Twitter Thread by Kay L Kirkpatrick \■\■



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I'm disappointed that the following needs to be said, because professors ought to educate themselves on basic facts, instead of accepting myths uncritically and behaving harmfully towards minoritized women in STEM.

People, especially women, who are Black and/or Indigenous have especially challenging pathways into tenure track faculty positions, because academia is still racist and sexist in ways that are intersecting and nonlinearly compounding.

The following myths and facts are paraphrased from the 1996 research article about Ford Foundation Fellows by Smith, Wolf-Wendel, Busenberg et al, "The Pipeline for Achieving Faculty Diversity: Debunking the Myths" at https://t.co/Dv7YxDHJEB

Academia changes slowly, so these 1996 research results still hold, and in fact other studies indicate that the representation of Black faculty has worsened since 2005.

To summarize the research...

Myth: Potential faculty of color are sought out by numerous institutions, and the competition to hire them is fierce, because there are so few candidates of color.

Fact: Supply and demand statements like this are greatly exaggerated.

Fact, continued: Even among high-achieving doctoral recipients of color, the overwhelming pattern is that the job market is challenging and the options are limited.

Fact, continued: Only 11% of scholars of color were actively recruited by hiring institutions. Moreover, only a few scholars in this actively recruited group had institutions in a bidding war for them.

The reality: institutions believe wrongly that candidates of color are over-recruited; candidates of color are actually under-recruited.

(BTW this presents an opportunity for departments who actually understand the reality.)

The myth seems to be even stronger about scholars of color in the sciences, that they are even more over-recruited into TT positions and hence scarce.

The reality is that STEM candidates of color are under-recruited and may have to stay in a "holding pattern" of postdoctoral study or leave academia.

Myth: Competitively positioned and "elitely" educated scholars of color are only interested in working at the highest ranked institutions. Thus they are virtually impossible to recruit by middle and lower ranked schools.

Fact: These scholars are interested in a wide range of positions, regions, and institutions; their typical limitation is location, but they often have affinities with regional schools that do not try to recruit them.

Myth: Scholars of color are continually recruited by wealthy schools; ordinary schools cannot compete with them.

Fact: The highly recruited and mobile scholars, a subset of the 11%, are actually rare but over-represented in the minds of people who could recruit them.

The reality is that academics of color do not simply follow prestige or monetary incentives; rather they move because of unresolved issues with their former institution, dual career challenges, and hoping for a better fit with the new institution.

Myth: Faculty of color are leaving academia for lucrative positions in government and industry.

Fact: For scholars of color who leave academia, a primary reason is they cannot stay in a postdoctoral holding pattern for a long time, e.g., past the age of 40.

These scholars also cite inhumane search processes as a reason for leaving academia.

Myth: Campuses are so focused on diversifying the faculty, that straight white men have no chance.

Fact: The vast majority of Euro American men are successful in their faculty job searches, and when they have trouble finding a faculty position, it was because their specialized fields had virtually no job openings.

Additional fact: European American men who had expertise related to diversity had a significant advantage on the job market.

(This is ironic and frustrating and fairly well-known nowadays.)

In summary, professors need to learn to recognize these myths, because these facts are important and fundamental.

The linked paper also has principles of good practice for hiring institutions which I like especially because good practices are better than "best practices" IMO