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ECU professor Compton found dead on campus

He is a former director of sports medicine for the ECU Athletics Department.

Rod Compton, 62, a tenured member of the Department of Health Education and Promotion, was found in the Carol Belk Building. ECU Police said he entered the building, which houses his office, Friday night. Dawn Tevepaugh, assistant chief of the ECU Police Department, said Compton had a number of health issues. Officials believe that he died of natural causes.

"We are all saddened by the loss of our longtime colleague. He was a nice guy who did a good job in the classroom," said Glen Gilbert, dean of the College of Health and Human Performance.

Compton joined the university in 1970 and is a former director of sports medicine for the ECU Athletics Department.

Funeral plans have not been announced.
COLLEGE FOOTBALL

McNeill completes football staff

East Carolina football coach Ruffin McNeill announced the completion of his initial staff Monday with the appointment of Mark Nelson as the Pirates’ defensive ends coach and special teams coordinator.

Nelson, who served as defensive coordinator and linebackers coach for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers of the Canadian Football League during the 2009 campaign, also brings 17 years of collegiate experience to the ECU program that includes earlier tenures in the Southeastern Conference, Big 12 Conference, Big East Conference and Conference USA.

“Mark brings a vast amount of experience on all levels to our program,” McNeill said. “He’s always put together strong special teams units, and that reputation has followed him wherever he’s been. His relentless and tireless work ethic will be contagious to everyone, especially to those in our kicking game and defensive side of the ball.”

— ECU Media Relations
Drugs taken from Shaw

RALEIGH -- A Shaw University police officer kept four bags of seized marijuana and other campus evidence in the garage of her Johnston County home, police reports say. After deputies recovered them from a plastic box near the house, she also reported case files had been stolen from the home.

In September, Johnston County deputies followed an anonymous tip to the home of Officer Argentina Rojas near Garner. There, they found the drugs, knives, toy guns, pictures and envelopes in the box, police reports said. It was unclear how much marijuana the bags contained.

Shaw's interim president, Dorothy Cowser Yancy, said that the university has disciplined the officer, who remains on the force.

"I think it was an isolated incident, and there were remedies taken," she said. "You're no more shocked than I was. I was quite surprised."

In September, deputies arrived at the house on Belve Drive and found foot-high grass and an apparently vacant house, reports said. The drugs were stuffed in evidence bags addressed to Shaw's police, reports said, and like the other items in the box, bore campus police markings.

In court records, Rojas' attorney said they had been in her garage for some time and that police Chief Thomas Lee knew they were there.

Rojas has no criminal record. She was not charged, but Yancy said her punishment remains in effect. A note left at Rojas' Raleigh address went unanswered, and an administrative assistant at the Shaw police department would not comment.

Shaw is a small school occupying only a few blocks of downtown Raleigh. The school's problem with evidence stemmed from too little space on campus, Yancy said. The problem, she said, has since been fixed by moving the six-officer department into a bigger space. Legal and practical questions remain.

For one, Yancy did not know what happened to cases supported by the evidence at Rojas' house. She referred questions to Lee, who would not comment.

Johnston County police reports described the marijuana as evidence from "past or pending cases," and police records say the drugs were taken back to Shaw for inventory. In court filings, Rojas' attorney said the drugs were evidence in a case Rojas was investigating. If the cases are pending, legal scholars say they will be hard to prosecute.

Duke University law professor Lisa Kern Griffin said criminal evidence must show a "chain of custody," meaning if a drug case goes to trial, prosecutors must show that the drugs were always in secure police custody.
"The fact that they were kept in the private residence makes it possible for the defense to argue that they are not the drugs in question," Griffin said. "Others may have had access to them."

Shaw University is the oldest historically black school in the South, and the downtown school has been trying to dig out of a $20-million debt.

Its police department is certified by the state Department of Justice, said Noelle Talley, the justice department's spokeswoman. Rojas is certified, she said, adding that personnel law keeps her department from commenting on whether Shaw's department or officers have accumulated complaints.

