Combatting Embedded Racism in TPC Academic Programs:
Recruiting for Diversity Using Student-Informed Practices

Chris Dayley
Texas State University

Abstract. Issues of embedded racism in the United States have once again been brought to the forefront by recent incidents involving violence against people of color. The systemic issues that make this type of violence possible are deeply rooted into American culture. Although colleges and universities are often seen as champions for social justice and racial equality, frequently stating their support for diversity and inclusion on their campuses, institutions of higher education are not immune to systemic issues that facilitate the poor treatment of people of color.

With the widespread difficulties brought on by issues of systemic racism, technical and professional communication (TPC) students, faculty, and administrators may feel that there is little they can do to combat these issues. TPC program administrators can begin to combat this embedded racism by focusing on increasing diversity and inclusion in their own academic programs.

This article reports the results of qualitative interviews with TPC students and pre-tenure faculty members who identify as people of color. In their interviews, participants were asked "how can TPC program administrators increase diversity and inclusion in their academic programs?" Their suggestions included 1. working directly with first points of contact at the institution, 2. creating local outreach programs, 3. facilitating a strong mentoring program, 4. including students of color in recruitment efforts, 5. creating clear and inclusive

messaging, 6. focusing on relationships instead of numbers, and 7. changing department culture.

E arly in my career I worked as an admissions counselor at a large public university. In our planning meetings, we often talked about how we wanted to recruit a diverse class of students to our institution. We would hold events and create recruitment materials focused on specific groups of students trying to convince them to enroll at our institution. However, we never talked directly to students of color about their experiences, what made them decide to attend the institution, and what kind of exclusionary practices existed at the university. Having worked at several different universities, I have seen many recruitment events aimed at recruiting students from underrepresented backgrounds, but I have seldom seen efforts from admission offices or program administrators to seek out the observations and opinions of students of color.

This article reports the results of qualitative interviews in which I asked TPC students and pre-tenure faculty who identify as persons of color about their suggestions for recruiting more TPC students from marginalized racial and ethnic backgrounds. Programmatic research regarding diversity and inclusion in technical and professional communication academic programs has gained increased attention in recent years (Dayley, 2020; Dayley & Walton, 2018; Jones, Savage, & Yu, 2014; Popham, 2016; Savage & Mattson; Savage & Matveeva, 2011). This increased attention reflects recent events that have once again brought to the forefront the embedded racism that exists in American society (Anderson, 2020; Tourse, Hamilton-Mason, & Wewiorski, 2018). Although almost all colleges and universities state their support for increasing diversity and inclusion, institutions of higher education are not immune to embedded racism (Karabel, 2005; Savas, 2014). Along with a lack of knowledge on the part of college administrators about possible cultural differences, outright discrimination still occurs on college campuses, and racial climate is a contributing factor in students from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds leaving the academy at higher rates than white students (McClain & Perry, 2017).

It can be difficult to see how we as technical communication students, faculty, and program administrators can contribute to redressing issues of inequality in the academy. One way may be to focus specifically on the issues of racism and lack of inclusion in our own

academic programs (Dayley, 2020; Jones, Savage, & Yu, 2014; Savage & Mattson, 2011; Savage & Matveeva, 2011). This article seeks to answer the question, "how can TPC program administrators increase racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion in their academic programs?" To answer this question, I spoke with TPC students, pre-tenure faculty, and student influencers directly. I interviewed TPC undergraduate students, graduate students, and pre-tenure faculty members who identify as persons of color and asked them about their experiences in their TPC program and about what advice they would give program administrators regarding increasing diversity and inclusion. Their answers included suggestions for overcoming barriers to recruitment efforts, a focus on facilitating strong mentoring practices, centering marginalized students in recruitment efforts, creating inclusive messaging, and changing department culture.

Literature Review

Diversity, including considerations of race, gender, sexual orientation, language, ability, religion, and nationality, "…has been defined broadly in attempts to incorporate multiple perspectives and viewpoints and include a variety of stakeholders and audiences" (Jones, Savage, & Yu, 2014, p. 133). However, the use of "diversity" as a catch-all term can be problematic in its lack of specificity in that often the word diversity has "at times, served as an insufficient stand-in for addressing race and ethnicity" (Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016, p. 215). For the purposes of this article, the word "diversity" refers specifically to racial and ethnic diversity.

Scholarly studies on racial and ethnic diversity in technical and professional communication programs are relatively rare; however, some research is available. Susan Popham's recent article regarding African-American students in TPC graduate programs points out many problems in technical and professional communication's efforts to increase diversity. She notes the lack of African-American participation in TPC programs as reported by Rachel Spilka in 2007 at the CCCC Conference (Popham, 2016, p. 73). Popham points out that current recruitment efforts, including offering minority students scholarships, seem to have little effect and that "recruitment efforts alone may not be enough to more suitably engage with the interests and needs of diverse student populations" (Popham, 2016, p. 73). Some of the reasons Popham points out for low enrollment by African American students in TPC programs include ignorance of the field's existence, the perception that TPC programs are highly stringent and demanding, requiring literary skills which some students may believe they do not possess,

and the technological divide which may exclude students from learning the technical skills necessary for a TPC degree program.

Gerald Savage and Kyle Mattson's 2011 article explores the perceptions of TPC program administrators regarding the state of racial and ethnic diversity in TPC programs. In their article, Savage and Mattson pointed out that "we need to do a great deal more than most of us have done so far to diversify student and faculty populations in programs and to incorporate diverse cultural perspectives in curricula" (Savage & Mattson, 2011, p. 43). They argue that the many benefits that come from program diversity are not necessarily achieved simply by increasing enrollment numbers of students of color. Program administrators need to also seek to diversify program faculty and thoughtfully examine program curricula to incorporate diversity in all areas of the program, the latter of which has been done to some extent in TPC academic programs. An example of this can be found in the Fall 2016 Program Showcase in *Programmatic Perspectives* in which Rebecca Walton, Jared Colton, Rikki Wheatley-Boxx, and Krista Gurko describe how Utah State University's Technical Communication and Rhetoric program redesigned their curriculum to incorporate social justice issues throughout academic programs (2016).

Gerald Savage and Natalia Matveeva explored TPC programs and curriculum at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) as well as in Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) (2011). In their article, they point out that there may be opportunities to increase racial and cultural diversity in TPC through outreach and partnerships with HBCUs and TCUs, but urge caution: "HBCUs and TCUs exist because of social and cultural realities with deep roots in histories of colonization, slavery, and genocide" (Savage & Matveeva, 2011, p. 81). Savage and Matveeva encourage an ethical approach in which administrators avoid missionary style zealotry in hiring minority faculty and enrolling minority students just to enculturate them into becoming "just like us" (Savage & Matveeva, 2011, p. 82). They encourage embracing diversity and being open to change in all areas including pedagogies, course designs, curricula, knowledge, and even educational facilities themselves.

In 2014, Natasha Jones collaborated with Gerald Savage and Han Yu to update the field on the status of diversity initiatives in technical and professional communication. Jones, Savage, and Yu reported some progress, but stressed that much needs to be done to bring TPC research on issues of diversity up to the level of other English-related disciplines as well as other applied fields. In their article, they remind us that "the kind of work [they] are calling for here is going to be dif-

ficult" (2014, p. 147), and that to do this work, TPC scholars may have to adopt research methods that many in the field are not accustomed to.

