

Content Analysis of Publicly Available Institutional Resources and Support: Implications for Black, Indigenous, and LatinX (BIL) Faculty Members at Highly Ranked U.S. Schools of Social Work

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Abstract: *Black, Indigenous, and LatinX faculty members remain underrepresented in research-intensive schools of social work (SSWs), particularly at the rank of full professor. This study involved a content analysis of publicly available data to examine the institutional resources and support at highly ranked SSWs that may influence faculty recruitment, retention, and promotion. We examined 10 highly ranked SSWs to assess institutional demographics, student enrollment profiles, financial and research resources, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility support. Data sources included institutional websites, federal databases, and organizational reports. Findings indicate common characteristics: All 10 SSWs are Research 1 universities with substantial endowments, urban locations, and selective admissions. Although none is a minority-serving institution, all provided accessible diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility information. Institutional resources and support exist in the academy, and faculty experiences may often be positioned in the context of persistent systemic challenges. These findings provide insights for Black, Indigenous, and LatinX faculty members navigating their career paths at highly ranked SSWs; they also inform institutional efforts to enhance recruitment, retention, and pathways to full professorship.*

Keywords: *Higher education diversity, faculty promotion and tenure, institutional resources and supports, content analysis, publicly available data sources*

Across all professorial tenure and tenure-track ranks in the academy, Black, Indigenous, and LatinX (BIL) faculty members remain underrepresented demographics (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). BIL is a term used to categorize racial and ethnic identities for those who identify as Black, African American, or in the African diaspora; Indigenous, American Indian, or Pacific Islander; Latina/o/x or Hispanic; and biracial or mixed race. The BIL term is neither precise nor perfect due to a lack of within-group specificity and political complexities, similar to the concerns raised about the term LatinX (Martinez, 2020). Yet for this manuscript, we wanted to center implications for BIL faculty members, given their distinct underrepresentation in the academy and disproportionate adverse experiences, both inside and outside the academy, that differ substantively compared to their non-Pacific Islander Asian and White faculty counterparts.

BIL faculty underrepresentation is particularly bleak at research-intensive (Research 1) schools of social work (SSWs; Vasquez Heilig et al., 2019), which are often in predominantly White institutions with White student enrollment at or above 50% (Brown & Dancy, 2010). Regarding the concentration of BIL faculty members who have achieved

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the rank of professor (i.e., full professor), the current situation is also discouraging (Lee et al., 2023), particularly for those at SSWs ranked in the top 10 nationally (U.S. News and World Report, 2023).

Understanding the broader resources and support, culture, and climates of these institutions may provide insight into the experiences of BIL faculty members' journeys to full professorship at highly ranked SSWs. This study defines resources and support as the representation of historically underrepresented minorities throughout the campus communities, the institution's financial stability, and the access to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility related services and stated intentions. A description of the institutional environments in which BIL faculty members are not only present (despite their underrepresentation) but have reached the most underrepresented rank of full professor at a highly ranked SSW is not available. Although there is a dearth of research examining diversity in social work education relating to BIL students (Chin et al., 2018), there is arguably even less information at the institutional level regarding the context for underrepresented BIL faculty members. Compiling such information represents a first step in providing valuable contextual, institutional information for aspirational institutions, future and current BIL faculty members seeking first or subsequent appointments (and promotions) at highly ranked SSWs, and even BIL doctoral students as future stewards of the profession (Walker et al., 2008) aspiring to enter the professoriate and reach the rank of full professor.

Literature Review

Current Landscape

In 4-year institutions that grant tenure, the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty members has been declining in recent years, now representing about one third of all U.S. faculty positions (Tiede, 2022). In this shrinking segment in the academy, BIL faculty representation among tenured and tenure-track ranks of assistant, associate, and full professors remains low and often centers on Black and LatinX faculty members. As summarized in Tables 1 and 2, the authors extracted rates of tenured and tenure-track BIL faculty members by race and ethnicity and across professorial ranks to assess their level of representation.

Specifically, faculty members identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, or two or more races collectively represent only 13% of all U.S. faculty members (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). This rate, a collective measure of BIL faculty members, is comparable to the 13.8% rate of those identifying as Asian (non-Pacific Islander) and significantly lower than that of White faculty members, constituting the remaining majority of faculty members at each tenured and tenure-track professorial rank (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). For this manuscript, the authors used raw data compiled by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (2023) to describe the proportion of BIL assistant, associate, and full professors at U.S. institutions alongside rates of non-Pacific Islander Asian and White faculty members (Tables 1 and 2). Nationally, BIL tenured and tenure-track faculty

members, at 13.5%, have the lowest representation in the academy. Further, these data highlight the importance of examining representation at each increasing professorial rank to full professor. BIL faculty members are the only group with a remarkable decline in representation with each professorial (promotional) rank in the academy (assistant: 17%; associate: 13.6%; full: 10%); see Tables 1 and 2. Conversely, non-Pacific Islander Asian faculty representation is fairly stable, particularly after tenure (i.e., associate: 13.6%; full: 13.0%), with only a slight decline at each promotional rank. Further, the starkest contrast is the pattern of representation for White faculty members, who are the most represented racial and ethnic group not only in the academy at 72.8% but also in each professorial rank, with their representation increasing at each level (assistant: 29.4%; associate: 31.2%; full: 39.4%).