Reports filed with the U.S. Department of Education show sparse crime at Shaw. Between 2006 and 2008, records show eight arrests for drug law violations on campus - six in 2006 and two in 2007. Raleigh police spokesman Jim Sughrue said that Shaw is not set up to handle large cases and that Raleigh officers sometimes assist.

Battle for custody

Much of the information about the Shaw drug evidence came to light in a civil case between Rojas and Edwin Maldonado over custody of their four children, ages 5 to 9. They were living at the house on Belve Drive with Rojas, who in January won temporary custody of them.

Jonathan Breeden, a lawyer who represents Maldonado, told the story of the wayward drugs as an argument that Maldonado should receive full custody.

In filings, Rojas said she was moving out and was in a dispute with her landlord, who was trying to evict her. Rojas' attorney, Christi Stem, said in court papers that the drugs had been at the home "for some time," that Maldonado knew of them and that they never left their "secure location."

Missing papers

Rojas told deputies she suspected her landlord had moved the drugs evidence from the garage to outside the house, and she reported several items missing from her home the day after deputies came in September. Among them: birth certificates, Social Security card and Shaw University case files.

Rojas' attorney also put in the custody case file an unsigned report that she attributed to Lee, the police chief. That report describes maintaining evidence as a long and serious issue for Shaw police.

"There was unacceptable storage facilities and evidence was left in unrestricted areas," the document said. "On many occasions evidence was reported missing by the previous police chief."

Moving the Shaw police department from the Dimple Newsome building to the old graphics building greatly improved the situation, and a chain of custody procedure is in place, the report said.

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Audit questions

Charlie Nelms, chancellor of N.C. Central University in Durham, believes a draft of an internal audit claiming that three university employees involved with a campus-based education agency improperly took thousands of dollars was poorly done. It would be good if Nelms, who fired the auditor who did the report, is right, because there are some disturbing things here. Nelms says he will make public a final version of the audit, and he thinks some of the draft's toughest points will be shown to be untrue.

But even if that proves out, the draft raises larger questions. The organization with which the employees were involved is called the Historically Minority Colleges and University Consortium. It's gotten nearly $13 million since it began about a decade ago, the money coming from the federal government, the state and foundations. The consortium is supposed to participate in efforts to close the achievement gap between white and minority children.

Any such organization should be required to produce hard evidence of what it has done and how it has spent the money it has received. In other words, how many students were helped, who were they, what did expenditures go for and what were the results of the investment?

The audit, at least the version obtained by The News & Observer, said that one person who was a leader with the group registered a company with the North Carolina secretary of state, and that some of the federal grant money went to that company. According to the audit, those payments were supposed to boost the leader's compensation. She was fired by Nelms last fall for poor performance. And the audit found some groups or people had received sub-grants from the program but could not be reached.

What's troubling here, in addition to the audit's allegations about specific employees, is that it raises questions as to whether a well-intentioned program actually had measurable goals and leaders who intended to reach them by helping kids - or whether this was a case of raking in public dollars because they were there.
Student survey boosts colleges overshadowed by U.S. News & World Report list

By Daniel de Vise
Washington Post Staff Writer
Tuesday, February 16, 2010; B01

In the game of collegiate rankings, Loyola University Maryland is a perennial backbencher, tucked away on an inside page of the annual U.S. News & World Report list of "America's Best Colleges."

But on the National Survey of Student Engagement, Loyola is a strong performer. It rates highly on measures such as academic challenge and student-faculty interaction.

"The students are definitely the number one priority," said Dan Nieves, 21, a Loyola senior from Merrick, N.Y. He learned of the university not from a newsmagazine but from some friends who had matriculated there and "had nothing but good things to say about it."

The U.S. News ranking and its imitators generally reward the same group of wealthy and selective institutions. There is little room at the top, and thousands of colleges do not make the list. And that has frustrated and angered many university administrators, who resent it when their school is reduced to one (poor) number.

The student engagement survey, abbreviated NSSE or "Nessie," is higher education's response.

Introduced 10 years ago by Indiana University researchers as an antidote to U.S. News, the survey has won buy-in from 1,400 colleges, with about half that number participating each year. Rather than rank colleges on overall quality, it attempts to quantify whether students at a particular school are learning, through a battery of questions: How often do you raise your hand in class? How many 20-page papers have you written? How often do you e-mail a professor? Each college is measured against similar institutions, and over time. But there is no overall ranking.

