provide documentation that details, chronicles, and supports their methods, analysis and conclusions for each of the elements in the plan.

All proposal elements, including any requests for funding and proposed actions, shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

8. Awards

Disbursement of salary support funds (and the corresponding graduate stipends) will occur on a rolling, case-by-case basis, once documentation of a confirmed faculty hire is received. Further details on disbursement will be discussed at the PRODiG Workshop, and included in award documentation.