

Enhancing the retention of underrepresented students in PhD training programs

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Disclosures and Disclaimer

I have no conflicts of interest to disclose

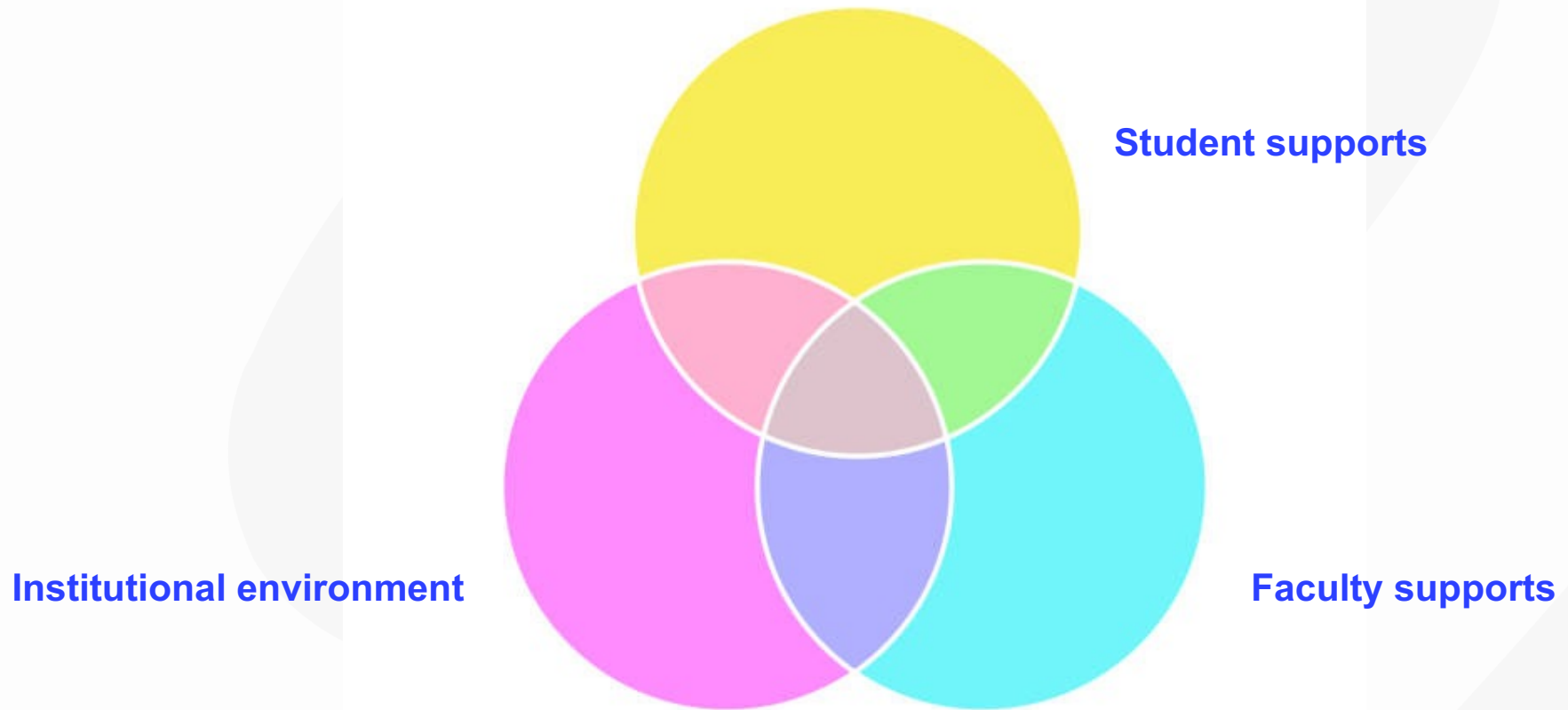
The information presented here reflects the approaches and experiences of a single institution

Objectives

Identify student support and retention strategies that can be implemented/enhanced at your institution

Identify approaches to support capacity of faculty to effectively train students from a diversity of backgrounds

A multi-faceted approach



Student supports

The process begins before the students matriculate

- Having a relationship with the student's undergraduate institution can increase their confidence and comfort in joining the institution
- Connecting with incoming students before matriculation can increase comfort

Student supports

Built-in student advising from day 1

- All first-year students have an assigned faculty advisor to help guide them through the first year
- All students who join the UMass Chan Initiative to Maximize Student Development (IMSD) are assigned a more senior graduate student in the program who acts as a “big sib”

Academic and other supports

- Center for Academic Achievement
- Student success coach within the Office for Student Life
- On-site Student Counseling Service
- Center for Biomedical Career Development within the Morningside Graduate School
- Learner Emergency Assistance Fund (LEAF)

UMass Chan Initiative to Maximize Student Development (IMSD)