Previous studies regarding recruitment efforts and the lack of diversity in technical communication programs, pedagogy, and faculty have pointed out significant deficits in technical communication as a whole in regard to racial and ethnic diversity (Savage & Matveeva, 2011; Savage & Mattson, 2011). As Felicia Chong and Aimee Roundtree (2021) stated, "Our field has expressed a need for and interest in recruiting more diverse students as industries diversify, globalize, and tackle social justice policies and issues" (p. 1). Through what little discussion has been had concerning diversity in the field, there seems to be a consensus that a problem exists. Some scholars have suggested actions that can be taken toward a resolution, such as participating in local community initiatives for diversity (Savage & Mattson, 2011); creating programmatic collaborations with community colleges (Savage & Mattson, 2011); encouraging diversity-focused service learning projects (Savage & Mattson, 2011); forming research, teaching, and service partnerships with faculty, students, and programs of historically black colleges and universities as well as tribal colleges and universities (Savage & Matveeva, 2011); increasing research based on participatory action and decolonial methodologies (Jones, Savage, & Yu, 2014); encouraging supportive peer networks (Popham, 2016); and more clearly defining the field to allow prospective students to be better able to find TPC academic programs and understand what they can expect from a career in TPC (Dayley & Walton, 2018; Popham, 2016). However, there has been little scholarship that directly engages with students of color to ask them what efforts may be effective in creating more diverse and inclusive programs. The present article seeks to begin to fill that gap in the research by directly engaging with students of color and asking them about their experiences. The article also reports the experiences of pre-tenure faculty members as they have completed a terminal degree and are able to look back on their relatively recent educational experiences with hindsight.

Methods

The following section describes the methods used for this study including participant recruitment methods, how data was collected, and the process for data analysis. This section also provides a brief description of the interview participants.

Recruitment

This study included participants who identified as a person of color and were an undergraduate student, graduate student, or pre-tenure faculty member studying/working in technical and professional communication. The initial student participants were identified from the participants of an IRB-approved online survey (Utah State University IRB General Review #7006) I previously conducted (Dayley, 2020) who indicated they are a part of a racial or ethnic minority group. Part of the approved IRB application included soliciting and conducting interviews with survey participants. Each participant electronically signed an informed consent document when they took the survey. They also gave verbal consent at the beginning of the interview. All survey responses were anonymous. Personally identifiable data for interview participants were kept in password protected cloud storage and deleted after the completion of the project.

After completing the survey, students were asked if they would be willing to participate in an interview. I contacted each student who identified as a person of color and indicated they would be willing to be interviewed. This resulted in three undergraduate and four graduate student participants. To increase the number of participants, additional student participants were identified through referral from student and faculty member participants. This increased undergraduate participants to five and graduate participants to six. Faculty member participants were identified primarily through referral as well as through personal knowledge of TPC faculty members of color. The number of pre-tenure faculty participants was five.

Participants

All participants attended or worked at public universities. Because of space limitations, four undergraduate students, five graduate students, and five pre-tenure faculty members are represented in the report of the data. Interview participants are identified by a pseudonymous first name or with the title "Dr." and a pseudonymous last name in the case of the pre-tenure faculty members.

As part of the study, participants were asked to name a person who was a major influencer in their decision to study technical communication or who was an important person in influencing that student to persist in a TPC academic program. Influencers were included in the study to learn if people who influence students of color are doing so purposefully and to what they are doing to influence students to study technical and professional communication.

Of the 16 participants, six identified an influencer and gave permis-

sion for that influencer to be contacted. Some quotations from these influencers are also included in the report of the data and are identified as such. Although students were not required to name an academic faculty member as an influencer, all identified influencers were faculty members at public colleges and universities. They are identified with the title "Dr." and a pseudonymous last name.

Undergraduate Students
The undergraduate participants whose responses are included in this article are:
- Charlotte, a woman who identifies as African American. She is an undergraduate student studying at a large southern university.
- Louisa, a woman who identified as a South Asian person from Palestine and attends a mid-size southern university.
- Mary, a Hispanic woman at a mid-sized western university. She works as a technical communicator at the IRS.
- Virginia, an African American woman. She is a student at a mid-size southern university. She also considers herself to be a non-traditional student as she is older than the average student.

Graduate Students
Graduate student participants represented in this article include:
- Abigail, a woman who identifies as Native American and white. She attends a midsize southern university.
- Alice, an African American woman who attends a mid-size southern university.
- Bill, an African American man who attends a mid-size southern university.
- Blair, an African American woman who attends a large southern university
- Mark, an African American man who attends a mid-size eastern university.

Pre-tenure Faculty
I interviewed faculty members who were early in their career to gain insights from their experience as students as well as their transition into a mentoring role. Pre-tenure faculty participants whose responses are included in this article are:
- Dr. Werner, a Hispanic man working at a mid-size southern university.
- Dr. Munro, a Hispanic woman working at a large western university.
- Dr. Joliot, an Asian woman working at a mid-size western univer-

sity.
- Dr. Lessing, an African Caribbean woman working at a mid-size eastern university.
- Dr. Curie, an African American woman working at a large southern university.

Influencers

Influencers were not necessarily people of color but were people who were identified by interview participants as the person who influenced them most in the field. Influencers were included in the study to give insights into mentoring students who identify as people of color. Students were not specifically asked to identify a faculty member, but all influencers who were identified were faculty members. Participant influencers included:
- Dr. Carson, a white man working at a large mid-western university.
- Dr. Franklin, a white woman working at a large western university.
- Dr. Elion, a white woman working at a large mid-western university.
- Dr. McClintock, a white woman working at a large southern university.

Data Collection

Participants were asked a set of questions focusing on several factors including how participants chose their college, how they chose a major in TPC, and what suggestions they have for administrators who would like to increase diversity in their academic programs. Because the resulting dataset was large, only answers relating to increasing diversity in academic programs are presented in this article. Interviews were conducted over the phone and the audio was recorded with permission. I created a list of 11 questions for students and pre-tenure faculty members; however, the number of questions varied depending on the information given by each participant. Influencers answered a set of seven questions. As with students and pre-tenure faculty members, some follow-up questions were asked of influencers based on the answers to each question. I recorded each interview and created a transcription of the interview from the recording.

Data Analysis

After transcribing the interviews, I used member checks wherein participants were asked to read transcripts of the interview in which they participated. I emailed each participant their interview transcript. In the email I asked the participants to read over the transcript and let

me know if any changes needed to be made so that I could make my reporting reflect what they were trying to say as accurately as possible. Any requested changes were made in the transcription document and that document was used for all quotations and analysis in this study.

As suggested by Crabtree and Miller, I used a spectrum of "prefigured" and "emergent" codes to analyze the data for emerging themes (1992, p. 151). The prefigured codes were based on the interview questions and emergent codes developed as the data in each prefigured code was analyzed. Each interview question, or a small group of interview questions, represented a prefigured code. Because of the large dataset that resulted from participant interviews, the present article only reports the results of one prefigured code "recommendations for recruiting more people of color into TPC academic programs."