Measuring the experience

Marc Camille, vice president for enrollment management and communications at Loyola, says he thinks the student engagement survey is "the best attempt at a paradigm shift" since the dawn of college rankings three decades ago. "I don't think there's anything else out there that's a better measure of the student experience."

Twenty-seven years since the publication of the first U.S. News rankings, academe is awash in
alternatives. There are rankings by Forbes, Kiplinger, College Prowler and Princeton Review: international rankings from Britain and China; and many purportedly new and better measures that sort colleges on everything from student course evaluations to the number of hits on a school's Web site.

There is also a new generation of accountability systems, mostly from within the higher education industry, that quantify colleges without ranking them. There is Colleges That Change Lives, a book and nonprofit organization created to promote a few dozen colleges buried in the U.S. News rankings. Another recent entry, from the Association of College Trustees and Alumni, grades colleges on required courses. (Harvard gets a D.)

The student engagement survey might be the most respected industry response to the rankings. Yet, it remains virtually unknown outside academia, and it is of limited use to the public. That's because the Nessie database is proprietary.

"It became clear fairly early on in the project that schools were not going to go along with it if their information was going to be put out in the public," said Alexander McCormick, the survey's director. "We operate in a climate right now of huge sensitivity toward comparisons of colleges and universities."

So, survey results at many participating schools remain private, although some colleges promote their results. USA Today offers a searchable database of schools willing to share their data.

"It'd be a great tool if all the 700 colleges actually made their Nessie survey data public," said Bob Morse, director of data research at U.S. News.

Raising their profiles

Morse notes that the magazine's report has "made a lot of schools visible" with its ever-expanding dossier of rankings. George Mason University in Virginia and the University of Maryland Baltimore County, for example, have profited from prominence on a U.S. News list of collegiate up-and-comers.

Loyola, in Baltimore, ranks third in U.S. News -- but in a comparatively obscure category of regional universities offering master's degrees.

Few students know Loyola's scores on the student engagement survey. The school rates higher than average for its institutional class on each of five student-learning benchmarks. Enriching educational experiences? Two-thirds of students study abroad. Student-faculty interaction? No class is led by a teaching assistant.

The Rev. Brian Linnane, president of Loyola since 2005, said that when he reads the U.S. News rankings, "generally I think, what I need to improve in those rankings is money."

And the student engagement survey? "We really sink into it," he said.

The survey has limitations -- and critics. Thirty-one of the nation's most selective schools do their own quality-assessment surveys through the Consortium on Financing Higher Education. A school such as
Pomona College, ranked sixth by U.S. News, will find its competitors there, and not in the student engagement database, said David Oxtoby, president of Pomona.

Oxtoby wonders, too, about the value of asking students to rate their own colleges. A high score for a less selective college might reflect the bias of a student who "comes to a place with low expectations, and the school exceeds them," he said.

McCormick, the survey director, says questions chosen for the four-page survey "come from a pretty long line of research" on how students acquire knowledge in college. Although McCormick welcomes efforts to make the survey public, the database remains primarily an internal tool for colleges looking to improve.

The president of Lynchburg College in Virginia credits the engagement survey with driving several reforms in recent years.

To boost student-faculty interaction, Lynchburg introduced new study-abroad programs led by professors, raising the share of students who participate from 4 percent to 25 percent in six years. The school revamped academic tutoring to embed support in the most difficult classes, said Mari Normyle, assistant dean for academic and career services. Lynchburg, like Loyola, has strong marks on the engagement survey.

"It doesn't matter to us the pedigree of the students coming in," said Kenneth Garren, president of Lynchburg. "What matters to us is what we do when we get them."

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After a Shooting, Colleagues Try to Regain Footing

By SHAILA DEWAN and KATIE ZEZIMA

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. — When after many months of careful tending, Sarah Cseke reached a milestone in her graduate student research, she went straight to the office of the busy chairman of the biology department at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Gopi Podila, to share the triumphal moment.