As such, the underrepresentation of BIL faculty members illustrates the leaky pipeline, a term used to describe the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields (Alpers, 1993). Furthermore, underrepresentation at the highest levels of professorial ranks reflects the *glass ceiling* effect. This term was first attributed to Mary Loden in 1978, describing the halted advancement to the highest levels in women's professional careers (Loden, 2017), and has been extended to a *concrete ceiling* (Babers, 2016) to emphasize the ceiling's impenetrability for people of color. These terms apply most demonstratively to BIL faculty members at U.S. colleges and universities.

Table 1. *Representation of Faculty Race and Ethnicity By Rank in U.S. Colleges and Universities, Fall 2022^a*

Race and Ethnicity	Rank			Total
	Assistant	Associate	Full	
BIL ^b	27185 (40.9%)	20911 (31.5%)	18307 (27.6%)	66,403
American Indian or Alaska Native	691 (37.1%)	597 (32%)	575 (30.9%)	1,863
Black	12903 (42.7%)	9515 (31.5%)	7820 (25.9%)	30,238
Hispanic	10403 (38.2%)	8646 (31.7%)	8217 (30.1%)	27,266
Pacific Islander	254 (35.4%)	248 (34.5%)	216 (30.1%)	718
Two or more races	2934 (46.4%)	1905 (30.2%)	1479 (23.4%)	6,318
Asian	23165 (34.1%)	20980 (30.9%)	23842 (35.1%)	67,987
White	105670 (29.4%)	111936 (31.2%)	141421 (39.4%)	359,027
Total	156020 (31.6%)	153827 (31.2%)	183570 (37.2%)	493,417

^a National Center for Education Statistics (2023). All totals exclude all faculty members at the instructor, lecturer, and other faculty levels and all faculty members reporting their race and ethnicity as either nonresident or unknown.

^b The first author collapsed data for BIL using the reported column totals for assistant, associate, and full professors for the following column totals in the data source: American Indian or Alaska Native (Column 5), Black (Column 7), Hispanic (Column 8), and two or more races (Column 10), with Asian faculty member (Column 6) excluded, for an overall author-calculated BIL total of 66,403 from per rank counts.

Table 2. *Representation of Faculty Rank by Race and Ethnicity in U.S. Colleges and Universities, Fall 2022^a*

Rank	Race and Ethnicity			Total
	BIL ^b	Asian	White	
Assistant	27,185 (17.4%)	23,165 (14.8%)	105,670 (67.7%)	156,020
Associate	20,911 (13.6%)	20,980 (13.6%)	111,936 (72.8%)	153,827
Full	18,307 (10%)	23,842 (13%)	141,421 (77%)	183,570
Total	66,403 (13.5%)	67,987 (13.8%)	359,027 (72.8%)	493,417

^aNational Center for Education Statistics (2023). All totals exclude all faculty members at the instructor, lecturer, and other faculty levels and all faculty members reporting their race and ethnicity as either nonresident or unknown.

^bThe first author collapsed data for BIL using the reported column totals for assistant, associate, and full professors for the following column totals in the data source: American Indian or Alaska Native (Column 5), Black (Column 7), Hispanic (Column 8), and two or more races (Column 10), with Asian faculty member (Column 6) excluded, for an overall author-calculated BIL total of 66,403 from per rank counts.

Although representation of BIL faculty members is the lowest in the academy, their representation is better among SSWs, yet they are still underrepresented. According to the Council on Social Work Education's (CSWE, 2024) annual survey of U.S. SSWs, BIL faculty members represented 30%. BIL faculty members are mostly Black or African American (19.5%), followed by Hispanic or LatinX (8.3%), American Indian or Alaska Native (1.2%), and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.2%). Most striking is the mere 4.5% of BIL full-time, tenure-track faculty members at SSWs having achieved the rank of full professor (CSWE, 2023). While CSWE (2024) survey collects data by race, it unfortunately does not provide ethnic-specific data. This rate further underscores the leaky pipeline and concrete ceiling effects reported in other disciplines in social work education and at the highest promotional rank of full professor.

Institutional Resources and Support

Limited empirical data describe institutional resources and support and their potential impact on the likelihood that faculty members will advance to the highest rank of full professor. These resources and support include but are not limited to the institution's geographic location, workplace climate, and financial stability. It is worth noting that prior research highlights individual-level peer and cultural factors, such as presence of professional mentors, that influence retention. However, the current study examines the implementation of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) initiatives at the institutional level to improve retention of underrepresented faculty members (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021; Kelly et al., 2017).

A qualitative study with 16 African American tenure-track faculty members from a historically Black college or university (HBCU) and a predominantly White institution identified job satisfaction and location of the institution as important (Hooker & Johnson, 2011). These study participants emphasized not only the geographical location of their respective institutions but also proximity to their loved ones, the availability of diverse community activities, and the institutional climate as being important factors influencing their retention and their success or anticipated success in achieving tenure or their

expectations to become tenured and promoted to associate professor (Hooker & Johnson, 2011). One participant was quoted as having said, “The setting can be a barrier. Many institutions are in remote or undesirable areas” (p. 179). It is worth noting that several HBCUs are clustered in the southern United States, resulting in fewer logistical barriers related to proximity. Consequently, this geographic proximity may lead to increased networking opportunities and sustained or stronger relationship-building in the region and across institutions, increasing the professional organization membership and participation necessary to build and maintain a sense of community both in and beyond the academy. Further, this regional clustering of universities and colleges could facilitate recruitment and retention of BIL students via a diverse range of HBCU-affiliated networks in which both BIL students and faculty members can build community.