I carefully read each transcription and highlighted the participants' answers to each interview question. After doing this, I created a summary of each highlighted quotation in a few words. After creating short summaries for each highlighted answer, I then grouped the answers to each interview question according to emerging themes based on my short summaries.

Coding participant answers within the prefigured code "recommendations for recruiting more people of color into TPC academic programs," resulted in five major emergent themes. Each section heading in the "Participant Recommendations" section of this document is one of the themes that emerged from the data analysis.

When quoting interview participants, I used exact quotations leaving in slang, alternative grammar usage, and so on. However, if an interview participant used "filler words" excessively such as "um," "like," or "you know," I removed those words. This was meant to allow the words of participants to be understood clearly (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

Participant Recommendations

The following section reports on suggestions by interview participants, including students, pre-tenure faculty, and influencers about how to increase diversity and inclusion in TPC academic programs. Specific recommendations varied widely, but some patterns did emerge. Each subsection represents a major theme that emerged from coding the data. Each quotation comes directly from interview participants.

Institutional Barriers to Recruitment

One barrier to recruiting more people from marginalized backgrounds in TPC academic programs repeated frequently by interview participants, especially those who are faculty members, is that they have

little to no control over their recruitment initiatives. This is more pronounced in the recruitment of undergraduates than in recruiting graduate students, but in both cases program administrators can often feel like they have little to no power. The tendency for colleges and universities to closely guard their admission process can make trying to take more control of the process difficult for program administrators. Dr. McClintock said:

> I have to be careful with what I say. Not that it has anything to do with identity politics— just recruitment politics. If we had control over the marketing of our program… I don't know if you know about [our university], we have [small number] people in Professional and Technical Communication, we have [small number] people in [Rhetoric and Composition] ...They're great about hiring us but they're not great about letting us take control of our own programs. We can't advertise, specifically our own program. We have a graduate studies committee for the whole department in charge of that. So, we're sort of at the whim of whoever's running graduate studies. So, the short answer is no, we don't [do recruitment] because we can't.

At an institution like Dr. McClintock's, even if their intention is to include people from diverse backgrounds in their recruitment efforts, they may feel that their efforts are fruitless since the university has such strict parameters for what can and can't be done with regards to recruitment activities. Even programs that have more control over their recruiting efforts face challenges, especially at the undergraduate level, in controlling the efforts made in recruiting diverse classes of students. Dr. Elion remarked, "I think it can kind of be difficult [recruiting a diverse class of students] because you kind of rely on, for undergraduate students especially, the admissions office to bring you students." Traditionally, admissions offices are the ones going out and finding students for the university. Generally, they don't decide admission criteria, but they are the ones enforcing it by making decisions about who is being let into an institution. TPC programs not actively involved in recruiting are forced to trust that enough of the students who are admitted to the college or university will choose the TPC degree program or will switch to this major after discovering they're not a good fit for their original major choice. However, it is certainly not a guarantee that students will choose the TPC major after enrolling at a college or university, even at large noteworthy institutions. Dr. McClintock said, "There's this attitude [among faculty members] like, 'They'll come to us because we're [a large noteworthy institution].' I hate to break it to them but we're an engineering and agriculture school. That's what [our

institution] is known for—not English." Even if a college or university does have an English department that attracts undergraduate students because of its reputation, it seems as though very few students are choosing TPC programs as their initial undergraduate major (Dayley & Walton, 2018). This leaves program administrators to either work to persuade undergraduate students to leave their initial major choice or hope the student discovers TPC through serendipitous means.

In contrast with undergraduate recruitment efforts, interview participants indicated that TPC programs tend to have more power and control when recruiting graduate students. Dr. McClintock remarked, "You get more diversity in your grad programs, particularly because you get international students, but with undergrads it's not as easy." Faculty members who participated in interviews implied that recruiting graduate students from diverse backgrounds was easier because faculty have more control over the recruitment process. For graduate studies, faculty members and program administrators are generally the ones in charge of reaching out to prospective students and making admission decisions. This means faculty members decide whom they will try to recruit and how they will try to recruit them.

Dr. Carson talked about the success of their TPC graduate program in creating diverse classes and attributed their success to their head of graduate studies:

> I would say we have an admirably diverse [graduate] cohort. I would attribute a lot of it to [our] head of Graduate Studies for quite a few years. I served on the Graduate Committee with her several times. She had procedures that helped us really try to identify students of color and students with diverse student backgrounds. I think we bring in very diverse classes at the grad level.

Having a person dedicated to implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives in recruiting can make a significant difference in the success of diversity and inclusion goals. However, many faculty and staff lack the resources necessary to devote time to initiatives such as these. Academic departments are often stretched thin. As Dr. Carson said, "There's not a lot of time to go recruit. You don't really have someone who's got that on their portfolio as their full-time job." Some departments are looking into the possibility of hiring a specific person to focus on recruitment initiatives focused on diversity. Dr. Werner said of his department:

> We have, obviously, research faculty as I am who can't necessarily spend a lot of time with the service aspect of doing stuff like [recruitment], but as a team we want to identify lecturers,

> and one in particular, who would be a director of recruitment. That will take some time. We're making quite a bit of transition towards that. So, I would imagine, given that we have a new bachelor of science in tech comm, that's one of the ways we want to go is to have a lecturer do those kinds of things. In particular, we would be looking for a lecturer who has a recruitment or academic services background.

Creating specific service responsibilities of a single faculty member, as Dr. Werner suggested, may not be a realistic solution for all institutions. Dr. Franklin suggested that one way to get help with recruitment is to work with university staff members who are already involved in recruiting activities:

> We are going to create a fact sheet or a packet of some sort to give to all of the advisors at the University in the different colleges because if students don't know about our program, we're doubting that advisors maybe know enough about professional and technical writing to push students in that direction and say "Oh, you are technically-minded but good at communication, and you're interested in editing. Hey, there's this major that's perfect for you." I don't think [advisors] know that, so our next plan for recruitment is to try to get advisors aware and on our side and funneling students to us.

Admissions counselors, academic advisors, and other staff members are often key influencers when students are deciding which major to declare. This is especially true for colleges and universities that primarily serve local populations. Many students are place-bound because of financial challenges, family obligations, or any of a variety of issues that would prevent them from moving to a new location to attend college. This means that they must choose from among the majors offered by the local college they will be attending. The information given to students by influencers such as admissions counselors and academic advisors may be the only information the student gets about available fields of study.

Another suggestion from Dr. Werner was to take a proactive approach when recruiting new students. This includes working with local high schools.

> You can go to the high schools and introduce people to tech comm. I think there's a trend in some high schools, at least what we're identifying, asking English teachers to also teach what might be called a business writing course, but-but that never translates as "oh, there's a whole field of study that does stuff like this." I'm sure [students are] not necessarily stating "I'm

> gonna be a tech comm major," probably because they don't know what it is. I would suggest that it would play out if that was a goal of an administrator to just reach out to high schools and introduce them to tech comm majors. I think our program should make that a way to go.

