



Assessment of the Diversity and Inclusion Climate in the FCS Department's Interior Design program

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Areas of Focus

We proposed to assess issues related to the recruitment and retention of under-represented students and the inclusive climate of the Interior Design (ITD) undergraduate program. Specifically, our proposed assessment project addresses two of the five areas identified in the request for proposals:

(a) Recruitment and Retention of African-American and Hispanic/Latino students, particularly in the professional 3rd & 4th years of the Interior Design program, and (e) Creating a welcoming and safe environment for all students in the Interior Design program.

Why the Interior Design program?

- 1) Students of color are under-represented in the program.
- 2) There is a significant drop-off in the number of African-American and Hispanic/Latino students from the first two years advancing to the professional program.
- 3) The Interior Design profession overall is also under-represented in terms of interior designers of color.

Ethnic minorities represented 10% of all AIA members in 2012.

Primary Research Questions:

1. How do the experiences of African-American and Hispanic/Latino students compare with Caucasian students in the interior design program? [Survey & Interviews]
2. What are the perceived barriers/challenges related to the advancement of students to the professional program and how do African-American and Hispanic/Latino students compare with other students? [Survey & Interviews]
3. What are the perceived facilitating factors/supports related to the advancement of students to the professional program and how do African-American and Hispanic/Latino students compare with other students? [Survey & Interviews]
4. What are the perceptions of students and faculty associated with the interior design program regarding the unit, department, college, and WMU environments being welcoming, inclusive, and safe? [Survey & Interviews]
5. At what key points do students of color discontinue the interior design program? [Review of transcripts and advising files & Interviews]

Key Methods

- Online anonymous **survey** of Interior Design students and faculty.
- Criterion based **interviews**, particularly with African-American and Hispanic/Latino current and recent previous students to be conducted by a doctoral student who is aware of and sensitive to issues of diversity and inclusion, and preferably a person of color.
- **Case review of transcripts and advising files** to ascertain at what points students who did not stay with the major took a different path.

Enrollment & Graduation Data

Enrollment Fall Census Day 2009-2013 (African-American=A; Hispanic=H) (Institution Research)

Program	F09	F10	F11	F12	F13	5-yr Total
Pre-Interior Design (1 st & 2 nd yrs)	4 A 0 H	4 A 1 H	6 A 1 H	4 A 2 H	4 A 3 H	22 A 7 H
Interior Design (3 rd & 4 th yrs)	2 A 1 H	1 A 1 H	0 A 1 H	0 A 1 H	0 A 0 H	3 A 4 H
Subtotal African American + Hispanic	7	7	8	7	7	36
Total Enrollment All Students	83	82	91	81	88	425
Percentage of African American & Hispanic of All Students	8.4%	8.5%	8.8%	8.6%	7.6%	8.5%

Graduates of Interior Design:

Fall 08 – Spring 14: Total = 72
 African-American: 2 (2.7%);
 Hispanic: 2 (2.7%);
 Asian: 2 (2.7%);
 2+ Races: 3 (4.2%)
 Total Racial/Ethnic Minority: 9 (12.5%)

Preliminary Findings

Factors related to not successfully moving thru the program:

- * Encourage students at freshman orientation to register in the first year of Interior Design courses even if they're only slightly considering it, because not doing so would add a year to their studies.
- * Professors and advisors talk to students about how challenging the program can be, especially once you get into the professional portion. We tell them how difficult it would be to hold down even a part time job. Many students just can't afford not to work.

What Advisors hear from ITD students:

- * The program was not what student thought it would be -not an interior decorating program.
- * Some students were disenchanted in previous program leadership.
- * Period history courses are tough and can be a barrier to successful navigation thru the program.
- * Students get the message the program is very challenging/time-consuming and won't have time to hold down a job.

Other Challenges:

- Limited role model Interior Designers of color in SW Michigan and in the field overall.
- Lack of racial/ethnic diversity among WMU ITD faculty and guest speakers and evaluators.
- Limited racial/ethnic diversity among advanced students.
- Stereotype that Interior Design is typically for higher SES and White populations.
- Belief that Interior Designers of color work less in private settings and more often in governmental or institutional settings.

Preliminary Strategies

- Be intentional about inviting ITD guest speakers, evaluators of color.
- Lift up designers of color who have made notable contributions to the field.
- Provide support services throughout the program & consider a mentoring program matching advanced and Pre-ITD students.
- Address views that ITD students are too busy to hold down a job.
- Intentional recruiting of diverse students and development of effective support services to enhance success in the program.