“I knocked on his door with a petri dish full of hairy roots, and he actually came to the door and took the time to look at it,” she said. “He was just as happy as I was.”

On Friday, the biology department at the university lost Dr. Podila, 52, and two other faculty members in a hail of gunfire at an afternoon faculty meeting. A colleague with a Harvard Ph.D., Amy Bishop, is charged with capital murder. Another professor and the department administrator are still in the hospital in critical condition.

The deaths have left a small, close-knit department trying to pick up the pieces without either its leader, Dr. Podila, or the person colleagues described as its “glue,” Stephanie Monticciolo, 62, the administrator, who does out hugs and birthday reminders. Ms. Monticciolo is in the hospital with a gunshot wound to the head.

The two other people killed were Maria Ragland Davis, 50, and Adriel Johnson, 52, described as professors who spent hours of extra time helping students. A colleague, Joseph Leahy, 50, a microbiology professor known for his zesty lectures, remained hospitalized with a head wound.

“They will leave a large hole in our department,” said Debra Moriarity, a biology professor and the dean of the university’s graduate program.

A third member of the department, Luis Cruz-Vera, was released from the hospital over the weekend.

When Dr. Podila, a native of India, arrived nine years ago to build the university’s biotechnology program, colleagues had to struggle to find him vegetarian meals. He and his wife, Vani, quickly became well known in Huntsville’s Indian community, arranging performances and, together, choreographing traditional Indian dances. He had two teenage daughters.

Dr. Podila was described as an enthusiastic administrator with a research interest in biofuels and the symbiotic relationship between fungi and trees. But he was just as interested in human symbiosis, said Joseph Ng, a fellow professor. “He was always encouraging collaborative efforts,” Dr. Ng said.

Dr. Johnson, who was married to a veterinarian, was from Tuskegee, Ala. He had two sons, one in college and one in high school, with whom he had recently been visiting colleges. His research focused on diabetes.
On campus, he was the director of the Louis B. Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation, and he also screened and helped students who wanted to go to medical school.

His desire to make sure minority students succeeded made him a stern but fatherly figure, colleagues said.

Dr. Davis, an enthusiastic gardener who was married and had three stepchildren, came to the campus from one of the city’s prominent biotechnology companies, Research Genetics. James Hudson, who started the company, said he had hired her away from Alabama A&M, where she was doing postdoctoral research. He said she had wanted to improve agriculture in developing countries by creating plants that could thrive in inferior soil.

In an interview on “Good Morning America” on ABC, Melissa Davis, Dr. Davis’s stepdaughter, said the family had still been recovering from the death of her mother when her father remarried. “We didn’t want to open our hearts quickly because we loved our mom so much, and Maria came in with this gentle and kind heart,” Ms. Davis said. “She just brought this life back.”

On Monday, officials in Massachusetts continued to pore over Dr. Bishop’s past, including a 1986 case in which she killed her brother with a shotgun. The shooting was declared accidental, but questions are being raised about it again. The revelation that she and her husband were questioned in the attempted mail bombing of a Harvard colleague has also drawn interest.

John Polio, the former police chief in Braintree, Mass., who came under criticism for not pursuing charges in the shooting, said Monday that while he stood by the decision, he had come to wonder in light of the Huntsville killings and the pipe bomb investigation.

“You put them all together and it does make you doubt just what happened and how it happened,” Mr. Polio said. “You have to be more than a psychiatrist to figure that one out. I don’t think anybody can really get a handle on it. These things happen, and they happen to people we least suspect they could happen to.”

Also Monday, Dr. Bishop’s husband, James Anderson, told The Chronicle of Higher Education that his wife had borrowed the 9-millimeter handgun found near the shooting site and that he had gone with her to an indoor shooting range in recent weeks. He had previously said the family did not own a gun.

Shaila Dewan reported from Huntsville, and Katie Zezima from Boston.
The $555,000 Student-Loan Burden

As Default Rates on Borrowing for Higher Education Rise, Some Borrowers See No Way Out; 'This Is Just Outrageous Now'

By MARY PILON

When Michelle Bisutti, a 41-year-old family practitioner in Columbus, Ohio, finished medical school in 2003, her student-loan debt amounted to roughly $250,000. Since then, it has ballooned to $555,000.