As Dr. Werner pointed out, even if students are taking classes that teach technical communication skills, the students may not know that they can major in the subject in college and later make it into a career. When asked how TPC program administrators could better recruit students of color into a TPC major, Charlotte responded: "I think [TPC program administrators] would have to make a concerted effort to go to high schools in their area and let them know this is a thing. I mean, like I said, I didn't find out that the program existed until after I started school."

Facilitating Strong Mentoring

When asked if he had advice about how TPC program administrators can bring in more students of color, Mark responded "Yeah, employ more people of color." This frank response suggested frustration with the general lack of representation of people of color in academic faculty. Mark went on to say:

> I don't know, it's strange. It's almost like a hot topic: how can we increase diversity in our programs? Everyone seems to be talking about this but literally everyone on your faculty is white. So that sends a message to people applying that it's not really valued, you know? So that's, that's one thing. It's not to say that student doesn't show up because there's not faculty members of color. That may be the case and it might not, but increasingly those statistics are coming out that students perform better with teachers who look-look like them.

Along with Mark, several interview participants mentioned the importance of having diverse faculty members in a department. When asked about the importance of diversity in the faculty, Dr. Munro said:

> I think that's critical. I mean, I think it's critical for the rigor of the department. I think if you don't have diverse faculty members your way of life is going to be very, I don't know, traditionally white. I think it's important not for the sake of the diverse faculty member, but for the sake of the rigor and the strength of the program. I think it's also important if you have students of color within the program to have faculty members of color who they can talk to and relate to and speak to and learn from. I think it's important on several different levels.

Here, Dr. Munro brings up an excellent point. Without diverse representation in the faculty, your departmental culture is going to be very "traditionally white." This directly affects the inclusiveness of the program. A "traditionally white" faculty may not be as open to other ideas or ways of doing things.

When thinking about attracting a diverse group of students, Dr. McClintock said, "So I don't think there's a magic bullet. I think part of it is having a mentor, preferably a person of color. Someone who tells it like it is, you know?" Dr. Franklin takes her role as a mentor very seriously. "I really try to be a mentor. I think that is so important for students to feel like they have someone in their corner, like there's someone who cares about them, and so that's really how I approach all students is that I, like them, I want to be part of their lives. If I see that they're struggling, I'm always trying to make sure I go the extra mile."

Mentoring means support, and a good mentor will work to recognize what each student needs. When Dr. Carson mentors students of color, he recognizes that there may be some support he can't give them:

> So, I am a, I'm about as WASPy a white cis hetero male as you can get. You know, a 54-year-old white guy who grew up in a white town. So, I'm very aware that I have, I have significant limitations on how I understand the campus. I grew up on campuses as a white male so I never worried about getting around campus or being harassed on campus. So usually when I have a student of color, I will just sort of come out and say you know "Can I help you find a mentor? I know there's stuff that I just probably have no clue about and do you want me to help find other kinds of mentors?" And so, some students of color have said "Yeah, can we find-can I find an African American woman?" or "Is there a club of African American grad students so that I can talk about those issues?" and I've had some students who say "No, I mean, I-it's important, but it's-I'm fine."

When Dr. Carson made the preceding comments in our interview, I was impressed. He struck me as a wise and confident mentor. I followed up with a question, asking if he felt comfortable having a conversation about race with his students of color. He replied:

> No, to be honest. I fear that I'm going to do it wrong again. I'm aware of having grown up in a privileged setting, and that I'm trying to do it well, but that I may just be tripping over myself. I still think I'd rather make the mistake and try and help out. I'd rather talk about it anyway, even though I'm uncomfortable than to not talk about it at all and perhaps have someone miss

an opportunity to gain perspectives that I can't give. Even very experienced and confident mentors with a strong knowledge base regarding issues of diversity and inclusion cannot be all things to all students. Every student experiences their degree program differently, and each student will have unique needs.

In addition to helping students find support systems the way Dr. Carson does, mentors can also have a positive impact on the students of color they work with by observing talent and pointing it out. Being told by a friend or family member that you have talent is not the same as being told by an expert in the field. Louisa talked about being told she had an aptitude for English:

> When I entered University, I didn't have a major at all. I was undecided. When I was in high school, I was taking dual enrollment classes with another university. So, the professor at that university, she would complement my writing and she would tell me, "You should consider an English major." Then in middle school I also had some teachers comment on [my writing]... so it was just basically those two or three experiences, but because they were coming from teachers, academic specialists, I felt their opinion had value.

Another approach to recruitment faculty and program administrators use is talking about TPC programs in their general education classes. Abigail experienced this at the community college she attended:

> The instructor there at that community college who was teaching English who told me about [professional communication]. She was just talking to the class and she said, "If anyone really enjoys writing, or is good at it, and you want to pursue a really good degree at a great pay point—well, check this plan out." So, she was the one that told me about the technical communication program at [my university].

This type of encouragement can be especially important for graduate students or students considering graduate school. Dr. Curie wasn't initially planning on continuing onto a PhD program, but her mentor, Dr. McClintock, saw her aptitude for research and strongly encouraged her to move forward. Dr. Curie said, "Dr. [McClintock] was such a great mentor. You know, as a master student, she said, 'Okay, you need to go on for your PhD and plus you're gonna-you're gonna write this article with me.'" Dr. McClintock's encouragement helped give Dr. Curie the confidence to move forward in her education.

Unlike Dr. Curie, Dr. Munro already knew she was going to go on to a PhD program, but didn't know how well her research interests would fit with TPC scholarship until she spoke with her mentor, Dr. Carson:

> I was initially trained as a composition scholar and love composition pedagogy and teaching. Then I went to get my PhD at [a large midwestern university]. I thought that I was going to continue doing [composition] research but [Dr. Carson] actually invited me to apply for the CPTSC diversity scholarship. In thinking about that I was like super new to tech comm. I said, "Does my research on transfer fit in with TechComm?" He said, "Well, actually it started here. A lot of the transfer research started here." So, he gave me some readings about transfer in tech comm and I was like, "Oh my gosh, I had no idea I had been missing all these conversations."

Dr. McClintock and Dr. Carson influenced their graduate students through informal conversations. In contrast, Dr. Franklin's department has formalized the process of identifying potential majors and encouraging them to consider TPC:

> We actually do have postcards in the English department that all the professors have, and we're supposed to write notes to our students if we identify someone with talent, like in our intro classes, and give them to them and say, "Hey, you should be an English major."

This idea of reaching out to students and identifying students with an interest in technical communication differs somewhat from the traditional idea of mentoring in that it asks faculty members to be proactive in finding new students rather than just reaching out to students with a current TPC major declared or waiting for students to decide to reach out.

Centering Marginalized Students in Recruitment Efforts

Another technique mentioned by interview participants to recruit students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds was to have students from underrepresented backgrounds participate directly in recruitment efforts. However, this technique—encouraging students from underrepresented backgrounds to recruit other students from underrepresented backgrounds—creates a complex situation. Institutions of higher education often see the recruitment of diverse classes of students as a way to increase prestige. However, this can be dangerous because when administrators are working for diversity to advance their own interests, they do not have the interests of the people of color they are recruiting at heart. Administrators need to avoid using students as diverse faces purely to attract more diverse faces. As Dr. Joliot said, "Many [universities] put diversity and pictures of people of color on their recruitment materials. I don't want to be the Asian face.

