

**Rackham Graduate School
Office of Graduate Student Success**

Recruiting: A Quick List of Useful Tactics

▪ **Use Multiple Forms of Publicity**

Increasingly, prospective students are learning about your program primarily from your website. Make sure the site is: communicating what you want it to convey about your program; has links to descriptions of your faculty and the Graduate School; and is updated regularly. Highlight programs and departmental efforts that address diversity and provide links to select student organizations on campus, to minority support offices, to cultural centers in the community, etc.

Place ads in publications with a likely readership of underrepresented students: consider programs for disciplinary conferences for underrepresented groups, multicultural journals, tribal college newsletters and the like.

Print materials have limited use because of the difficulties in keeping the content current. The same is true for conventional mailing lists. If yours is a discipline that has a particular use for print (e.g., the arts and communications) ensure that material is current and update often.

Be sure all recruitment materials have a statement on the department's commitment to diversity.

▪ **Maximize Personal Contact**

Identify potential recruiters in your program. Train these interested faculty, advanced students and staff by partnering them with experienced recruiters in your school or college, or with recruiters from other University schools and colleges.

Conduct your own recruiting trips for the school, college, department or program. Identify the recruiting fairs, disciplinary organizations, minority organizations and feeder institutions most likely to render qualified students for your program. Rackham's office of Graduate Student Success can assist with the cost of recruiting trips.

Take advantage of less formal opportunities for undergraduate recruitment. For example, host receptions for prospective students at national conferences; encourage researchers to recruit as part of scholarly trips; when networking with colleagues ask about their promising undergraduate students.

Encourage your faculty when they give talks at other colleges and universities to ask colleagues and administrators at the host institution to identify students who may be interested in the U-M. Invite these undergraduate students for a conversation, share email addresses and maintain contact with them.

Consistently promote the understanding that underrepresented students are welcome in your program as well as at the University as a whole.

Always, always follow through with any contact: nothing is more discouraging to a potential applicant than never getting a response after that first contact.

- **Target Underrepresented Groups**

Identify schools with large minority populations and undergraduate departments in your discipline, develop a contact in the department and send promotional materials. This doesn't need to be any more than a simple flyer with a general description of your program, website and the contact information for a recruiter.

Likewise, send such flyers to the departments in historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs), and tribal colleges whose students may have an interest in your program.

Utilize the National Name Exchange and McNair Scholars national directory. Staff in the office of Graduate Student Success can assist you with these and similar resources.

Send faculty representatives to national meetings of relevant organizations such as the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS).

Make full use of institutional opportunities currently available at the U-M. For example, the Summer Research Opportunity Program at Rackham and the Perrigo Summer Fellows Program at the Life Sciences Institute offer departments the opportunity to mentor prospective graduate students. These are only two examples of programs available to disciplines across campus.

- **Identify and Develop Feeder Institutions**

Use the network of your department's former students who now are faculty members at other colleges and universities. Ask them to recommend your department for graduate study and offer to send them up-to-date materials about the degree programs available.

Draw on the networks already in place with those trusted institutions that frequently supply applicants to your department. Collaborate with them to encourage their underrepresented students to apply. Develop similar partnerships with institutions from which we hire.

- **Put a Face on Your Program**

Applicants often report they are influenced most by the quality of contact from the University. Think beyond the threshold of regular "customer service."

Designate a staff member to serve as the recruiting contact to ensure a consistent level of appropriate response. Students are reassured when they know whom to contact with questions.

Help potential applicants imagine life at U-M through the department's website. The availability of detailed information about faculty and their research interests, academic and professional programs, current graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, post-graduation placement records and campus life all play a role in recruitment.

Enroll those to whom you extend offers in list serves or chat groups targeted for current graduate students so that they can discuss enrollment with those who already selected your program.

- **Sponsor Campus Visits**

Many programs have been successful in increasing their yield rate by inviting prospective students, individually or in groups, to make campus visits. Invite all accepted minorities to visit the campus. This can be as simple as offering to pay for their travel and arrange for a graduate student host. Other possibilities include a recruitment weekend with organized activities, tours of facilities, interactive panels, and social events. Some departments do this on their own, others host “preview” weekends at the school/college level.

- **Fund Competitively**

Don't assume that students are familiar with the variety of ways in which they might fund their graduate education. Ensure that underrepresented students are apprised of all available funding. Make certain they understand what they are being offered.

When possible, it is advisable to offer multi-year packages. Consider "top-up" funding to increase support above normal assistantship levels and other incentives for especially attractive students.

- **Encouraging Acceptance of Admission**

Again, the importance of following through on your offer with personal contact cannot be overemphasized. Such efforts may include email messages and personal phone calls from graduate students, faculty, and administrators offering to discuss any additional questions.

- **Evaluate Your Strategies**

Keep records to assess the effectiveness of the various strategies you use. Determine over time which ones result in the highest quality students. Ask your current doctoral students what elements of your program's recruitment strategy were most influential.