It is the result of her deferring loan payments while she completed her residency, default charges and relentlessly compounding interest rates. Among the charges: a single $53,870 fee for when her loan was turned over to a collection agency.

"Maybe half of it was my fault because I didn't look at the fine print," Dr. Bisutti says. "But this is just outrageous now."

To be sure, Dr. Bisutti's case is extreme, and lenders say student-loan terms are clear and that they try to work with borrowers who get in trouble.

But as tuitions rise, many people are borrowing heavily to pay their bills. Some no doubt view it as "good debt," because an education can lead to a higher salary. But in practice, student loans are one of the most toxic debts, requiring extreme consumer caution and, as Dr. Bisutti learned, responsibility.

Unlike other kinds of debt, student loans can be particularly hard to wriggle out of. Homeowners who can't make their mortgage payments can hand over the keys to their house to their lender. Credit-card and even gambling debts can be discharged in bankruptcy. But ditching a student loan is virtually impossible, especially once a collection agency gets involved. Although lenders may trim payments, getting fees or principals waived seldom happens.

Yet many former students are trying. There is an estimated $730 billion in outstanding federal and private student-loan debt, says Mark Kantrowitz of FinAid.org, a Web site that tracks financial-aid issues—and only 40% of that debt is actively being repaid. The rest is in default, or in deferment, which means that payments and interest are halted, or in "forbearance," which means payments are halted while interest accrues.

Although Dr. Bisutti's debt load is unusual, her experience having problems repaying isn't. Emmanuel Tellez's mother is a laid-off factory worker, and $120 from her $300 unemployment checks is garnished to pay the federal PLUS student loan she took out for her son.

By the time Mr. Tellez graduated in 2008, he had $50,000 of his own debt in loans issued by SLM Corp., known as Sallie Mae, the largest private student lender. In December, he was laid off from his $29,000-a-year job in Boston and defaulted. Mr. Tellez says that when he signed up, the loan wasn't explained to him well, though he
concedes he missed the fine print.

Loan terms, including interest rates, are disclosed "multiple times and in multiple ways," says Martha Holler, a spokeswoman for Sallie Mae, who says the company can't comment on individual accounts. Repayment tools and account information are accessible on Sallie Mae's Web site as well, she says.

Many borrowers say they are experiencing difficulties working out repayment and modification terms on their loans. Ms. Holler says that Sallie Mae works with borrowers individually to revamp loans. Although the U.S. Department of Education has expanded programs like income-based repayment, which effectively caps repayments for some borrowers, others might not qualify.

Heather Ehmkhe of Oakland, Calif., renegotiated the terms of her subprime mortgage after her home was foreclosed. But even after filing for bankruptcy, she says she couldn't get Sallie Mae, one of her lenders, to adjust the terms on her student loan. After 14 years with patches of deferment and forbearance, the loan has increased from $28,000 to more than $90,000. Her monthly payments jumped from $230 to $816. Last month, her petition for undue hardship on the loans was dismissed.

Sallie Mae supports reforms that would allow student loans to be dischargeable in bankruptcy for those who have made a good-faith effort to repay them, says Ms. Holler.

Dr. Bisutti says she loves her work, but regrets taking out so many student loans. She admits that she made mistakes in missing payments, deferring her loans and not being completely thorough with some of the paperwork, but was surprised at how quickly the debt spiraled.

She says she knew when she started medical school in 1999 that she would have to borrow heavily. But she reasoned that her future income as a doctor would make paying off the loans easy. While in school, her loans racked up interest with variable rates ranging from 3% to 11%.

She maxed out on federal loans, borrowing $152,000 over four years, and sought private loans from Sallie Mae to help make up the difference. She also took out two loans from Wells Fargo & Co. for $20,000 each. Each had a $2,000 origination fee. The total amount she borrowed at the time: $250,000.

In 2005, the bill for the Wells Fargo loans came due. Representatives from the bank called her father, Michael Bisutti, every day for two months demanding payment. Mr. Bisutti, who had co-signed on the loans, finally decided to cover the $550 monthly payments for a year.