Those posters are a lie. It's false advertising. It really bothers me. I was there. I was that person."

Students can play an important part in creating a more diverse and inclusive environment. Blair talked about what happened when her department empowered her to take ownership of recruitment efforts.

> I do the recruitment for our program. I go out to HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) and I use my personal network to try to bring in other minority scholars to the program. I do a really good job in this position especially in that first semester of trying to make sure everyone feels welcome. I put people in contact with whomever they need to know while in the program. I call [recruitment practices] on the ground initiatives. And what that essentially does, it kind of takes a political approach to recruiting. I try to tell people "I know political typically has a bad taste in people's mouths when you hear it but the act of recruiting students is political." Students become stakeholders within the organization. They become constituents. So, it is a political practice. But in those on-the-ground initiatives it's all about you making personal connections with people. So, who do you know, why do you know them, and breaking down the institutionalized pipelines because sometimes those pipelines are only about recruiting, and you know the image of it but it's not about actually knowing those students. So, in my on-the-ground approach I've actually visited HBCUs. I go and talk to people that I know personally, I make sure people have my personal contact information. Even if it comes to the point where that person decides the program is not for them or they get there and they're like "look I don't like this," I still make sure that I fostered a relationship that they know they can still come to me either way. Granted it's labor intensive, but it does help with bringing diverse students of color into the program.

Blair's personalized approach to recruiting is quite different from the recruitment techniques traditionally used by colleges and universities. Blair focuses on developing genuine personal relationships, rather than trying to impress students with flashy recruitment materials or presentations,. Traditional recruitment techniques meant to attract people of color are not meant to benefit people of color but are meant to benefit the institution and the people at that institution. Conversely, Blair's take on recruitment practices puts the focus on the individual. Traditional recruitment practices have the potential to harm marginalized people by putting them into a position that might not be best

for them. By acknowledging the individual, Blair fosters a supportive relationship regardless of whether or not that student chooses her institution because the focus is on helping marginalized people rather than simply increasing diversity numbers. Even those with the best intentions may be doing unintended harm. Program administrators must recognize that they are not the experts when it comes to recruiting people of color. This is why including people of color in recruitment efforts is so important. Embedded racism often goes unnoticed by the privileged.

Mark's comments seem to support Blair's ideas of direct involvement in the recruitment of students of color. He commented on how prospective students having students of color to talk to during the recruitment process would be helpful, but he stressed that it's important to be able to speak with students who don't feel an obligation to say good things about the department. Mark would like students to have access to other students who don't necessarily have an official assignment with the department:

> It's also helpful to be able to actually talk to students and not necessarily, you know, the graduate assistant for the department. Because you're going to get a very specific kind of response from them. Just like having people of colors' emails, you know, like maybe there's a list of students of color who are okay with being contacted by prospective students of color. They don't necessarily hold a position on campus because when I was a graduate assistant, I felt comfortable being upfront with people and talking to them about my experience in the program, but you do feel like a kind of pressure especially if you're employed by the program to present a certain view of the program.

Similar to Blair, Mark spoke about the value of a sincere personal relationship in the recruitment process. Mark was not interested in the institutional message. He wanted personal contacts from people who did not feel obligated to speak positively about the program. Like Blair, Mark valued having a sincere personal contact who can be trusted whether or not the student decided to attend the institution. For program administrators, this may mean stepping back from the recruitment process and allowing students to develop genuine personal relationships with prospective students even if the prospective student chooses not to attend the administrator's institution. This also means managing the messaging of the department less and focusing on inclusivity more.

Creating Inclusive Messaging

Despite the recent growth of the field, technical and professional communication appears to still be relatively unknown to prospective students. Prospective undergraduate students most often seem to choose to study TPC only after discovering it at their college or university rather than enrolling at an institution with the intention to study it. This issue is especially compounded for students from marginalized backgrounds who often lack the influence from a mentor to point them toward a TPC program (Dayley & Walton, 2018). Alice talked about the need to clear up misconceptions about TPC as a field to appeal to the interests of prospective students:

> I guess it's really just trying to appeal to their interest. I mean, a lot of times if you don't enjoy writing or you don't have analytical nature about you, this field's not going to be something for you. But it's really just trying to figure out individual interest and focusing on that. A lot of times when I say "technical communications," people automatically think I'm in computers. They don't think writing, they don't think copy editing, they don't think about any of that stuff, so they don't-they don't get the field. But if you're able to kind of connect it to things within their lives and that might apply to them, it might garner interest. Using taglines like "do you enjoy persuading; do you enjoy creating lists" might stand out to certain people. I think you might catch a few people who hadn't really thought about, you know, this degree.

Mary also mentioned the need to clear up misconceptions and explain to prospective students what TPC actually is:

> I think my advice would just be to take the approach that [TPC] is not what you think. Don't let them fool you. It's not-it's not necessarily writing instructions and textbooks. It's not what you think. Really, you're-you're limited by your imagination. I mean, I could find a job pretty much anywhere by just explaining "Listen, this is what I can do for you and your customer base or your employees," or wherever they need help being able to explain what I'm capable of doing. I just don't think people know what it is.

Along with clearing up misconceptions about TPC, interview participants pointed out that program administrators should describe the advantages of obtaining a TPC degree. Charlotte said:

> I think specifically [my institution] should be going out there and saying look at us. Not only do we have this one-of-a-kind program here, but we've got an active alumni pool so they

> could literally go look for people who graduate from our department. [Graduates] get jobs. They get good jobs. So, you show [prospective students] that it's a career path and you show them that success, but you've got to go into the school. I think the other thing that tech programs could be doing is telling students the cool thing about technical communication, is a technical writer can be anything right now.

Louisa also said that administrators should talk to prospective students about real job opportunities they can have after graduation:

> I guess like mentioning some of the things you can do with your English major. I really wish, for me, I wish it was spoken about more, but I would definitely recommend that they mention what a person can do with an English degree. Like the articles I get, for example, for a car company or something. There has to be somebody writing articles about whatever it is. Maybe just like show how it applies to the real world.

Dr. Lessing echoed Charlotte's and Louisa's sentiments by also mentioning the importance of explaining potential job prospects to prospective students:

> I think tech comm is attractive to a lot of people of color because it's an area of liberal arts that provides us a marketable skill. I've gotta admit, I've been in the game a little bit. I'm gonna take some contract jobs during the summer because it's something that I can do. I think you look at African American history you'll see that it's something we've always been interested in—owning businesses. And so, if you're selling your program to people of color, it's cool to have the courses in diversity but you also need to tell them what they can do, what they can get out of the program. Not just to work in the IT industry or to work at Apple or Dell or wherever. They may want to start a business.

For most, going to college is mainly about a future career. This is especially true for students trying to move out of a lower socioeconomic group. Students who have had to justify their choice to go to college rather than immediately look for employment must choose a major with solid job prospects. By focusing messaging on potential career opportunities, TPC program administrators can highlight technical and professional communication as an attractive field for those who need financial stability after graduation.