Similarly, in a case study at a research institution, O’Meara et al. (2014) interviewed close to a dozen full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty members across nine STEM disciplines who had left the institution. Their findings highlighted the importance of geographic location (e.g., cost of living, crime, quality of primary public schools, commuting) and family-related matters (including a partner’s career opportunities) as reasons related to their departure. The type of community in which faculty members desire to reside is a personal and subjective choice. If both choices cannot be reasonably satisfied, then faculty members must decide if they are going to prioritize either their personal or their professional needs. Although some faculty members may prefer bustling metropolitan city living, others may seek what they view as slower-paced college towns with rural-leaning identities. Other domains that BIL faculty members identified as reasons for leaving their institution included a better opportunity elsewhere; the work environment and fit; and the “writing was on the wall” regarding potential or failure to achieve promotion and tenure (O’Meara et al., 2014). When evaluating institutional resources, it is important for BIL faculty members, given their underrepresentation in the institution, to consider the diversity of the institution’s surrounding community and how they can create networks, a sense of belonging, and healthy experiences.

Institutional Culture and Climate

An institution’s culture and climate (Schneider et al., 2013, 2017) is yet another way in which BIL faculty members may benefit or be hindered along their journey toward tenure and promotion. The institutional climate is composed of physical, psychological, and social environments, shared perceptions of members, and political processes, whereas its culture is built on the historical values, beliefs, norms, and myths understood by its members (Griffin, 2020; Stolp & Smith, 1995). A substantial body of empirical research has detailed how women and men of color often face barriers rooted in the culture and climate of these institutions that perpetuate inequities in higher education. For example, Fields and Cunningham-Williams (2021) conducted a qualitative case study with nine Black women faculty members at a top-ranked SSW. They found that although social work espouses a code of ethics and core values, these faculty members described their experiences as inequitable and often toxic because of their race and gender (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). Their findings aligned with Edwards et al.’s (2012) study of the experiences of African American female faculty members at SSWs in predominantly

White institutions ($n = 108$), linking a greater representation of Black faculty members with an increased likelihood of achieving tenure. This finding and those of Jackson et al. (2024) underscore the value of representation in academia and how institutions may support Black women (and possibly BIL faculty members in general) on their journeys to not only survive but also thrive in these institutions. It is important to note that faculty of color have been shown to be underrepresented in top-ranked, research intensive, and predominately White institutions (Vasquez Heilig et al., 2019), a pattern that also appears evident among BIL faculty members at top-ranked, research-intensive SSWs.

Despite a rich body of knowledge on diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA) in higher education, the academy continues to grapple with White supremacy and the denial of full participation by people of color (Baffour et al., 2023; Lafferty et al., 2024; Minjung et al., 2021; Williams, 2022). In a study of the campus experiences of Black faculty members at a Midwestern research-intensive institution, Pittman (2012) found that 86% of the 14 Black faculty member participants said their race greatly shaped their overall campus experiences, with 71% of them reporting that their race-related experiences of exclusion and tokenism led to negative feelings. Institutions often speak of valuing diversity and the importance of recruitment and retention of racially diverse faculty members; however, these stated values and beliefs are not usually reflected in equitable proportions, particularly in the most prestigious positions in the academy. In a phenomenological study of Black faculty members in education departments at 13 U.S. institutions (McGee & Kazembe, 2015), faculty members reported that when presenting their research, they encountered racialized stereotypes and expectations that led them to behave as “performers,” believing humor and smiling were equally important to their scholarly presentations as the substantive content being conveyed in the presentation. Additionally, these African American faculty members said they often received criticism from others for lacking scholarly rigor and integrity (McGee & Kazembe, 2015). Black faculty members also reported that their institutions recruited them heavily, then later made them prove that they were qualified to be faculty members at the institution while not offering institutional resources and supports to retain them (Louis et al., 2016).

Campus leaders are important in creating equitable and inclusive communities in these institutions; hence, institutional leaders are often called to prioritize DEIA-centered policy, practice, and procedures, which may prove to be especially difficult in state-supported institutions where state legislatures are not supportive of DEIA efforts (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). In fact, as Quinn (2024) asserted, it is premature to assume faculty members are leaving politically red states for bluer states or abandoning the academy because of conservative legislation. Further, Quinn (2024) maintained that minority professors may elect to remain in right-wing climates because they believe they can have a tremendous effect on their students by countering the prevailing political ideology.

Institutional Interventions

Several interventions implemented at the institutional level appear promising as invaluable faculty support, particularly for BIL faculty members on their trajectory toward

full professorship. For example, postdoctoral programs that intentionally recruit doctoral students of color often serve as direct pipelines into tenure-track faculty positions in the academy, thus acting on their implicit or stated commitments to institutional diversity through allocation of tangible resource and support (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021; Fries-Britt et al., 2011). For example, a systems-dynamic modeling study focusing on basic science departments in medical schools (Gibbs et al., 2016) reported a positive relationship between the increase in BIL postdocs entering the job market and being hired, and the increase in faculty diversity.

Cluster hiring is another institutional intervention, pioneered at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (2008) in the 1990s, that goes beyond mere recruitment and may increase the likelihood of BIL faculty member retention and promotion along the tenure track (Urban Universities for Health, 2015). Cluster hiring involves onboarding multiple new employees as a cohort—a practice “known to impact diversity and institutional climate: hiring faculty into interdisciplinary clusters” (Urban Universities for Health, 2015, p. 2). This institutional practice is based on the expectation that cohort members will support one another and build community, resulting in productivity and retention (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021), similar to forming doctoral program cohorts (Bista & Cox, 2014; Cunningham-Williams et al., 2019). Creating and nurturing a collaborative culture is important to aid the success and retention of BIL faculty members.