Wells Fargo says it will stop calling consumers if they request it, says senior vice president Glen Herrick, who adds that the bank no longer imposes origination fees on its private loans.

Sallie Mae, meanwhile, called Mr. Bisutti's neighbor. The neighbor told Mr. Bisutti about the call. "Now they know [my dad's] daughter the doctor defaulted on her loans," Dr. Bisutti says.

Ms. Holler, the Sallie Mae spokeswoman, says that the company may contact a neighbor to verify an individual's address. But in those cases, she says, the details of the debt obligation aren't discussed.

Dr. Bisutti declined to authorize Sallie Mae to comment specifically on her case. "The overwhelming majority of medical-school graduates successfully repay their student loans," Ms. Holler says.

After completing her fellowship in 2007, Dr. Bisutti juggled other debts, including her credit-card balance, and was having trouble making her $1,000-a-month student-loan payments. That year, she defaulted on both her federal and private loans. That is when the "collection cost" fee of $53,870 was added on to her private loan.

Meanwhile, the variable interest rates continue to compound on her balance and fees. She recently applied for income-based repayment, but she still isn't sure if she will qualify. She makes $550-a-month payments to Wells Fargo for the two loans she hasn't defaulted on. By the time she is done, she will have paid the bank
$128,000—over three times the $36,000 she received.

She recently entered a rehabilitation agreement on her defaulted federal loans, which now carry an additional $31,942 collection cost. She makes monthly payments on those loans—now $209,399—for $990 a month, with only $100 of it going toward her original balance. The entire balance of her federal loans will be paid off in 351 months. Dr. Bisutti will be 70 years old.

The debt load keeps her up at night. Her damaged credit has prevented her from buying a home or a new car. She says she and her boyfriend of three years have put off marriage and having children because of the debt.

Dr. Bisutti told her 17-year-old niece the story of her debt as a cautionary tale "so the next generation of kids who want to get a higher education knows what they're getting into," she says. "I will likely have to deal with this debt for the rest of my life."

Write to Mary Pilon at mary.pilon@wsj.com
Colleges lagging on faculty diversity

Numbers trail makeup of Hub’s student bodies

By Tracy Jan, Globe Staff | February 16, 2010

The lack of black and Hispanic professors, highlighted in two recent reports critical of the faculty makeup at MIT and Emerson College, is a problem shared by the most prominent universities in the Boston area, a Globe survey reveals.

Among those struggling the most is the city’s largest school, Boston University, where blacks and Hispanics make up 3.4 percent of tenured and tenure-track faculty, a figure that has barely budged over the past decade. At BU, like the other schools, the percentage of minority faculty lags far behind the demographics of its student body.

Other local institutions don’t fare much better. At Brandeis University, 3 percent of so-called tenure-line professors are black or Hispanic, and at Harvard, they make up 5.8 percent.

Colleges across the country are struggling to bolster the faculty ranks of these underrepresented minority groups as student populations grow more diverse. Nationally, blacks and Hispanics constitute 8.8 percent of tenure-line faculty, according to the American Council on Education.

A diverse faculty helps universities recruit top minority students and provides them with mentors and role models, say students and university officials. The different perspectives and experiences that minority faculty bring can also make colleges more competitive academically and further intellectual debate.

“If we are homogenous, we are weaker as an institution,” said Julie Sandell, BU’s newly appointed associate provost for faculty development who oversees the university’s diversity efforts.

Too few minorities enter academia, studies say. The ones who do often report feeling isolated, with poor mentoring and a campus climate that some perceive as unwelcoming. And unintended racial bias can make the quest for tenure, a long slog for any candidate, particularly grueling for some minorities.

MIT’s unusually frank, two-year study released last month outlines the difficulties black and Hispanic professors experience, such as in getting promoted and feeling ostracized from the university community. Underrepresented minorities account for 6.4 percent of MIT’s tenure-line faculty.

At Emerson College, where that figure is 8.5 percent, an external review this month said its leaders have ignored the role racial bias plays in tenure decisions. Emerson, which has granted tenure to three black professors in its history, commissioned the review amid a controversy that erupted after the college refused to promote two black professors in 2008.