Changing Department Culture
Each TPC academic program has its own culture and established way

of doing things. One example is the format of a master's degree thesis or PhD dissertation. These scholarly works typically follow a specific set of norms particular to each institution. There is little variation in the process and format of one thesis or dissertation to the next. When students want to do something out of this norm, they may be scolded or criticized. One suggestion from interview participants to increase diversity and inclusion in TPC academic programs was for programs to be willing to change the social norms and culture of their programs. Bill said:

> There's so much research that shows that oftentimes it's just an issue of culture when students of color or students from some kind of minority culture are in the classroom. They're often viewed as being at a deficit in some way. Oftentimes they just think in a different way or they bring some kind of other asset to the classroom or to whatever the rhetorical or classroom situation is. I think sometimes we get so stuck in our one mode of "this is what a good scholar does," whether that's a good tech writing scholar or a good scientist or whatever, that we fail to kind of see the ways in which students who think differently may be able to help grow the field or expand the ways we think about our field.

As Bill stated, students who don't necessarily follow typical academic norms are an asset in the classroom. Technical communicators need to be able to understand their audience to communicate effectively. The more exposure a TPC student had to diverse ways of thinking, the better they will be when designing communication to be effective for specific or general audiences.

Efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in TPC academic programs are not purely altruistic. As Bill said, making space for students from different backgrounds may help expand the way TPC students, faculty, and administrators think about contemporary issues in the field. Creating inclusive spaces for students of color will allow students to bring new ideas and new ways of thinking to TPC programs. To remove barriers for students from underrepresented backgrounds, some TPC programs are trying to implement strategies to increase inclusiveness. Dr. Carson described changes made to their graduate admission process to address inclusion in their program:

> We don't ask for GREs; we don't ask for certain things that... might turn off students of color because they seem rigged... which can be really intimidating especially for first-generation students whether they're students of color or identify as white first-generation students in grad school. It's extremely intimi-

> dating so we don't ask for some of these things that might
> cause students to select themselves out of the running who
> might not apply.

Removing barriers such as standardized test requirements is one pos-
sible way to make a program more inclusive for students (Jencks &
Phillips, 1998). Another way to increase inclusion in TPC programs is by
including diverse scholarly voices in program curriculum. This means
intentionally including the writing of people of color in course reading
assignments and lectures. Maria suggested some introspection when
program administrators create their program curriculum:

> What orientation or perspectives are your program privileging
> right now? Who's on your reading list for your comps? Is it all
> dead white guys? Whose voices are you including? That says a
> lot about whose voices and opinions you think matter.

Maria's suggestion to include diverse voices in program curricu-
lum could be a good start for many programs; however, changing the
curriculum can be difficult. Virginia related an experience one of her
faculty mentors had when trying to change program curriculum to
include diverse voices:

> I actually had a professor who wanted to create a class of chil-
> dren's literature but from African American writers or authors
> of color. She wanted to do that, but because [my university]
> wants to do things for the basketball team, the funding for
> the class was cut. I feel like there are teachers who try certain
> things, but with the university, other things come first and
> sports is one of them. So, I would say it's kind of like a losing
> battle almost. Because [this city] is such a sports city, the sports
> want something the sports are gonna get it, regardless of if
> they're cutting funds from other departments that actually
> need it.

Virginia's perception is that increasing diversity in the curriculum at her
institution is very low on the priority list. Instead, she sees money put
into things like athletics and not into the education she and the other
students in her department are paying for. When ideas to increase
inclusion are not supported in a department, students, like Virginia, no-
tice—especially when other activities and programs seem to get more
consideration, higher priority, and more funding. This lack of priority
and funding seems to be an especially difficult problem for humanities
departments, such as English, which is where most TPC programs are
housed (Dayley & Walton, 2018). With more funding and higher status
in the university, English departments and TPC programs could cer-
tainly do more to increase inclusion. However, there is little to no guid-

ance regarding ways in which program administrators can accomplish this. Future research projects on the status of English departments and their tendency to receive lower funding could prove useful not only for English departments and TPC programs in general, but also for efforts aimed at diversity and inclusion.

Another way interview participants suggested TPC program administrators can change the culture of a department is to shift focus away from simply bringing in a diverse group of students to focus specifically on inclusion within the current student body. In other words, increase inclusion in TPC programs by focusing on student retention and support. Dr. Munro mentioned this specifically:

> I think there's a lot of focus on recruitment in terms of diversity. So how do we get people of color into our programs? I think what administrators can do is focus on retention and support. Because the thing is, people of color in academia, there's not that many of us so we talk to each other. So, if I know that my friend has gone to a program who is a person of color and has not been supported, I'm not gonna want to go to that program. So, while people might focus on recruiting, I think focusing on support and retention so important. Supporting students when they get to the program. Supporting them as they do their project. Supporting them in their field. Supporting them when they graduate. Continuing that sort of sustainable line of mentorship can actually really help recruitment efforts because we talk to each other and when we identify violent places, we tell each other. It's not to say like all people of color know each other, but we have trained ourselves as a survival strategy to reach out to other people of color who are at places that we're thinking of going and saying "how this has been for you?" That really does influence the decisions that we make about going places. I think the biggest advice I would have is for administrators to focus on how they're supporting the people of color who are already there. Those people of color will talk to the people of color who are not there but are somewhere else and we'll know that your program is great about supporting people of color and therefore encourage other people to apply to that program. I think one of the arguments that people make is "well we just didn't have any applicants that were diverse," and it's like "well, support people who are diverse, support diversity, and those applicants will come because those things don't go unnoticed."

Dr. Munroe's advice regarding changing department culture to fo-

cus on inclusion and support ties into the previous section on inclusive messaging. As Dr. Munroe suggests, students who find inclusion, support, and success in TPC programs will ultimately talk to other people who may choose to come to a program because of its reputation of valuing people of color.

Recommendations

To give readers actionable takeaways from this research project, the following section contains recommendations for TPC faculty and administrators regarding the creation of more diverse and inclusive academic programs. These recommendations are based on the reported findings from the interviews in this study.

Recommendation 1: Designate a Recruitment Officer

If a TPC program is interested in taking the steps necessary to create an effective and targeted recruitment program, the first step is to designate someone to oversee recruitment efforts. Program administrators should either create a new position or designate a current faculty member as the program's director of recruitment. This should be a specific person with a specific assignment over recruitment and not simply a part of the job description of a current director or advisor. There are several ways this may be done. The program could hire a new staff member with a reduced teaching load and a specific job description outlining recruitment duties. Administrators could also identify a current faculty member and reduce their teaching load with the intent of spending extra time working on recruitment initiatives. If the intent of the program is to increase diversity and inclusion, program administrators should strongly consider hiring a person of color for this position. This person could coordinate recruitment efforts for the entire department and could also coordinate efforts with the admissions office and graduate college.

Recommendation 2: Create a Student Recruitment Advisory Council

Instead of directing recruitment efforts with no input from the type of students program administrators want to recruit and retain, administrators should intentionally solicit ideas, recommendations, and experiences of students of color already in their programs to create a supportive recruitment program that doesn't exploit or tokenize students to simply increase the number of students of color, but actively

seeks advice and council from students of color in an effort to create an inclusive program. This council should include a diverse group of students representing a variety of backgrounds and experiences. This council could be advised and facilitated by the program's recruitment officer.

