WellAcademic

WOMEN OF COLOR FACULTY RETREAT RATIONALE

I.   Executive Summary

The WellAcademic Women of Color Faculty Retreat is a three-night professional development training program for approximately 15 to 25 women of color faculty members from various institutions across the United States. The aim of the retreat is to help women of color faculty thrive in their work-life using empirically supported techniques shown to decrease stress and increase productivity, focus, and well-being. Using a mentor-coach model of development, attendees learn skills that are applicable to all aspects of their professional roles, including research, teaching, service, and administrative/faculty leadership.

II.   Retreat Rationale

Higher education leaders nationally understand that a racially and ethnically diverse faculty enriches the university community and students' educational experience. Faculty of color, however, remain underrepresented. This underrepresentation is particularly problematic for women of color faculty (WOCF) on the tenure track, as shown below.

Table 1. Percent of women of color faculty compared to total faculty at each tenure track rank

Tenure-Track Rank	Black	Latinx/ Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Native American/Alaskan Native
Assistant Professor	2%	1%	3%	0.1%
Associate Professor	3%	2%	5%	0.2%
Full Professor	3%	3%	6%	0.2%

Source: US Department of Education, 2018

The scarcity of WOCF in the tenure ranks has been consistently linked to recruitment, retention, and progression challenges (See Turner, Gonzalez, & Wong, 2011). Although better recruitment of WOCF is important, such efforts are undermined if there is limited institutional support for success once these faculty become part of the university community (Moreno, Smith, Clayton-Pedersen, Parker, & Teraguchi, 2006). Moreover, the support that is available needs to address the stressors WOCF face due to their unique location at the nexus of racialized and gendered oppression, including: isolation, marginalization, tokenism, excessive service/caretaking expectations, student opposition and hostility, devaluing/undervaluing of research, and experiences of gendered racism and racialized sexism (Monzó & SooHoo, 2014; Tuitt, Hanna, Martinez, Salazar, & Griffin, 2009; Turner, 2002; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wong, 2011). Even WOCF that earn tenure and promotion, express doing so at the

price of their health, well-being, relationships, motivation, and connection to the institution (Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Galindo, 2009; Kelly & McCann, 2013).

The silver lining to this bleak picture is the growing body of evidence that suggests mentoring can increase the "access, persistence, advancement, and career success" of underrepresented groups like WOCF (Zambrana, Ray, Espino, Castro, Cohen, & Eliason, 2015, p. 42; also see Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Galindo, 2009; Monzó & SooHoo, 2014; Turner, 2003; and Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2008). The keys to the effectiveness of mentoring opportunities for WOCF are the extent to which they: (1) focus specifically on the distinctive experiences of WOCF, which are similar to *and* different from those of men of color and White women faculty; (2) provide culturally appropriate strategies to combat individual, institutional, and structural barriers to professional success and well-being; and (3) foster a sense of social acceptance, support, community, and inclusion (Diggs et al.; Evans & Cokley, 2008; Kelly & McCann, 2013; Monzó & SooHoo, 2014; Piercy, 2005; Thomas, 2001; Zambrana et al.).

Finding competent mentors, however, is not easy. Data show WOCF are less likely than men of color and White women faculty to have mentors, and, when mentored, are more likely to experience ineffective mentoring that significantly impedes their career progression (Thomas, 2001; Zambrana et al., 2015). This disconnect highlights the need for institutional investment in culturally effective mentoring programs that focus on the experiences of WOCF. Unfortunately, the low numbers of WOCF in most institutions make this difficult, if not impossible, to implement internally. The lack of external opportunities also hinders the ability of WOCF to benefit from mentoring outside their institution. The vital need for additional mentoring support structures for WOCF motivated the development of this retreat.

III.   WellAcademic Women of Color Faculty Retreats

WellAcademic uses a three-pronged approach to mentoring at our retreats: group mentoring; targeted individual coaching; and peer-mentoring/networking.

Serving as a supplement to existing on-campus resources for WOCF, the three-night retreat offers over 14 hours of programming developed to meet the following objectives:

1. Decrease stress and increase productivity, advancement, focus, and work-life balance through the practice of scientifically informed, culturally sensitive techniques (e.g., goal setting, conflict resolution, emotion regulation, and mindfulness). Because these techniques teach how to approach academic work in ways that maximize positive outcomes, they are applicable to WOCF's advancement in all areas of professional life—teaching, research, service, and leadership.

2. Provide a supportive "sister circle" where participants can discuss their challenges in the academy. This sharing is central to reducing frustration, shame, and self-blame, common responses to the stressors WOCF face that negatively impact productivity, institutional engagement, and health.

3. Facilitate connections among participants, particularly those from different departments and colleges. These connections are the building blocks of a WOCF peer-mentoring community that can help sustain the growth and success of participants post-retreat.

IV.   Institution and Participant Data

Faculty from a variety of institutions, from liberal arts colleges to research intensive universities, are represented at the retreats, including:

- Brown University
- Lehigh University
- Southern Illinois University
- Spelman College
- University of Cincinnati
- University of Connecticut, Storrs
- University of Houston Downtown
- University of Massachusetts Amherst
- University of Massachusetts Boston
- University of Missouri-Columbia
- University of North Carolina, Wilmington
- University of Texas, San Antonio
- University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Virginia Commonwealth University

Participants represent all academic ranks, which adds to the richness of the peer-mentoring aspect of the retreat. The breakdown from our most recent retreat was:

- 43% Assistant Professors
- 24% Associate Professors
- 19% Full Professors and/or Administrators (Chair level and above)
- 14% Other (e.g., non-tenure track faculty)