Additionally, honoring the rigor and quality of the research that BIL faculty members produce, which is often related to their identities, is another way to support these scholars. Yet in a study examining perceived barriers to research productivity (Allen et al., 2018), interviews with 10 African American social work researchers considered to be “highly cited” revealed that their identity or African American-focused research was perceived by others as of less value and not worthy of study. Facilitating mentorship pairings with senior faculty members who are available and prepared to be dedicated to the success and retention of BIL faculty members across research and methodological interests may be a key approach to not only increase research productivity but also reduce attrition (Kelly et al., 2017).

Institutional Financial and Research Resources

An institution’s financial stability is yet another way that BIL (and other) faculty members may garner support that contributes to their retention and promotion to full professor. In fact, an institution’s prestige and reputation seem closely tied to the quality of scholarship produced by its faculty members (Dundar & Lewis, 1998). Further, an institution’s ability to secure external funding for research and attract desirable students has been linked to the institution’s financial stability (Dundar & Lewis, 1998). One way in which reputation, impact, and other financial variables are measured is by using an institution’s endowment as a proxy. In fact, one of the greatest benefits of a healthy endowment is long-term stability, which allows for innovative research that positions institutions and faculty members to secure additional streams of funding (American Council on Education, 2021).

Hence, the current study focused on the demographic characteristics, resources, and supports of research-intensive, highly ranked SSWs in U.S. institutions. Specifically, we aimed to describe and understand institutional characteristics that may have contributed to the success of BIL full professors at these institutions. To our knowledge, this is the first effort to use publicly available data to describe the institutional (i.e., college or university) demographics, resources, and support that characterize highly ranked, highly resourced SSWs. This study provides the necessary exploratory, descriptive first steps to understand the broader institutional culture and climates of the work environments of BIL professors at highly resourced SSWs in the United States.

Method

Sample Selection

We followed a purposive sampling strategy using a publicly available sampling frame of highly ranked SSWs to select our institutional sample for this descriptive case study content analysis. Specifically, we used the top-10 ranked SSWs (including tied rankings) according to the results of the U.S. News and World Report's (2023) fall and early spring survey of SSW deans and directors as of March and April 2023, the most current ranking at this project's initial planning stage. More detail on the methodology of these annual rankings is available elsewhere (U.S. News and World Report, 2024).

Although many SSWs change ranks each year, our sampled SSWs are historically and consistently highly ranked. We used OpenAI's ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2024) to generate a side-by-side comparison of the 2023 and 2024 rankings to identify any changes. We then consulted the source document (U.S. News and World Report, 2024) to verify all identified changes. The data analytic sample listed by each institution's 2023 and 2024 positions (see Table 3). We determined that only slight changes occurred between the two annual rankings, with all SSWs remaining highly ranked and one SSW slightly decreasing its rank, constituting movement out of a top 10 ranking.

Table 3. *Highly Ranked SSWs in 2023 and 2024*

Institution	2023 ^a	2024 ^b	Change
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor	1	1	0
Washington University in St. Louis	2 (3-way tie)	2	0
University of Chicago	2 (3-way tie)	3	-1
University of Washington, Seattle	2 (3-way tie)	7	-5
Columbia University	5 (2-way tie)	4 (3-way tie)	+1
University of California, Berkeley	5 (2-way tie)	4 (3-way tie)	-1
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	7 (2-way tie)	4 (3-way tie)	+3
University of Texas, Austin	7 (2-way tie)	8 (4-way tie)	-1
University of California, Los Angeles	9 (2-way tie)	8 (4-way tie)	+1
Case Western University	9 (2-way tie)	12 (8-way tie)	-3

^a2023 ranking data were extracted from the U.S. News & World Report (2023). Because of tied rankings, the top 10 institutions cover nine levels or ranks.

^b2024 ranking data were extracted from the U.S. News & World Report (2024). In some cases of ties, SSWs ranked as top 10 institutions in 2023 remained ranked in 2024, except one school (Case Western University)

that dropped out of the top 10 (to 12th), tied with seven other SSWs in 2024. Two SSWs (University of Pennsylvania and Boston College) rose to the top 10 in 2024, tied for eighth place, but were not included in our analysis because they were not in the top 10 in 2023.

Data Extraction, Quality Control, and Content Analysis

To create initial descriptive profiles at the institutional level (i.e., SSW and college or university), we examined each SSW's and university website's landing homepage. We also supplemented institutional website data with data from several additional publicly available sources about these SSWs (i.e., joint organizational report of the CSWE and Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education in Social Work [GADE], 2021; also see Lee et al., 2023 and the interactive online directory of GADE, n.d.). We also included institutional data about the colleges and universities in which SSWs are located—i.e., reports from the National Center for Education Statistics (2021, 2023), American Council on Education (2024), and Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Civil Rights (n.d.)—and the demographics of each institution's surrounding community from the U.S. Census Bureau's (n.d.) website and the interactive Rural Health Information Hub (n.d.)

Specifically, for each SSW, the authors organized and compiled the data into an Excel spreadsheet database to determine the availability and quality of the various public data sources to describe these 10 schools. The authors made decisions about the initial dataset and with the research assistance of a social work doctoral student in spring and summer 2023, extracted data to inform the developing dataset through December 2024.