Administrators should keep in mind that the students in this group should not be treated as monoliths and that their intersectionality will be a strength in the context of group decision-making. However, program administrators should also be wary of possible burnout of students of color who may be asked to do too much to support program recruitment efforts while also dealing with school assignments, work obligations, and more. A possible solution to this could be tuition waivers or even payment to students for their time rather than expecting students to volunteer their time as recruiters. This leads to a bigger issue: how do TPC programs pay for such efforts? When asking for money from department heads, deans, and upper-level administrators, program administrators are often told, "We don't have any money." Taking small steps at first and keeping good records can be key here. If a program administrator can get a few student volunteers to give a small amount of time and then show a positive effect from that effort, upper-level administrators may be more likely to give more money the next time they are asked.

All ideas regarding recruitment activities should be brought before the advisory council. For example, if a new recruitment brochure is being designed, the advisory council should be involved in every aspect of the design process. What will the brochure say? What will the representation of students look like? Who will the brochure be given to? This will help identify areas of interest convergence and help administrators understand cultural contexts they may not be aware of. The advice of this council should be taken very seriously. Program administrators should keep in mind that they have a very narrow perspective and that traditionally white middle- and upper-class values dominate the academy. Although not every idea presented by this council will work, trying new ideas brought forth by students of differing backgrounds fosters inclusiveness and will give students a sense of ownership of the program.

Along with assisting in recruitment ideas and activities, a diverse student recruitment advisory council could help program administrators identify areas where a program is not inclusive for students from underrepresented backgrounds. Students from diverse backgrounds

can help identify areas where whiteness is an oppressive norm and help break that norm to allow for other ideas, beliefs, and conceptions. Administrators should give over some of the property rights of their programs and allow for students from diverse backgrounds to leave their mark on the program, making it more welcoming for future students.

Recommendation 3: Community Outreach
With a recruitment officer in place, and a diverse and active student advisory council functioning, TPC programs can begin more effectively reaching out to prospective students. These are several ways this could be done:

1. Faculty and students can look for talented writers in entry-level courses and specifically invite them into the major at the university.
2. Recruitment officers can reach out to local high school teachers to inquire about strong writers who may be interested in a TPC major. Recruitment officers could then reach out to these students directly, similar to how fine arts professors search for talent for their ensembles or how college coaches reach out to athletes.
3. TPC program recruitment personnel can identify local companies and organizations that would benefit from educated technical and professional writers. A partnership could be formed to train employees through a TPC degree program.

Perhaps the most important part of an outreach program is to educate people about the existence of technical and professional communication as a potential field of study. Most TPC students do not know that a TPC major exists or what a professional communicator does before matriculating (Dayley & Walton, 2018). By simply getting outside of the confines of the campus, program administrators will be able to spread the word about technical and professional communication and its potential employment opportunities for strong writers and communicators. Recruitment officers and TPC administrators can specifically focus on geographic areas where they know there will be a higher concentration of people from diverse backgrounds. This may be difficult as administrators may encounter different values and norms in these areas than the ones they are used to. This is where a diverse student advisory council can be helpful. Administrators should keep in mind that different social and cultural norms are what they are looking for when trying to create an inclusive environment.

Recommendation 4: Don't Rely on Admission Offices or Others to Recruit Students

Especially for undergraduate students, TPC programs often rely on admission offices to bring in students and hope that some of them are interested in studying technical communication and that some of those students interested in the TPC program are from diverse backgrounds. For graduate programs, administrators seem to put in more time recruiting, but still largely rely on the name of the school and proactive students to bring in a new class.

Program administrators are remarkably busy. They likely have a full plate even without worrying about recruiting new undergraduate and graduate students. However, especially when thinking about diversity, neglecting recruitment can be detrimental. There are several things program administrators should remember when considering recruitment activities:

1. Prospective students are generally unaware of TPC academic programs. The same can be said of admission and advising offices. Taking the time to educate admission officers and academic advisors will empower them to direct students to the TPC program at their respective institutions.
2. When program administrators are not directly involved in recruitment activities, they remain unaware of which students are choosing their programs, why they are choosing their programs, and how their programs may be excluding individuals from diverse backgrounds.
3. If a TPC program traditionally has a very low percentage of students from diverse backgrounds, that is unlikely to change without direct intervention and effort.

Although some of the recruitment process is not controlled by TPC administrators, there are several things administrators can do if they are willing to put in the effort to recruit a diverse class of students:

1. Administrators can work directly with admission and advising offices to help admission counselors and academic advisors know what a TPC major can do for undergraduate students.
2. Administrators can also reach out to teachers and employers who work with potential students to educate them about degree program opportunities so they can direct potential students to TPC degree programs.
3. TPC program administrators should also not be afraid to find ways to reach out to potential students directly both at schools and

workplaces.

4. As mentioned previously, appointing a faculty member or hiring a specific staff member who does not already have an administrative assignment to specifically lead recruitment efforts may also prove effective.

Recommendation 5: Focus on Inclusion

Creating a more diverse academic program isn't just about recruiting a diverse group of students. A much greater problem in colleges and universities than lack of diversity is in retaining and graduating the students of color they already have. Getting students through the door is ineffective at best and actively harmful at worst if students are not graduating with a degree and mutually constructed competencies that go with it. A student advisory council can help begin to identify gaps in inclusion by pointing out areas where embedded whiteness has created an exclusionary environment.

Dr. Temptaous McCoy's recent dissertation is an excellent example of how TPC program administrators can think outside of the box and use inclusive practices to enrich their programs (McCoy, 2019). In her dissertation, McCoy uses African American Vernacular English in several places, and includes a digital chapter on the cultural phenomenon of TRAP Karaoke to show the value of black epistemologies in technical and professional communication. Because McCoy was allowed to bring her own cultural experience into her dissertation project, she was able to expand and enrich the experience of all involved and challenge established norms that may have limited other students of color.

As program administrators begin to encourage new ideas that challenge white cultural norms, some inclusive barriers will be lifted and more people will be able to participate in the scholarly conversation. Scholarship will be opened to new ideas, and these new ideas will lead to new knowledge. This type of inclusive behavior doesn't need to be limited only to a dissertation or thesis. Program administrators can expand this idea to every programmatic activity including developing curriculum, creating and refining degree programs, and even when planning departmental social activities.

When program administrators begin implementing inclusive practices, such as McCoy's previously discussed project, they will likely encounter challenges. For example, if a program has few faculty members from underrepresented backgrounds, there will be few or no faculty members familiar with topics, genres, or vernacular that students

may want to incorporate into a work such as a thesis or dissertation. Also, upper-level administrators may push back against new ideas especially when traditional ideas and behaviors have always been "good enough." Administrators can begin addressing these challenges by purposefully hiring faculty from diverse backgrounds. However, stubborn administrators that are not open to change may pose a greater threat. TPC program administrators may consider addressing this challenge by simply taking small steps forward and documenting progress and positive outcomes which can be presented to upper-level administrators as evidence of the benefits of inclusive practices.