V.   Participant Feedback

At the end of each retreat, participants are asked to provide feedback about their experience via a short survey. As shown below, results indicate the retreat is of high quality and a significant value for participants and their institutions. Additionally, 100% of participants would recommend the retreat to other women of color faculty and 98% would attend another retreat.
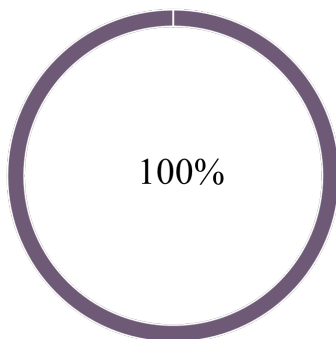
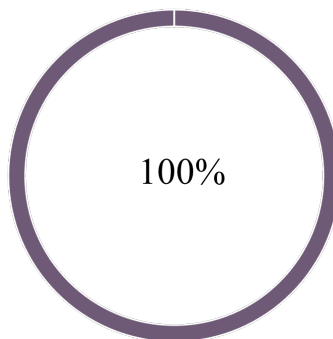### Participants' Programming Feedback*
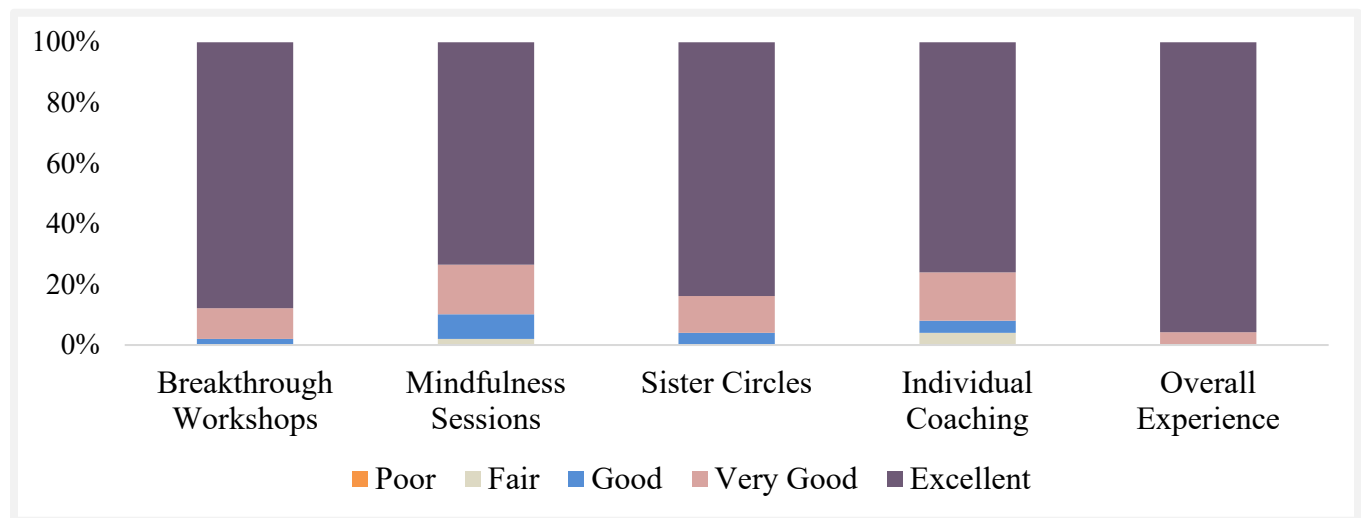
*n=25 for Individual Coaching; n=49 for all other categories

Percent of participants* who responded "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" to the statement: I learned strategies that will help me better…
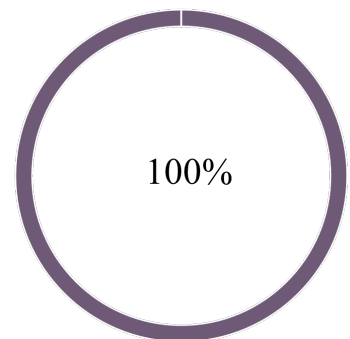
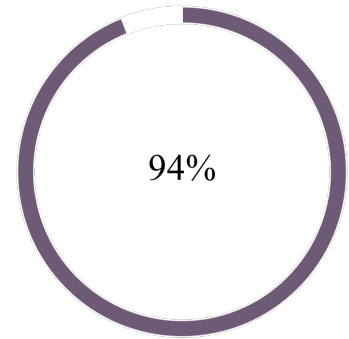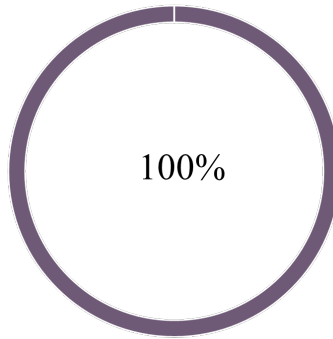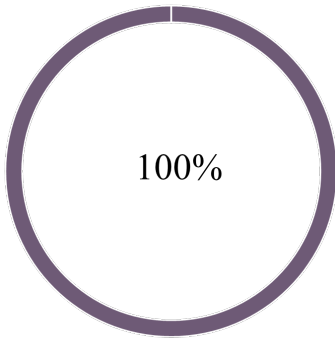| Manage High Work Demands	Cope with Stress	Balance Work and Life
100%	100%	100%

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Accomplish Goals	Recover from Setbacks	Address Imposter Syndrome & Perfectionism
100%	100%	94%

*n=17 (questions were not asked prior to fall 2019 retreat)

For more information about the retreat, please contact Dr. Roxanne Donovan at
Roxanne@WellAcademic.com or 770-405-9554. Detailed retreat information can also be found
at https://www.wellacademic.com/retreats.html.

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