- Financial support for attendance at national or international scientific conferences
- Assigned 'big sib'
- Twice-monthly professional development sessions
- Building community and a sense of belonging

UMass Chan Initiative to Maximize Student Development (IMSD)

Professional Development Topics

- Rigor and reproducibility (multi-session series)
- Writing and editing for clarity
- Effective oral presentations
- Applying for fellowships
- Mentoring relationships
- Building and maintaining professional networks

UMass Chan Initiative to Maximize Student Development (IMSD)

Supporting Identity and Building Community

Discussions related to different aspects of identity

- Navigating graduate school as a person of color
- Imposter syndrome
- Gender and sexual harassment in science

Supporting oneself

- Maintaining wellness in graduate school

Being comfortable in professional spaces

- Improv for scientists
- Social side of science

Student Groups

Peer support, support of creative pursuits, community building

- Diversity Interest Group
- SACNAS student chapter
- QMASS
- SNMA
- White Coats 4 Black Lives
- Other student groups focused on external interests – music, art, exercise

Faculty supports

Helping faculty members develop inclusive curricula and teaching practices

DRIVE – **D**iversity, **R**epresentation and **I**nclusion for **V**alue in **E**ducation

Provides tools to screen for bias in course materials. Workshops on inclusive teaching practices

Enhancing the capacity of faculty members to engage in inclusive mentoring

Recurring workshops on effective mentoring and inclusive mentoring

Initial faculty cohort consisted of IMSD and PREP faculty

Expanded to broader research training faculty

Offered to all new faculty

Enhancing institutional environment

Increase the capacity of the campus community to develop inclusive environments, recognize bias and speak out when observing bias

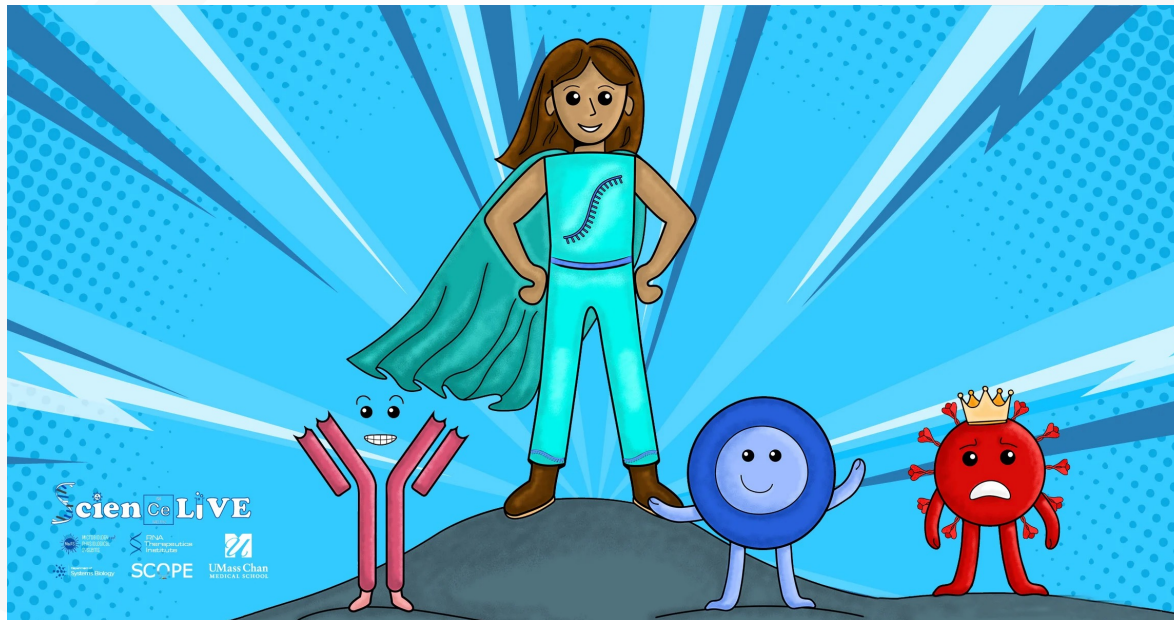
- **Development of “Departmental Equity Action Plans”**
- **Recurring foundational workshops – Inclusive communication; Addressing unconscious bias; Navigating microaggressions**
- **Work to normalize conversations related to diversity.**

Opportunities to give back

UMass Chan has a suite of outreach programs and other volunteer opportunities

- Peer mentor opportunities through UMass Chan PREP
- Research mentoring opportunities through the UMass Chan summer research program
- Mentoring and tutoring opportunities in the Worcester Public Schools (middle schools and high schools)
- Other volunteer opportunities within the school (e.g. medical Spanish elective) and the community

Opportunities to give back



<https://www.umassmed.edu/rti/rnaworld/Science-LIVE/>

Thank you