We ensured rigor in data extraction by checking entries at the time of entry, then used a combination of double-checking entries across coders, random selection of entries, websites, and consensus coding in cases of uncertainty and discrepancy. Missing data were verified with the authors by the team's data management consultant. In the context of limited theory on the institutional characteristics that contribute to BIL faculty success, we used conventional descriptive content analysis, thus allowing patterns and themes to emerge organically from the raw data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Morgan, 1993).

We created preliminary profiles of these 10 institutions for a juried national social work research conference presentation (Cunningham-Williams & Fields, 2024), from which we received initial peer feedback. In spring and summer 2024, we added a data management research consultant to our research team who provided consultation on refining the dataset and data management protocol ahead of institutional review board (IRB) review and approval at the authors' institutions.

The first author's IRB served as the IRB of record and determined that this project did not require IRB oversight, given the use of publicly available data (September 27, 2024). Given the plans for data extraction to continue as relevant institutional data were either updated or newly reported as additional institutions were added and time periods were either expanded or otherwise modified beyond the current study, the IRB also clarified that no additional IRB review was required for additional public sources of data and institutions beyond those reported in the current study (personal communication with IRB office, September 30, 2024).

The dataset reported herein consisted of institutional demographics (i.e., U.S. city and county, rural or urban designation, rural or urban commuting area, CSWE regional location, county-level BIL population); student enrollment profile (i.e., enrollment size, student transfer status, undergraduate and graduate enrollment profile); financial and research-related characteristics (i.e., private or public funding, endowment rank, research doctorate offerings in addition to social work PhD, doctoral research activity, presence of SSW dean or director of research or faculty); and DEIA resources and supports (i.e., federal designation of institution as minority-serving; accessibility of DEIA information on website; presence of faculty profile information such as photos, videos, curricula vitae, and biographical descriptions; presence of a SSW or institutional dean or director of diversity; community-engaged institutional classification).

Furthermore, considering our focus on the institutional workplace context for current and future BIL faculty members, given their low representation in U.S. institutions, we also extracted information on the availability and accessibility of DEIA resources and support as described on SSW websites. Specifically, we counted the number of clicks away from the landing page to DEIA website information and the availability of faculty-specific DEIA-related information (i.e., faculty photos; faculty biographical information; statements of mission, vision, and values relating to DEIA; and DEIA-designated personnel at the SSW or university). Such DEIA information may contribute to an inclusive culture and climate for BIL faculty members (e.g., presence of faculty photos and bios, probable BIL identity based on website photos; Huggins-Hoyt, 2018; Huggins-Hoyt et al., 2015) and also identity-focused research as described in faculty curricula vitae or biographical profiles).

Results

Institutional Demographic and Student Enrollment Profiles

In this sample of SSWs, about half were clustered in the middle of the United States (i.e., Great Lakes, Mid Central, or South Central), with the rest along either U.S. coast (Southeast, Northeast, West, or Northwest); see Table 4. These SSWs were all in urban U.S. cities, counties with low rural populations, and urbanized rural–urban commuting areas. BIL representation in these counties varied, ranging from 23% to 63%, with most having about 20% to 50%.

Regarding student enrollment profiles, about half of these highly ranked SSWs had student populations of 40,000 or more students, followed by four schools with 15,000 to fewer than 40,000 students and one school with fewer than 15,000 enrolled students (see Table 5). All these SSWs were in traditional 4-year, full-time universities, mostly with highly or primarily residential campuses. Most of these institutions also had a majority undergraduate focus, with one having a high focus on undergraduate education. All these institutions were considered more selective in their admissions processes.

Table 4. *Community Location Demographics of Highly Ranked SSWs in the United States*

Institution	CSWE Region ^a	U.S. Location ^b	Urban Area, 2020 ^{bc}	% Rural County Population ^{bc}	Rural–Urban Commuting Area ^{bf}	% County BIL ^g
University of Michigan (UM), Ann Arbor	Great Lakes	Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, MI	Ann Arbor	17.2	Metropolitan core: primary flow in urbanized area	22.5
University of Chicago (UC)	Great Lakes	Chicago, Cook County, IL	Chicago	0.05	Metropolitan core: primary flow in urbanized area	53.5
University of Washington (UW), Seattle	Northwest	Seattle, King County, WA	Seattle, Tacoma	3.29	Metropolitan core: primary flow in urbanized area	25.2
Washington University (WU) in St. Louis	Mid Central	St. Louis, St. Louis County, MO	St. Louis	0.00	Metropolitan core: primary flow in urbanized area	31.9
Columbia University (CU)	Northeast	New York, New York County, NY	New York, Jersey City, Newark	0.00	Metropolitan core: primary flow in urbanized area	47.9
University of California, Berkeley (UCB)	West	Berkeley, Alameda County, CA	San Francisco, Oakland	0.49	Metropolitan core: primary flow in urbanized area	41.6
University of North Carolina (UNC), Chapel Hill	Southeast	Chapel Hill, Orange County, NC	Durham	29.0	Metropolitan core: primary flow in urbanized area	26.1
University of Texas (UT), Austin	South Central	Austin, Travis County, TX	Austin	5.11	Metropolitan core: primary flow in urbanized area	46.2
Case Western University (CWU)	Great Lakes	Case Western Reserve, Cuyahoga County, OH	Cleveland	0.57	Metropolitan core: primary flow in urbanized area	40.6
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)	West	Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, CA	Los Angeles, Long Beach, Anaheim	0.89	Metropolitan core: primary flow in urbanized area	62.9

^a CSWE and GADE (2021) report on the current landscape of doctoral education in social work.

^b The Rural Health Information Hub (n.d.) was used to establish rurality or urbanicity of the institutional sample.