The difficulties black colleagues faced at Emerson have had a “chilling effect” for some faculty of color at the downtown school, discouraging them from seeking tenure, said Michelle Johnson, a former Globe editor who taught at Emerson for three years before arriving at BU last fall as a visiting professor.

“I’ve seen people shown the door who failed that process,” said Johnson, an African-American multimedia professor who decided against pursuing tenure-track positions. “I just chose not to run the gauntlet.”
So few minorities make it through the academic pipeline that the ones who do are in great demand. BU is prepared to offer competitive salaries to entice minority professors, Sandell said, but a better strategy is to nurture its own talent.

"I would like to develop some creative ways of grabbing people before we're in a bidding war with someone else," said Sandell, who hosted a luncheon Thursday for minority professors to discuss how the university could better attract and support a diverse faculty.

Too often, though, bright minority students, especially those who are the first in their families to go to college, choose law, medicine, or business over academia.

"When you talk to young students of color, they say, 'Why should I get a PhD when I can become a real doctor?'" asked Judith Singer, senior vice provost for faculty development and diversity at Harvard.

To help draw more minority students into academic careers, Harvard has started two summer programs that allow its undergraduates and those from other colleges to conduct research with Harvard professors in various fields.

But focusing on the pipeline problem is not enough, college officials say. Universities need to pay closer attention to how the experiences of minority faculty may differ from that of their white colleagues. Minority professors say they often feel both hyper-visible and invisible as the only people of color - with their presence noted in a room but their concerns not necessarily heard.

Simple diversity training during new faculty orientation does not work to foster a more inclusive community, said Jamshed Bharucha, provost at Tufts University, where 7.7 percent of tenure-line faculty are black or Hispanic.

Tufts has asked some of its psychology professors who conducted research on stereotyping and stigma to speak with faculty and administrators about recognizing their own implicit biases.

"You can talk all you want about diversity but often, it's preaching to the choir," Bharucha said. "You need to present good data, from good science, to get the skeptics to not say, 'I'm not biased. I don't need to pay attention.'"

College presidents and deans must be strong enough to put their foot down and suspend a faculty search if the pool does not include qualified minority candidates, said Hubie Jones, dean emeritus of BU's School of Social Work. In the early '80s, Jones caused an uproar by suspending the hiring of white professors in his school until administrators tapped more minority faculty, even when it meant turning away national stars. At one point, he said, he posted the photos of every faculty member in the school along the main corridor.

"I wanted them to look in the mirror and see that this was not a diverse faculty," said Jones, who is African-American. "I laid down the law, and as a result, we found five faculty of color."

Once they hire minority faculty, schools should see to it that the newcomers are hooked into social networks within and outside of their universities, administrators said. The schools also need to work hard to retain minority hires. That means having regular conversations about how the university could support professors' goals and creating paths for advancement - be it more money for research or a lightened teaching load to focus on their scholarship for tenure.

White college leaders must be willing to seek advice from minority colleagues to better understand the experiences of faculty of color, said William Smith, who recently left Emerson to direct Wheelock's National Center for Race Amity.
"White institutional leaders often equate liberal views with cultural knowledge," Smith said. "They need to acknowledge that they need help."

The schools that have the highest percentages of black and Hispanic faculty in the Boston area, UMass Boston (12.6 percent) and Wheelock College (23 percent), have black leaders. Minority college leaders tend to bring more diverse networks that schools can tap into, said Adrian Haugabrook, Wheelock's chief diversity officer.

Ibrahim Sundiata, a Brandeis University professor who teaches history and African and Afro-American studies, said the college has lost prospective students to more diverse Boston-area schools because of Brandeis's dearth of black faculty.

"Often, students want to know that there will be someone like them that they can talk to within a department, that they're not just going to a white school," said Sundiata, who is black.

At BU, junior Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Puerto Rican student from New York, said universities will look antiquated if the makeup of faculty does not reflect the realities of the world.

"It's harder to produce a progressive environment when you don't have people with different perspectives challenging one another," said the 20-year-old. "It's about having an optimal learning environment and an optimal education."

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