Program administrators need to accept that students of color may not follow some of the cultural norms of the academy. Administrators who are interested in inclusion need to make a conscious effort to lead their programs and departments towards deliberately identifying the ways in which cultural differences are dismissed. Program administrators can do this by intentionally building coalitions with marginalized people associated with their TPC program and department. Program administrators should seek out opinions and advice from people with diverse backgrounds who are stakeholders in the program including students, faculty, staff members, and other administrators. This can take the form of formal advisory groups, electronic surveys, informal conversations, or any variety of communication methods. Program administrators should remember that seeking knowledge from marginalized people in TPC academic programs should not be a one-time activity but should be a regular occurrence that carries on indefinitely. Initially, such conversations may not yield significant results, but as trust is built over time, insights will likely be brought out that will change every aspect of the program.

Another way to foster inclusion is to hire faculty members who identify as persons of color and to support those faculty members. These faculty members can also help identify areas of exclusion as well as support students of color; however, this kind of work is labor intensive. Departments need to hire more than just one person of color (i.e., cluster hire) and should consider the work and effort needed to support students when assigning teaching, research, and service loads. According to Natasha Jones, Kristen Moore, & Rebecca Walton, TPC programs should seek "to forward a more expansive vision of TPC, one that intentionally seeks marginalized perspectives, privileges these perspectives, and promotes them through action" (2016, p. 214). In the context of strong mentoring practices for the purposes of recruit-

ing students of color, this means intentionally providing mentors that represent the student population, intentionally asking students what resources they need to succeed, and intentionally reaching out to students with a strong aptitude who may benefit from enrolling in a TPC program. To be clear, I am not advocating for coercive behavior. I am advocating for a proactive approach that prioritizes support for students to create a hospitable environment that promotes student success.

Conclusion

Because the recruitment of students from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds is such a salient issue, it is important that TPC program administrators include the voices of people of color in their decision making. The current racial climate of the United States makes including people of color in our decision making even more important. TPC students should be able to find programs that offer an environment that values their presence and contributions. The suggestions in this article represent only a very small number of POC (persons of color) students and faculty members in TPC academic programs. As more research is done regarding the perceptions and insights of people of color regarding diversity and inclusion in TPC academic programs, researchers and administrators will begin to get a better picture of what can be done to combat the embedded racism in our programs and institutions.

References

Anderson, Carol. (2020). *White rage the unspoken truth of our racial divide.* London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Chong, Felicia, & Roundtree, Aimee K. (2021). Student Recruitment in Technical and Professional Communication Programs. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 30*(1) 1-18. DOI:10.1080/10572252.2020.1774660

Crabtree, Benjamin F., & Miller, William L. (1992). *Doing qualitative research.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Dayley, Chris. (2020). Student perceptions of diversity in technical and professional communication academic programs. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 29*(1), 49-69. DOI: 10.1080/10572252.2019.1635210

Dayley, Chris, & Walton, Rebecca. (2018). Informing efforts to increase diversity: Academic programs and student motivation in technical and professional communication. *Programmatic Perspectives, 10*(2), 5-47.

Jones, Natasha N., Moore, Kristen R., & Walton, Rebecca. (2016). Disrupting the past to disrupt the future: An antenarrative of technical communication. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 25*(4), 211-229.

Jones, Natasha, Savage, Gerald, & Yu, Han. (2014). Editorial: Tracking our progress: Diversity in technical communication programs. *Programmatic Perspectives, 6*(1), 132-152.

Karabel, Jerome. (2005). *The chosen: The hidden history of admission and exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton.* Houghton Mifflin Company.

Lindlof, Thomas R., & Taylor, Bryan C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods.* SAGE Publications, Inc.

McCoy, Temptaous T. (2019). *Y'all call it Technical and Professional Communication, we call it #ForTheCulture: The use of amplification rhetorics in black communities and their implications for technical and professional communication studies* (Doctoral Dissertation, East Carolina University). Retrieved from http://thescholarship.ecu.edu/handle/10342/7421

McClain, Kevin S., & Perry, April. (2017). Where did they go: Retention rates for students of color at predominantly white institutions. *College Student Affairs Leadership, 4*(1), 2332-4430.

Miles, Matthew B., Huberman, A. Michael, & Saldaña, Johnny. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Popham, Susan. (2016). Disempowered minority students: The struggle for power and position in a graduate professional writing program. *Programmatic Perspectives, 8*(2), 72-95.

Savage, Gerald, & Mattson, Kyle. (2011). Perceptions of racial and ethnic diversity in technical communication programs. *Programmatic Perspectives, 3*(1), 5-57.

Savage, Gerald, & Matveeva, Natalia. (2011). Toward racial and ethnic diversity in technical communication programs: A study of technical communication in historically black colleges and universities and tribal colleges and universities in the United States. *Programmatic Perspectives, 3*(1), 152-179.

Savas, G. (2014). Understanding critical race theory as a framework in higher educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 35*(4), 506-522. DOI:10.1080/01425692.2013.777211

Tourse, Robbie W. C., Hamilton-Mason, Johnnie, & Wewiorski, Nancy J. (2018). *Systemic racism in the United States: Scaffolding as social construction.* Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

Walton, Rebecca, Colton, Jared S., Wheatley-Boxx, Rikki, & Gurko, Krista. (2016). Social justice across the curriculum: Research-based course design. *Programmatic Perspectives, 8*(2), 119-141.

Walton, Rebecca, Moore, Kristin, & Jones, Natasha. (2019). *Technical Communication After the Social Justice Turn: Building Coalitions for Action.* Routledge.

Appendix

Student and pre-tenure faculty interview questions:
- How did you learn about the field of TPC?
- Why did you decide to study TPC? (The answer(s) to this question led to follow-up questions that attempted to discover deeper insights regarding the subject's motivation to choose TPC)
- Who influenced you to study TPC? (If no one was credited, I asked follow up questions, such as "Did a teacher or friend or family member influence you?")
- Why did you stay in TPC? What keeps you participating in the field?
- As you pursue your education/career in TPC, who helps you?
- Did you face any challenges or barriers with finding TPC? With remaining in the field?
- What kinds of support got you to the field in the first place? What kinds of support keep you participating in this field, as opposed to leaving for another major/career, etc.?
- Do you think you support others in finding out about TPC? Why? How?
- Do you think you support others in staying in TPC? Why? How?
- How many students in a typical TPC class are persons of color?
- What are your career aspirations? What kinds of support would you need to achieve those aspirations?
- What advice do you have for recruiting more people of color to TPC as a field? For recruiting more people of color into TPC academic programs?
- Why do you think people of color are underrepresented in TPC? Why do you think there aren't more people of color in TPC?

Influencer questions:
- How do you see your role as an advisor?
- Do you purposefully seek out students to try and support them?
- Do you have students who intentionally seek you out? If so, why do you think the seek you out?
- How you ever influenced a student to study technical communication?
- Does your program, department, or institution have any diversity and inclusion initiatives? What are those initiatives and how do you implement them?
- Is it important to have diverse representation on the faculty?
- How can technical communication academic programs recruit more people of color?

Author Information

Chris Dayley is an assistant professor and the director of the Master of Arts in Technical Communication program at Texas State University. His research interests include issues of social justice in technical and professional communication academic programs. Chris' work has been featured in the academic journals *Programmatic Perspective* and *Technical Communication Quarterly*.