^c U.S. Census Bureau (2024a).

^d U.S. Census Bureau (2024b).

^e Economic Research Service (2025).

^f BIL = Black, Indigenous, and LatinX (BIL). The authors calculated count-level BIL percentages by adding percentages by race and ethnicity for each category except “White alone,” “White alone, not Hispanic,” and “Asian alone,” using the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.).

Table 5. *Student Enrollment Profiles of Highly Ranked U.S. SSWs (n = 10)*

Student Characteristics	# of Highly Ranked Schools	Schools^a
Enrollment		
40,000 or more	5	UM, UW, UCB, UT, UCLA
25,000–39,999	2	CU, UNC
24,999–15,000	2	UC, WU
<15,000	1	CW
Undergraduate profile		
4-year (vs. 2-year)	10	UM, UC, UW, WU, CU, UCB, UNC, UT, CWU, UCLA
Full-time (vs. part-time)	10	UM, UC, UW, WU, CU, UCB, UNC, UT, CWU, UCLA
More selective (vs. less)	10	UM, UC, UW, WU, CU, UCB, UNC, UT, CWU, UCLA
Highly or primarily residential (vs. not)	9	UM, UC, UW, WU, CU, UCB, UNC, CWU, UCLA
Transfer-in status ^b		
Higher	3	CU, UCB, UCLA
Lower	7	UM, UC, UW, WU, UNC, UT, CWU
Undergraduate or graduate profile		
Majority undergraduate	6	UM, UW, WU, UCB, UNC, UCLA
Highly undergraduate	1	UT
Majority graduate	3	UC, CU, CWU

Source: American Council on Education (2024)

^aUM=University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; UC=University of Chicago; UW=University of Washington, Seattle; WU=Washington University in St. Louis; CU=Columbia University; UCB=University of California, Berkeley; UNC=University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; UT=University of Texas, Austin; CWU=Case Western University; UCLA=University of California, Los Angeles

^bTransfer student from another university into this university

Financial and Research-Related Resources and Support

The institutions were fairly evenly split in terms of funding source, with six publicly funded and four privately funded universities (see Table 6). With respect to endowment funding, all SSWs were among the top 120 U.S. institutions with the largest endowments as of fiscal year 2021 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023), with half ranked in the top 30 of these highly resourced institutions. In fact, all but one institution ranked in the top 50; four ranked in the top 20 and one ranked in the top 10 regarding endowment size.

All SSWs were in universities offering a research doctorate other than social work, with all designated as Research 1 institutions, given their very high research activity. Additionally, nearly all institutions had a medical or veterinary school. Many of the sampled SSWs also had a dedicated dean or director of research or faculty (see Table 6).

Table 6. *Supports of Highly Ranked U.S. SSWs: Financial and Research-Related*

	# of Highly Ranked Schools	Schools ^a
<i>Financial characteristics</i>		
Funding type ^b		
Public	6	UM, UW, UCB, UNC, UT, UCLA
Private	4	UC, WU, CU, CW
Endowment rank (of 120 largest), FY2020 ^c		
Top 10	1	UM
11–20	3	UC, WU, UC
21–30	1	UT
31–40	2	UW, UNC
41–50	2	UCB, UCLA
51 or lower rank	1	CW
<i>Research characteristics</i>		
Has research doctorate ^b other than social work		
No	0	
Yes	10	UM, UC, UW, WU, CU, UCB, UNC, UT, CWE, UCLA
Research activity ^c		
Very high (Research 1)	10	UM, UC, UW, WU, CU, UCB, UNC, UT, CWE, UCLA
High (Research 2)	0	
Moderate (Research 3)	0	
Has dean or director of research or faculty		
No	2	UCB, UT
Yes	8	UM, UC, UW, WU, CU, UNC, CWE, UCLA

Data extracted from institutional websites unless otherwise noted.

^aUM=University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; UC=University of Chicago; UW=University of Washington, Seattle; WU=Washington University in St. Louis; CU=Columbia University; UCB=University of California, Berkeley; UNC=University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; UT=University of Texas, Austin; CWU=Case Western University; UCLA=University of California, Los Angeles

^bAmerican Council on Education (2024).

^cNational Center for Education Statistics (2023).

DEIA Resources

None of these highly ranked SSWs was in an institution federally designated as an HBCU, Hispanic-serving, or tribally affiliated (see Table 7). Yet they each had accessible DEIA information found within one to three clicks from their homepage, with variations in the type of information available. For example, DEIA information regarding discrimination, sexual harassment, and accessibility policies were found one click away from the homepage for all SSWs, yet other information (e.g., links to the institution's provost office or another institutional unit) required up to three clicks to find. Although

eight SSWs had a diversity officer or liaison described on the homepage in either the SSW or university, only one had a strategic equity plan described on its website and another had an equity tagline in its branding. All SSWs had photos or videos showcasing the racial and ethnic diversity of their faculty (or students). Half of the SSW were on campuses designated as classified or reclassified from 2006–2024 as community-engaged (see Table 7), according to the *Carnegie Elective Classification Report* (American Council on Education, 2024).

