

Richard Mankin – Scientific Diversity Interventions-Comments

We read with interest the recent Science Policy Forum article (Moss-Racusin et al. Science 343, 615-616, 2014) proposing a scientific approach in programs to increase scientific workforce diversity. Given that the creativity, insight, and persistence needed for high productivity and innovation are found in individuals of all racial and ethnic groups, male and female, independent of disability, the occurrence of explicit or implicit bias in hiring and career development negatively affects the pursuit of excellence within the scientific community. We agree that evidence-based programs to increase awareness of diversity issues and reduce bias should be incorporated into existing training required for scientist grant recipients. Part of the training could include discussions of examples where mentoring and career development programs for underrepresented minorities have helped foster centers of excellence. Ultimately, scientific workforce diversity is an important practical concern as well. In this era of increasing population and decreasing natural resources, rapid scientific innovation is needed to ensure supplies of energy, water, food, and health care. Failure to encourage and develop the talents of all who wish to participate in these efforts can only lead to underutilization of precious human capital (Alberts. Science 323, 15, 2009). The interventions proposed in the policy forum article can help the scientific community achieve important improvements in workforce diversity.

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