Table 7. *DEIA Resources and Supports on Websites of Top 10 U.S. SSWs*

DEIA Characteristics	# of Highly Ranked Schools ^a	Schools ^b
In federally designated minority-serving institution (4-year) ^c		
No	10	UM, UC, UW, WU, CU, UCB, UNC, UT, CWE, UCLA
Yes	0	
Has accessible DEIA information (1–3 clicks from homepage)		
No	0	
Yes	10	UM, UC, UW, WU, CU, UCB, UNC, UT, CWE, UCLA
Has faculty photos or videos (1–3 clicks from homepage)		
No	0	
Yes	10	UM, UC, UW, WU, CU, UCB, UNC, UT, CWE, UCLA
Has faculty bios (1–3 clicks from homepage)		
No	0	
Yes	10	UM, UC, UW, WU, CU, UCB, UNC, UT, CWE, UCLA
Has dean or director of diversity		
No	3	CU, UCB, UT
Yes	7	UM, UC, UW, WU, UNC, CWE, UCLA
In community-engaged institutional classification (2006–2024) ^d		
Not classified	5	UC, WU, CU, UCB, CW
Classified	3	UM, UW, UT
Reclassified	2	UNC, UCLA

^a Data were extracted from institutional websites unless otherwise noted below.

^b UM=University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; UC=University of Chicago; UW=University of Washington, Seattle; WU=Washington University in St. Louis; CU=Columbia University; UCB=University of California, Berkeley; UNC=University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; UT=University of Texas, Austin; CWU=Case Western University; UCLA=University of California, Los Angeles

^c Minority-serving institutions were defined as those serving Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders, HBCUs, Hispanic-serving institutions, or tribal colleges or universities, as defined by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Civil Rights (n.d.) as of January 10, 2025.

^d American Council on Education (2024).

Discussion

Our content analysis of publicly available data allowed, for the first time, a description of institutional (college or university) demographics, resources, and support characteristics potentially contributing to the success of BIL full professors at highly ranked SSWs in the United States. Hence, our findings draw attention to the many resources that highly ranked SSWs have accumulated that afford them options to support the recruitment and retention of BIL faculty members and their achievement of tenure and promotion to full professor. Prior empirical studies pointed out that geographic location (regional and city or county characteristics), organizational culture and climate, and financial resources heavily affect BIL faculty members' experiences and retention (Sadagheyani et al., 2022), especially at Research 1 institutions that are predominantly White. Though geographic location and other characteristics are not modifiable, work can be done to create and sustain a supportive and collaborative culture for BIL faculty members that is rooted in equity and inclusion (see Dade et al., 2015; Jackson et al., 2024). Our findings indicate how similar highly ranked SSWs are to one another. For example, all these SSWs consistently maintained their high ranking and have large endowments, irrespective of their overall public or private funding models. Furthermore, these SSWs are relatively similar in their predominantly White student populations, student population size, and traditional 4-year undergraduate, nontransfer-focused status. Essentially, these highly ranked SSWs are in institutions not typically characteristic of institutions where BIL faculty members (and students) are the most represented (for data on BIL representation at SSWs, see CSWE, 2023) and supported in their psychological health (Koo, 2021) or success regarding promotion and tenure. This is partly due to a double standard in the promotion and tenure evaluations of scholarly productivity for BIL faculty members. Masters-Waage et al. (2024) concluded that there is an apparent double standard in the evaluation of scholarly productivity for Black and Hispanic faculty, wherein, at the school or department level, their impact—as measured by h-index scores—was more harshly judged; at the college or university level, they received more negative votes and were 44% less likely than their White counterparts to receive unanimous votes for promotion and tenure.

Our results also found that information related to each institution's commitment to DEIA was quite accessible on SSW websites. Yet, given Executive Order 14151 (The White House, 2025) signed on January 20, 2025, eliminating or significantly reducing federal employment positions, programs, and new grant funding related to DEIA, such information may no longer be as available or accessible as reported herein. This may be particularly true for SSWs that are publicly funded and have high endowments that may be affected by noncompliance with this executive order.

Thus, the current study's findings can inform early and mid-career BIL faculty members seeking research-intensive university environments for mentorship, scholarly collaboration, or employment that have successfully promoted and retained senior BIL faculty members. Additionally, this study may contribute to the development or refinement of best practice guidelines and efforts among peer and aspirational institutions seeking to move beyond a focus on recruitment toward inclusion, equity, promotion, and retention of BIL faculty members at SSWs.

Limitations

These findings are presented in the context of a few key methodological limitations that are important to consider in future research. This study used a purposive sampling strategy that relied on an annual survey by the U.S. News & World Report involving SSW deans and directors to determine SSW rankings. There has been very little movement among SSWs in the top 10 of these rankings. For example, we used the 2023 survey rankings (U.S. News & World Report, 2023). These results showed only minor changes from the most recent, 2024 and prior surveys. This stability, however, must be interpreted cautiously, given ongoing debates about the validity of these rankings and the processes used to determine top 10 institutions (Kim, 2018). Thus, reliance on these annual rankings and the decision to only select the top 10 (versus another cutoff point) could have systematically excluded other institutions that may have a higher representation of BIL faculty members at the full professor rank. Additionally, excluded institutions could potentially provide rich data to enhance our understanding of the phenomenon of institutional support and its role in recruitment, retention, and promotion to full professor among BIL faculty members (for best practices for promotion to full professor at Research 2 (R2) institutions, see Freeman et al., 2020).

This study also used institutional websites for content analysis; although current at the time of extraction, the sites could have been updated with new (or less) information on institutional supports and resources or DEIA resources not accounted for in our content analysis. There is no feasible way to ensure that the institutional website data reported herein are consistent with current institutional website content without rechecking every variable. However, we did recheck these data nearly a year after the end of the initial extraction period (November 2024) and the publicly available source documents used for the descriptions of the top 10 SSWs and could not identify any updates. It is important to note that although we are aware that the list of SSW rankings in the U.S. News & World Report is published annually, we purposefully did not update our list. We wanted to maintain the rankings as they were in spring 2023 to align with the start of our research project.

Finally, we found similarities in research-related characteristics and financial resources among these schools. In fact, prior empirical studies have identified how institutional research and financial resources can aid the retention and success of BIL faculty members (Clark et al., 2023). However, the current investigation was limited regarding the conclusions that can be drawn due to the exclusive use of publicly available data. Without interviewing BIL faculty members, we could not determine what they credit for their retention, tenure, and promotion. Hence, being a faculty member at these well-resourced institutions might not ensure equitable allocation of institutional resources to support BIL success.

Implications for Policy

Institutions that are committed to increasing the representation and success of BIL faculty members must ensure that equity and inclusion are not an afterthought and instead

are intentionally integrated throughout their strategic plans (Fries-Britt et al., 2011). It is imperative that these institutions are clear in their goals of inclusion and equity, invest financially in these initiatives, and communicate these priorities clearly. BIL recruitment and retention should be the focus of these efforts, and leaders need to define and communicate the goals, success markers, and outcomes to all stakeholders both in and beyond the campus community (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). It is also important to share the message that diversity and quality are not mutually exclusive, to set a healthy tone that positively influences the BIL faculty hires and the culture and climate into which they are transitioning (Allen et al., 2000; Marbley, 2007; McGee & Kazembe, 2015). Finally, a policy implication that could increase the retention of BIL faculty members is to set the expectation that senior faculty members serve as mentors to junior and mid-career faculty members, perhaps in both formal and informal relationships. However, institutions should consider the “cultural taxation” risk (see Jackson et al., 2024) experienced by BIL faculty members expected to serve in these roles while being underrepresented in the academy. This expectation is particularly important for BIL faculty members, who may lack organic faculty relationships or established mentoring networks at their institutions (Kelly et al., 2017). Again, the messaging should be such that BIL faculty success is invaluable to the broader institutional goals of DEIA.

Implications for Practice

Similar to the policy implications, many practice implications outlined here are the responsibility of leaders at the university and school levels (Parsons et al., 2018). Transparent and effective communication is key when seeking buy-in from community members both on and beyond these campuses. Funneling financial resources into the recruitment and retention of BIL faculty members is key (Banks, 2022). Improving the representation of BIL faculty members and working to ensure they have positive experiences could create a de facto snowball effect. Part of the retention of BIL faculty members is the ability of senior BIL faculty members to support new faculty members with whom they share identities. Retaining these diverse faculty members could enhance the ability to recruit and retain others.

Cluster and cross-department hiring initiatives also can increase recruitment and retention of BIL faculty members. Creating a cohort experience across the institution can result in a sense of inclusion and belongingness and opportunities for collaboration in the SSW and across the institution (Curran et al., 2020). Collaborations leading to tangible research products can strengthen tenure and promotion packets, ideally resulting in retention and promotion to the rank of full professor. Collaborations are important because they lead to productivity, a key measure of evaluation for tenure and promotion (Niles et al., 2020). In addition to ensuring BIL faculty members can be productive, practices must be in place to ensure their scholarship—often identity-based, community-engaged, and qualitatively studied—is equitably evaluated and acknowledged as rigorous contributions to our understanding of phenomena. Promotion and tenure documents should include explicit language that clearly underscore that this work is worthy and rigorous, and affects people’s lived experiences (Allen et al., 2018).

Implications for Research

This study provides a rich foundation on which further understanding of the role of institutional resources on the success of BIL faculty recruitment, retention, and promotion to full professor can be developed. Through an analysis of publicly available content, this study offers initial contextual insight into the university environments within which current BIL full professors work; however, interviewing these individuals would greatly expand the body of knowledge regarding what these longstanding professors see as instrumental to their trajectories in the academy. A qualitative study would allow these individuals to identify what internal and external factors led to their success from their perspective. It would also be worthwhile to understand if and how their needs have shifted between promotion to associate and full professor. Finally, determining what they know now that they wish they had known earlier could prove invaluable for junior faculty members at the onset of their careers and institutional administrators charged with faculty development.

The current study focused on top-ranked SSWs that were highly resourced, R1, and PWIs. Future research could include a more diverse sample of institutions (e.g. less resourced, R2, and minority-serving institutions). Although the current study focused on the institutional characteristics and supports that provided the context for BIL faculty members who had attained the rank of full professor at top-ranked SSWs, future studies are needed to understand faculty experiences at each career transition point along the tenure track, where attrition is evident. Specifically, additional research is needed to examine what institutional resources and support are required at each transition point: before tenure, during the associate professor stage, and after full professorship. Such research is particularly needed regarding BIL faculty members who have exited the academy at a higher rate than other groups and are disproportionately either not in tenure-track positions or have opted to take an administrative position in lieu of progression to full professor.

Conclusion

This study provided a content analysis of the websites of top-ranked SSWs, supplemented with several publicly available data sources. The purpose of this study was to identify common descriptors among these institutions related to resources and support being provided to faculty members on their trajectories toward tenure. This study focused on how an institution's resources may have supported the recruitment and retention of BIL faculty members that have reached the rank of full professor. Understanding the environmental factors amid which these historically underrepresented faculty members have thrived can serve as a blueprint for both peer institutions and faculty members who aspire to the rank of full professor.

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Representation of Faculty Rank by Race and Ethnicity in U.S. Colleges and Universities, Fall 2022 and guide journal selection. All substantive content, analysis, and conclusions were solely authored by the researchers.

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